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Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650-1800

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3. The ascent of the Surinamer, 1713-1738

The term *Surinamers* (people who are Surinamese) appeared in print for the first time in 1716 and was used by a group of lobbyists to refer to the colony's planters as a group with common interests.¹⁷⁷ The relationship between the planters and the SC has been described by historians as troublesome and rife with conflict, prompting Van der Meiden to title his political history of early modern Suriname *Bestwist Bestuur* (Contested government).¹⁷⁸ The small number of European colonists, their isolation, and their single-mindedness about making a quick fortune in the colony was said to have caused much of the bickering described by Van der Meiden. However, in many respects the planters, directors and local government were in agreement on how Suriname was to be governed, and there was much more to the local elite than just incessant infighting. What changed in the decades after the war was that the planters and interested parties outside the *Sociëteit van Suriname* (Suriname Company) were becoming more vocal about their interests. The SC ruled the colony according to its charters and where the charters were unclear, or their meaning disputed, the States General had a final say in their interpretation. In the period after its founding in 1683 the SC functioned as the formal representative of the Suriname interests to the Dutch States General. The fact that the interested parties both in the Republic and in Suriname were increasingly voicing their opinion on how the colony should be governed reflects the ascent of the Surinamers and Atlantic interests in the Republic more generally.

After the War of the Spanish Succession (1703-1713) the Dutch position in the Atlantic declined compared to that of the French and the English, while at the same time the importance of the Atlantic trades to the Dutch economy increased.¹⁷⁹ In Suriname the period of consolidation of the colony was followed by a period of growth of Paramaribo, a strengthening of the sea-side defences and the introduction of coffee as a successful export crop. Regional shipping intensified, and connected the colony firmly to North American traders who were evading British restrictions to have access to Suriname's molasses production. The shipping connection to the Dutch Republic remained a mix between trade and consigned shipments, but after the period of consolidation there was an increasing emphasis on freight shipping for planters and investors rather than goods trading in the hand of captains and their companies.

¹⁷⁷ SvS, *Request van J. van der Marsche en andere belanghebbenden om een regeling te treffen voor de aanvoer van slaven naar, de defensie van en de vrije handel op de kolonie Suriname* (1 april 1716) entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 125.

¹⁷⁸ Meiden, *Betwist Bestuur*, 7–8.

¹⁷⁹ Vries and Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 19.

Because of the intricate route and long voyage, the slave trade was more fragile and prone to disruption than the other connections. The slave trade to the colony had been under pressure from French attacks during the 1690s; it was unstable during the war years, and only became more dependable in the post-war decades. Only after the War of the Spanish Succession the number of years without slave disembarkations declined. Interested parties in the Republic attempted to break open the monopoly of the WIC over the slave trade. They succeeded in 1730, even though the Suriname slave trade remained in WIC hands until 1738, when the WIC voluntarily gave up its privilege. In all the various connections there was growing group of planters, freighters and investors who operated Suriname's Atlantic connections outside the formal channels established by the West India Company and the Suriname Company.

In the years after the French attacks on the colony of 1712 the States General were frequently mediating between the Suriname Company and vocal groups of planters and interested parties in the Republic. These *Surinamers* became a separate group who were, for example, formally included in a treaty on the defences of the colony. The treaty on the defences was ratified by the States General in 1733 and had the "most distinguished inhabitants and those interested in the colony", as a party to the treaty, together with the representatives of the colonial governing council and the directors of the Suriname Company.¹⁸⁰ In that way the SC and the Surinamese governing council were no longer seen as the only partners of the States General in Suriname, but the planters themselves had received recognition.

Besides the intensification of the slave trade, both the planters and the directors of the SC considered the diversification of production, the expansion of defences and the curtailing of the growing number of Maroons to be the central challenges for the colony. In the case of the diversification of production the directors seemed to rely on their networks in the European hinterland and their knowledge of Asia. Many SC directors had close relations to, or were sitting on the board of the Amsterdam chamber of the VOC, giving them some knowledge of what products and techniques were being tried in Asia. The planters in turn relied on the opening of the regional connections to attract a greater number of diverse skills. The starting up of most of the newly attempted products failed, except for coffee which became

¹⁸⁰ *Conventie tusschen de directeuren van de geoctroyeerde societeyt van Suriname ter eenre en gemagtigde van raaden van policie der voorschreeve colonie, mitsgaders van veel voornaame en meest gedistingueerde ingeseetenen en geïnteresseerden in deselve colonie, ter andere zyde: By haar Hoog Mog. geapprobeert den 19 December 1733 ('S Gravenhage: J. Scheltus, 1734).*

a tremendous success. Did the vision of the SC-directors on the colonisation of the colony clash with the propositions made by the planters in the period after the War of the Spanish Succession, as would be suggested by the claim of Van der Meiden about the quarrelsome nature of the Surinamese planters? While there were several areas where they clearly did – most notably the regional trade and the payment for the defences – there were large areas where the planters and the SC-directors had overlapping ideas about how the colony should be developed.

3.1. After the War of the Spanish Succession

There was an Atlantic context to the ascent of the *Surinamers*. The war years had given Suriname a strategic edge in the Atlantic because the “blockade of the French Caribbean colonies (...) had encouraged a rapid spurt of output” from colonies that could still be reached from Amsterdam.¹⁸¹ In addition the firmly established regional connections allowed the colony to benefit from the growing demand for molasses in the North American Atlantic market. The increase of English power after 1713 firmly determined the geographical limits of Dutch success in the Atlantic. The slave trade on St. Eustatius was an attempt by the WIC to increase its market share after the *asiento* had been lost. The strength of the English slave trade in the area around the island however hampered the development of *Statia* into a successful regional slave entrepôt, prompting the WIC-directors to focus more of their resources into supplying the Surinamese planters,¹⁸² directly providing Suriname with the labour it needed on its slave-devouring plantations.

In the decades after the war there was no explosive growth in the production of sugar. The yearly export averaged at 17 million pounds. During the 1710s production stood at 14.2 million pounds per year, going up to an average of 19.7 in the 1720s, and falling back to 17.1 million pounds per year during the 1730s. Given the sugar price, the 1730s resulted in the lowest turnover for Surinamese sugar in the eighteenth century. For the planters however, it was an exciting time. The introduction of coffee would come to shake up the colony profoundly. The first coffee seeds most likely germinated in Suriname around 1713. From then on every 3 to 5 years tensions rose in anticipation of a next generation of trees starting to bear fruit and new seeds were planted. A growing number of anxious planters were

¹⁸¹ Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 393.

¹⁸² Leo Balai, *Het slavenschip “Leusden”: slavenschepen en de West Indische Compagnie, 1720-1738* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011), 139.

waiting for the results until in 1723 the first (small) shipments of coffee left the colony, and ever greater plots of land were cleared for the new crop. It would take until the 1750s for the coffee turnover to surpass that of sugar. Due to high coffee prices in the 1730s the yearly sales of coffee in Amsterdam were worth on average fl. 11.2 million, with sugar bringing in fl. 18.9 million.¹⁸³

In the years after the War of the Spanish Succession many sectors of the Dutch economy were either in decline, or their growth was stagnating. Compared to this, Suriname's output was impressive. Amsterdam's position as entrepôt declined due to the closing of markets in a period of growing mercantilism.¹⁸⁴ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude identify the Atlantic as one of the few areas where there was the prospect of growth. Sugar trade and sugar refining in Amsterdam were among the very few sectors quickly recovering after the war. This did not prevent other European ports like Hamburg from taking a share of what had previously been Amsterdam's market.¹⁸⁵ The hinterland to which Amsterdam's sugar refiners were selling their sugar became "largely confined to the Low Countries themselves, the Rhineland and some other areas in Germany."

By 1720 the possibilities of growth in the Atlantic were creating a feverish atmosphere in England, France and the Dutch Republic. Speculation on future returns of companies, for example through the production of tropical goods in Louisiana by the Mississippi Company, created an exuberance amongst speculators across Europe, resulting in a speculative bubble, or *windhandel*, also known as the South Sea Bubble (referring to the manic trade in the shares of the South Sea Company). Even though the impact of the short-lived bubble on international trade was minor,¹⁸⁶ a feverish atmosphere surrounded the introduction of coffee into Suriname around 1720. The suggestion that one could get rich quickly by engaging in Atlantic trade or joining a new fad at the right moment was not lost on those interested in the colonisation of Suriname. Planters and SC-directors alike were experimenting with a range of new products to introduce in the colony.

¹⁸³ Total export of Surinamese coffee times the average price of coffee on the Amsterdam market that year. PSDC and N. W Posthumus, *Nederlandsche prijsgeschiedenis*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1943).

¹⁸⁴ Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, 386.

¹⁸⁵ J. Reesse, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam: een bijdrage tot de handelsgeschiedenis des vaderlands, hoofdzakelijk uit de archieven verzameld* (Haarlem, 1908), 46–47.

¹⁸⁶ Frederikus Philippus Groeneveld, *De economische crisis van het jaar 1720* (Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1940), 82.

3.2. Growth of Paramaribo

Two maps, one by Ottens and the other by De Lavaux, clearly illustrate the change that took place. The map by Ottens was published in 1718, shortly after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession and the attack by Cassard. The other map was published in 1737, shortly before the liberalisation of the slave trade. On the older map by Ottens there are several settlements visible, both of the colonists as well as those of the indigenous population along the various rivers and on the coast. On the map by De Lavaux, Paramaribo and Jodensavanne are the only two settlements of the colonists in Suriname. Torarica was still a one-street settlement on Ottens' map, but on De Lavaux' map it has disappeared and is replaced by a plantation. Of the indigenous villages only a few are still visible on the map of De Lavaux; a new addition on that map are the burning *Wegloopers Dorpen van Rebelle Slaaven* (villages of rebellious slaves).¹⁸⁷ De Lavaux' map fuses both a war report with outlines of scenes of battles together with a detailed layout of the colony's plantations. The result is a map that has the well-ordered outline of plantations on the left, with on the right, inland, images of burning villages and marching regiments trampling bodies and routing enemy forces.

During this period Paramaribo had clearly left its days as a frontier settlement behind. Herlein's book from roughly the same period as the map by Ottens depicts the houses as being situated between the house of the Governor, the main church and the river front. There is also the beginning of the *Nieuwe Uitleg* (new expansion) which is an extension of the Gravenstraat, and on De Lavaux' map a new grid pattern fills the space between the two old streets and the *Waterkant*.¹⁸⁸ Around the town there was still savannah, open land surrounded by forest. There are only two plantations, one belonging to the SC, the other managed by Eduard Jordan.¹⁸⁹ During the 1720s this land becomes more heavily cultivated as breeding ground for the first coffee trees and as kitchen grounds for those living in town. On De Lavaux's map from 1737, the land surrounding Paramaribo is completely parcelled out, and the town has grown considerably. The church and the square in front of the church, first on the

¹⁸⁷ Alexander de Lavaux, "Generale Caart Van De Provintie Suriname: Rivieren & Districten Met Alle d Ondekkingen Van Militaire Togten Mitsgaders De Groote Der Gemeetene Plantagien Gecarteert Op De Naauwkeurigste Waarnemingen, 1737, UBM (UvA): Kaartenzl: 105.20.04; Joshua Ottens, "Nieuwe Kaart Van Suriname: Vertonende De Stromen En Landstrecken Van Suriname, Comowini, Cottica, En Marawini, Gelegen in Zuid America Op De Kusten Van Caribana, 1718, UBM: Kaartenzl: 33.24.69.

¹⁸⁸ Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 46–49.

¹⁸⁹ Ottens "Nieuwe Kaart".

edge of town, are now at its centre. The Gravenstraat and Heerenstraat have been stretched further inland, forming a gridded street pattern. At a 45 degree angle from the Heerenstraat new streets have been added, making a second grid expansion of the city follow the course of the river.

[Figure 6]

Figure 5 Detail of a map showing Paramaribo and Torarica, 1713

Josua Ottens, *Nieuwe Kaart van Suriname: vertonende de stromen en land-streken van Suriname, Comowini, Cottica, en Marawini*. UBM: Kaartenzl: 33.24.69. Paramaribo is on this map also named 'Nieu Middelburg', or New Middelburg. Torarica can be found in the south of this map along the Suriname River.

[Figure 7]

Figure 6 Detail of a map showing layout of new coffee plantations near Paramaribo, 1737
Alexander de Lavaux, *Algemeene Kaart van de Colonie of Provintie Van Suriname*, 1737.
UBM: Kaartenzl: 105.20.03. The De Lavaux map has an inverted North-South projection, with the Atlantic Ocean as the lower part of the map.

3.3. The civilian militia

The 1712 attacks by the French privateer Jacques Cassard were amongst the most momentous events of Suriname's eighteenth-century history. The attacks also opened a period in which planters tried to have a say over how the colony was defended. The attacks by Cassard had certainly hurt the colony, but it had not been lost. While abandoning the colony had been an option for the States of Zeeland in the 1680s, or was used as a threat by the WIC in the 1690s, the idea no longer surfaced in the period after the War of the Spanish Succession. Instead, with the (perceived) growing importance of the Atlantic colonies, the number of people in the Republic attached to the colony grew. The vocal group of planters in the colony initially crystallized around the officers of the civilian militia and the role the militia played in the colony. The militias were geographically partitioned across various districts, and there was a segregated Jewish division located around

Jodensavanne. The militiamen were all the able-bodied free white men of the colony and received their orders from their district officers. These officers were also organising the yearly head-count in their districts to determine the poll-tax per household.

These militias directly connected the colonists to the defence system, giving them a feeling of entitlement in issues regarding the colony. These same militias had also played a pivotal role in the defending of the colony during the 1688 mutiny and the attacks by the French in the 1690s. After the attacks by Cassard the colonists were clearly shaken by the bad state of their defences, and the officers came out against the local government and the SC directors, complaining about how the defence had been neglected. But besides complaining, they also addressed the States General to mediate for a solution. When the planters felt unrepresented in the board of the Suriname Company, they suggested a tax strike.¹⁹⁰

In a report on the first attack by Cassard compiled by Adriaen de Graeff for the directors of the SC the impatience of the militia to mobilize and defend the colony was emphasized and contrasted by the indecisive attitude of the Governor and the Commander. De Graeff recounted that during the attack by Cassard, civilians had requested several times to be allowed to come to arms. Despite not receiving the order, the companies of the civilian militia started to mobilise. A free corporal with eight or ten other civilians rushed to the defence of the *Waterkant* saying: “order or no order, who cares for me, follow me.”¹⁹¹ Reports mainly emphasised the heroism of the civilians under arms, portraying the garrison made up of European hirelings as incapable by recounting how none of the cannons on the fort were manned properly, and an officer had to use his wig to load a cannon. After Cassard’s troops had been chased away, the approach of barges from the Commewijne caused a sudden scare. Immediately the civilians remobilized: “they obeyed with an outstanding courage the orders of the civilian officer, who gave orders indiscriminate of Company.” There was a “mutual trust shining on their faces, arriving so diligently from all sides (despite the rough weather) that the captains who had boarded ships to prepare said to one another: ‘It is truly as if those people are going to a wedding celebration’”, emphasizing the diligence of the civilian militiamen in defending the colony.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ SvS, *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren*, 1713, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 240.

¹⁹¹ “De Gevryde Corporaal Hendrik van Eyk, met nog acht of tien andere Burgers, langs den Waterkant over de Brug in den nieuwen Uitleg gerukt, zeggende, order of geen order, *die my lief heeft volgt my na.*” Ibidem.

¹⁹² “zy gehoorzaamden met een byzondere volvaardigheid aan den eersten Burger-Officier die maar sprak, zonder onderscheid van Compagnie te maaken; men zag een onderling

The Suriname River, although it is very wide, is not easily attacked by surprise. The *brandwacht* on the coast and the ebbs and flows of the tide prevent enemy ships from a swift attack. The hours before the attack by Cassard had been rather chaotic and were described by a witness as a tumultuous scene of slaves making a fuss while looking for vessels and organizing the European women and their belongings to flee upstream. The civilians, clearly shaken by the attacks, were angry with the Governor and the bad state of the defences. After the first attack by Cassard, the Governor decided to convene the civilians on the central square between the fort and the town. Several civilians wanted to stop paying for local taxes and the poll tax until the colony was brought into a better state of defence; and suggested to announce this at the public assembly on the central square. They said they saw the arrival of Cassard “as a blow given them by the well-meaning hand of God, to wake us from our careless sleep of imagined security.”¹⁹³ The officers argued that there should not be “a general shouting bearing arms” during the assembly since that would certainly be seen as a mutiny.¹⁹⁴ The officers also pointed out that there was no-one in the colony authorised to suspend the poll tax.

While the meeting at the central square proceeded peacefully, the officers of the companies of the civilian militia met that night to discuss the possible improvements to the colony’s defences. The stream of requests and propositions that were sent in the following months resulted in an announcement by the Governor that he would admit no more letters.¹⁹⁵ The Governor protested when the officers of the civilian militia offered their suggestions for the defences to him and the council and informed them of their intention to take this to the States General to complain about the state in which the SC had left the colony.¹⁹⁶ The States General was nevertheless approached by the officers, thus bypassing the SC and local government. The States General was naturally rather surprised by this and refused to take action in support of the *Surinamers*. The SC, whose main income was the poll tax, was able to prevent a tax strike through an order of the States General that payment should continue. The States General was chosen by the

vertrouwen op hun Gelaat uitblinken, en zy schooten van alle kanten, (niettegenstaande het ruuw Weer,) zo vaardig toe, dat de Schippers, die zich aan boord vervoegd hadden om in gereedheid te zyn, daar na tegen malkander zeiden: *Het was waarlyk of dat Volk naar een Bruiloft liep.*” Ibidem.

¹⁹³ “*als een stoot haar door de goetdierene hand Gods toegebracht om haer uijt dien sorgelose slaep van ingebeelde securiteijt op te wecken.*” Ibidem.

¹⁹⁴ “*algemeen geroep onder de wapenen.*” Ibidem.

¹⁹⁵ SvS, *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren*, 1713, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 240.

¹⁹⁶ Hartsinck, *Beschryving*, 1770, 2:723–727.

colonists themselves as the mediator, and held enough sway to convince the colonists not to continue their opposition.¹⁹⁷

The second attempt to petition for change in how the colony was governed followed in 1716 under the leadership of the colony's former bookkeeper Jan van der Marsche.¹⁹⁸ Van der Marsche drew up a pamphlet that was signed by twenty prominent plantation owners such as Anna Verboom, Willem Bedloo, the Greenwoods, and also several Sephardic colonists such as da Silva, de la Para, Henriques and de Pardo. Throughout the text, at every point the planters demand strong and respectable leadership for the colony, and one that understands that the population needs to be protected and internal disputes need to be dealt with firmly. The planters feared new wars, and suggested to strengthen the colony's defences and an expansion of the armed forces with both enslaved Africans and Amerindians. They had no doubt about who would have to pay for this; the SC was obliged under the charter to pay for the colony's defences.¹⁹⁹

The Surinamese governing council attempted to strengthen its lobbying position to the directors of the Suriname Company directors. Ordinarily communication went through letters, or SC servants could be called back to Europe to report to the SC directors. But the representation of the colony's planters was turned into a permanent endeavour by hiring an agent in Amsterdam with the money of the *modique lasten* (Surinamese local taxes) which was approved by the Governor. The directors claimed that this was "contrary to the respect for the directors,"²⁰⁰ and they argued that this was against the charters' stipulations on the use of money from local taxes. The resolution of the States General mentioned a *commissioner* and not an agent, and especially not one paid for by the local taxes.²⁰¹ The admission of such a representative however did indicate that the directors chose to offer some form of representation of the planters in the colony. There were some restrictions to this, since only the most "*aanzienlijkste planters*" (distinguished planters) could be consulted in the questions regarding the colony's defences.²⁰² When a final agreement was made with the planters

¹⁹⁷ Bylaw 254, 25-Nov-1713, *Plakaatboek*, 294.

¹⁹⁸ SvS, *Request van der Marsche*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 125.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ "*strijdig is aan t respect van de Heeren deeser Tafel*"

²⁰¹ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721* (1720), entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25 The resolution of the States General of 1713 mentioned a "gemagtigde" and not an "agent".

²⁰² SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721* (1717), entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

about the payment and organisation of the defences, these “most distinguished” planters were included as a separate party to the treaty.²⁰³

3.4. Diversification and expansion

In their pamphlet the planters outlined to the directors how the colony needed to be improved on the issues of the slave trade, the defence and the regional trade: the three pillars of prosperity from the viewpoint of the planters. They wanted a protective state that would provide maximum freedom for them to mobilize labour and sell their goods, while at the same time guaranteeing ample military force to protect the colonial investments through the building of forts. Marsche's pamphleteers hoped that an opening of the trade to Suriname would attract more “*nieuw bekeerden*” (converted Jews) who had knowledge of the production of “*Indigo, Tabak, Catoen en Rocou of Orlean.*” They also proposed other avenues. Those without the means to start up sugar works could start breeding cattle, or producing cotton, cacao, orlean, and rice, or grapes, copying the wine making in Cayenne (sic). Coffee and olives had been planted, but the results were not there yet. They furthermore proposed the cultivation of saffron, flax, hemp, and mulberry for silk, as well as different kinds of woodworking, shipbuilding, pottery and brick making.²⁰⁴ This was all a world away from the single-minded focus on the production of sugar in the previous period.

The directors of the SC were also looking to diversify the range of products produced in the colony. The Governor was the key node of communication for the directors, eager to expand the colony's production. Especially Governor Mahony (1716-1717) played an active role in the experiments. The directors demanded fruits and cacao for personal use, as well as seeds for the *hortus* in Amsterdam,²⁰⁵ and were pleased by samples of the dyestuff and gum.²⁰⁶ They most likely also sent over the first coffee

²⁰³ *Conventie tusschen de directeuren van de geotcroyeerde societeyt van Suriname ter eenre en gemagtigde van raaden van policie der voorschreeve colonie, mitsgaders van veel voorname en meest gedistingueerde ingeseetenen en geinteresseerdens in deselve colonie, ter andere zyde: By haar Hoog Mog. geapprobeert den 19 December 1733.*

²⁰⁴ SvS, *Request van der Marsche*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 125.

²⁰⁵ “indachtig te zijn omme met alle scheepen een wijgig Cacao van de boomen op de grond van de Heeren deeser Tafel, ofte in derselver soogenaamde Gouverneurs Thuijn staande, mitsgaders eenige vaaten met orangie Chinaas Appelen, limoenen, limoensap & limmetjes aan de heeren deeser tafel tot derselver gebruik toe te laten komen.” *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 9.

²⁰⁶ About the dye they suggest to the Governor to produce several pounds and send it to them. About the gomme they complain that it is not even close to the regular quality of real barnstone which comes from the *Oostzee*, and would only be worth six *stuyvers* per pound,

seeds and supplied the Governor with a manual on how to plant them. For the most part the directors were rather clueless about the precise way in which the cultivation should be organised.²⁰⁷ The directors were very strongly engaged with trying out new techniques and products, especially by making suggestions to the Governor and colonists. The connection to the Amerindians was of no interest to them at all, on the contrary: they needed peaceful relations, instead of the disruption caused by trade. In 1717 they decided to prologue the ban on trade with the Amerindians, and simultaneously order the loading of so-called “*Indiaanse Cargasoenen*” to serve as a form of tribute to the Indigenous.²⁰⁸

The only non-agricultural experiments supported by the directors were attempts to begin mining. The haphazard expedition sent by Governor Aerssen van Sommelsdyck to find the mythical gold lake of Parima was part of a larger dream to find precious metals in the South American hinterland. The directors of the Suriname Company remained eager to experiment with mining, sending out several expeditions from 1717 until the founding of a chartered mining company in 1743. In 1719 the Governor was ordered to find out if there were any minerals in the colony, and the directors tried to send over someone who could assess the dug up ore.²⁰⁹ Attracting expertise from the wider Atlantic played a major part in the search for gold and other mineral resources in the colony. When in 1716 Salomon Herman Sanders from the German town of Kassel in Hesse offered to lead mining expeditions in the interior of Suriname, he was sent out with enslaved Africans and some German mountaineers to try his luck. Sanders undertook several expeditions until 1723. The efforts were halted that year, to be recommenced in 1729. The restart of the mining again involved Germans. The nephew of Francois van Aerssen van Sommelsdyck, Jacob Alexander Henry De Cheusse (incidentally also the brother of the Governor De Cheusse) was a German military Captain. Through him two German mountaineers were hired to explore the possibilities of mining in the colony. The Germans quickly commenced their work when they arrived in Suriname in 1729, but fell ill before the year was over. One of them lost his life while the other was plagued by fevers. De Cheusse in Germany sent over two other mountaineers, but to no avail. The SC continued sending over researchers throughout the thirties, the last were again two Germans moving to the

and they ask him only to send large quantities and take note that the hardest and biggest pieces are worth most.

²⁰⁷ SvS, *Brieven van de Sociëteit aan de Gouverneur*, 1719, entry 1.05.03, inv.nr. 95.

²⁰⁸ SvS, *Brieven van de Sociëteit aan de Gouverneur*, 1717.; Bylaw 273, 20-Feb-1717, *Plakaatboek*, 312.

²⁰⁹ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren*, 1717-1721, 1719, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

colony in 1739, who continued working until 1741. The director of the SC, Philip Hack restarted mining activities in 1743 when he founded the Chartered Suriname Mining Company together with his brother Wilhelm Hack, but despite the presence of precious metals in the ground, the mining expeditions failed.²¹⁰

Coffee would turn out to be the only success of the drive for diversification. The drink was becoming increasingly popular in the Dutch Republic around the turn of the eighteenth century.²¹¹ Drinking coffee in specialized coffee houses was not only a social activity, but also became closely connected to doing business. In the famous play by Langendijk on the investment bubble of 1720 several scenes are situated in an Amsterdam coffee house doubling for a stock exchange with actors holding on to their cups and demanding refills while trading their papers.²¹² The first mentioning of a *coffyhuyz* in Suriname in a legal document dates from 1705 and regards the banning of the playing of a host of card games from inns, pubs and coffee houses.²¹³ The coffee consumed in those houses was most likely imported from Amsterdam through the Dutch-Levant trade. From 1711 onwards the volume of coffee shipments from Java to Amsterdam was growing quickly, and soon the coffee plant would be introduced in Suriname. The years before the export of coffee from Suriname took off in 1723, planters in the colony were fighting their neighbours for seedlings and pieces of land perceived as good for coffee production.²¹⁴

The introduction of coffee anywhere is generally surrounded by myths. The transfer of coffee to Martinique was allegedly made possible by a Dutchman who shared his water rations during a trans-Atlantic voyage with his seedlings. The introduction of coffee in Brazil is said to have taken place through Guiana when a Brazilian officer mediating a border dispute between Suriname and French Guiana charmed his way to the heart of the wife of the Governor of French Guiana, and on his departure received a few berries hidden in a bouquet of flowers from her. In Suriname the first coffee

²¹⁰ R. Bijlsma, "Het mijnwerk der societeit van Suriname op den van-den-Bempdenberg 1729-1741," *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 1, no. 2 (1919): 335–338.

²¹¹ Pim Reinders and Thera Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Koffie in Nederland: vier eeuwen cultuurgeschiedenis* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994), 42–43.

²¹² Pieter Langendijk, *Quincampoix, of de windhandelaars: blyspél* (De erven van J. Lescaillje en Dirk Rank, 1720).

²¹³ Bylaw 222, 15-Apr-1704, *Plakaatboek*, 256.

²¹⁴ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721*, Minutes of October 1721, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

most likely arrived via the *hortus medicus* in Amsterdam, and was spread by the gardener of Governor de Veer, a German silversmith called Hansbach.²¹⁵

Acquiring the seeds is however only half the story. The production of coffee is not difficult technically, but demands great care. At every step of the production process the coffee can be spoiled if it is not handled correctly. The seedlings are also rather fragile, the transfer therefore had to be accompanied by a transfer of knowledge on how the seeds had to be treated. Coffee made its way to Suriname around 1712 or 1714, making it one of the first colonies in the Caribbean to adopt coffee growing.²¹⁶ To instruct the Governor about coffee cultivation, the directors of the Suriname Company decided to send him a recently published book about a voyage to Mocha and a note by the gardener of the *Hortus Medicus*.²¹⁷ The book that the directors sent was most likely the travel account by Jean de la Roque in which the author described the coffee cultivation in Yemen, published for the first time in Amsterdam in 1716.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 149.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹⁷ SvS, *Brieven van de Sociëteit aan de Gouverneur*, 18-Jun-1717, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 95.

²¹⁸ Jean de La Roque and Thomassin, *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse par l'Océan oriental et le détroit de la mer Rouge: fait par les Français pour la première fois, dans les années 1708, 1709 et 1710* (Amsterdam: Steenhouwer & Uytwerf, 1716).

[Figure 8]

Figure 7 First page of the book that introduced coffee growing techniques to Suriname, 1716
Jean de la Rocque, *Voyage de l' Arabie heureuse* (Amsterdam: André Cailleau, 1716).

In October 1721 Suriname's coffee fever hit the boardroom table of the directors in the form of a torrent of requests regarding land grants and disputes around Paramaribo, all to cultivate coffee. Johannes Bley had seen "the growth and success that will come from the cultivation of coffee." He feared that his neighbour would infringe on his property. A similar request to reaffirm a land grant came from Magdalena Outhuijs (widow of D. Egidius de Hoij). She acquired the piece of land with the goal to build a house and a coffee plantation. However, she now understood that Christiaan Hansbach was trying to do the same and expand his land to the area behind the hospital, which would hinder her to enlarge her *Coffyplantinge*, on what she perceived as the best land for the cultivating of coffee located directly behind her grounds. That same day the directors read a letter by Gerrit Pater and Carel de Hoij "in Suriname on Paramaribo in the new part of town at the end of the Northern side of the Graavestraat." The land Gerrit Pater bought from the deceased Governor Coetier was partly planted with *Coffy boomen*. Also Carel de Hoij obtained some land from the late Governor with the intention to put a house on it and make a *Coffythuijn*. The men tried to annul

a land grant given to Jan Haterman, who they claimed only cultivated four or five per cent of his land, while hindering their own expansion.²¹⁹ All of these and many more conflicts preceded the first sizeable coffee exports, resulting in a quick parcelling out of the commons around Paramaribo, clearly visible on the Lavaux map.

The directors of the SC were themselves also engaged in the early experiments with coffee and the representatives of the city of Amsterdam on the board had proposed to begin a *Coffij plantagie* for the account and to the profit of the directors.²²⁰ Later Governor Temmick gave himself no less than 1500 *akkers* in 1722 to plant coffee, food, sugar cane, coffee, cacao, indigo, tobacco, as well as for the production timber, and the following years he expanded his plantation several times.²²¹ Most of the attempts at the diversification of the colony's production stemmed from the period after the connections had been consolidated, and both planters and directors were enthusiastic about the possibilities the production of different crops could yield. In the end only coffee became a success, next to sugar and to a much lesser extent cotton.

3.5. Tax evasion: Dutch and British

Planters in Suriname demanded more freedoms for the regional trade than were granted in the bylaw of 1704; the central issue being that the planters wanted to be able to trade locally themselves instead of having to wait for the English to come and collect the molasses. The planters argued that the regional trade would also increase the number of local ships and able-bodied seamen in port to strengthen the colony's defences in case of an attack. The planters suggested setting up a symbiotic relation with Curaçao to get "Salt, Flint, and Limestone", although this never materialized. In case the English supply of horses would cease, the colonists would be able to get their horses from Portuguese Brazil, Essequibo, or from the *Orinoques*. The import duties would still befall the SC, and the growth of the colony would increase shipping, production and consumption in the colony for the benefit of the Republic.²²²

The pamphlet by Marsche argued that the ban on Suriname-based regional trade was hampering the economy of the colony. The plantation owners referred to Barbados where regional trade was not banned, and argue

²¹⁹ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

²²⁰ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

²²¹ R. Bijlsma, "Gouverneur temming's plantage Berg-en-Daal bij den parnassusberg in Suriname," *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 3, no. 1 (1922): 31–34.

²²² SvS, *Request van der Marsche*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 125.

that they should have similar freedoms. In 1704 only the English trade had been legalized, while any requests by the planters to get the right to set up their own regional trade had been blocked by the directors. The pamphleteers wrote that “it is hard for those from Suriname, to have to see that other Nations enjoy greater freedom, while they are barred from selling their *Koorn*, *Syroopen* and *Dram* even to people on Curaçao, fellow subjects of the state.” Since those goods were never sent to Holland, the produce would have to be wasted or rot away if not enough English captains sailed to the colony.²²³ In this sense their suggestions had much in common with the position taken by the North American colonists in the 1770s who were demanding freedom in trade between their colonies and the other colonies in the Americas.

The shipping in the regional trade was based on the exchange of provisions from North America for molasses from the sugar colonies. Stephen Grand sailed his bark *Abigael* from Boston to Suriname in 1738. He shipped farm products, as well as fish and candles. His cargo was a typical collection of goods traded in the harbour of Boston. The goods had arrived there either from the hinterland or from fish banks off the coast. The inwards cargo for Suriname consisted of four small barrels of butter, ten small barrels of flour, sixteen sheep, a hogshead of ale, and two horses. Fish products were six hogsheads of cod, five half hogsheads of cod, thirty barrels of alewives (a fish close to mackerel), five barrels filled with mackerel, and two tons of whale oil. From a candle factory came four boxes of candles.²²⁴

Samuel Gallop, from Rhode Island not far from Boston, sailed to Suriname with his barkantine *Phanix* that same year. On board he had fifty barrels of flour, twenty barrels of salt, five cases of cheese. Again fish was an important part of the shipment: Twenty-five barrels of pickled fish (likely cured herring), and five barrels filled with mackerel, three barrels of whale oil, and three barrels of cod. In building material and non-food there arrived eight barrels of tar, 2000 planks, 17000 shingles and 7000 stones.²²⁵ Again, mostly daily foodstuffs. The horses, the pretext for the trade, and the centre of attention in Postma’s study of the connection,²²⁶ were hardly present.

Benjamin Appelbij came at around the same time from a harbour further south, New York. His bark *Catharina* brought in fifty barrels of

²²³ Idem.

²²⁴ SvS, *Inkoomende Carga van de bark Abigael schip Steph Grant koomende van Boston alhier arriveert op den 5 oct 1738*, 19-Feb-1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 276.

²²⁵ SvS, *Inkoomende Carga van de barkentijn Phanix Schip. Sam. Gallop komende van rood ijlant en alhier gearriveert op den 4 oktober 1738*, 23-Feb-1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 278.

²²⁶ Postma, *The Dutch*, 287–322.

flour, sixty barrels of salt, eighty one (barrels) of alewives, twenty boxes of bread, ten boxes of butter, and 10000 stones.²²⁷ No horses, mostly flour and fish and building materials.

When comparing this with the inward shipments of John Rule around 1688 we see essentially the same kind of products. However, now they came directly from North America, and not through Barbados. The content of the return shipments did change drastically. The ships were loaded with molasses and the local sugar based moonshine called *dram*.²²⁸ In the early period of the Suriname Company the colony had been re-connected to its former coloniser Barbados. This Caribbean connection fell apart completely when the non-Dutch trade from Paramaribo settled into its direct and bilateral North American focus. There was a simple economic reason for this. The British West Indies wanted to sell their molasses to the North American distillers; the distillers wished to import cheaper molasses from French and Dutch plantation colonies as well. Wood production in Suriname had become less important at the same time that the sugar production for the Dutch market increased.²²⁹ On top of that the North American colonies began to develop their own wood exporting industry. The connection with North America was an easier way of getting daily provisions than selling wood to Barbados and buying their provisions which the Barbadians themselves had imported. The fact that they were becoming competitors on the North American molasses market likely increased this further.

The return shipments from colonies like Suriname were supposed to be discouraged by the Molasses Act which levied a tax on non-British molasses, and was supposed to fill the coffers of the British state at the same time. The revenue reaped from the Molasses Act by the British was extremely low.²³⁰ This was the result of large scale tax evasion, which happened in a fairly organised fashion as we can see from the Surinamese tax sources. The ships sailing to Paramaribo mentioned earlier are a good example. The *Phanix* declared to return to Rhode Island, where she had

²²⁷ SvS, *Inkoomende Carga van de Bark Catharina Schip. Benjamin Appelbij van Nieuw Jork alhier gearriveert op den 12 Xber 1738*, 24-Feb-1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 280.

²²⁸ SvS, *Uijtgaende Carga van de barkentijn Phanix Schip. Sam. Gallop van hier vertrocken naer rood ijland op den feb 1739*, 23 februari 1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 277.; *Uijtgaende Carga van den baerk Abigael Schipper Stephen Grand van hier vertrokken naa madera op den feb 1739*, 19-Feb-1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 275.; *Uijtgeande Carga van de Bark Catharina Schip. Benjamin Appelbij van hier vertrocken naa Madeera op den 25 feb 1739*, 24-Feb-1739, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 266 fo. 279.

²²⁹ Nassy et al., *Essai historique table of exports*.

²³⁰ Albert B. Southwick, "The Molasses Act: Source of Precedents," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 8, no. 3, Third Series (July 1951): 389–405, doi:10.2307/1917421.

come from. The other two stated their destination to be Madeira, a very surprising destination for a British ship loaded with molasses sailing out of a Dutch colony. Around the year 1736 many ships reported their outward destination to be Madeira. It was so much that we can say that the last two, the *Abigael* and *Catharina* sailing to Madeira were the rule. The *Phanix* which was sailing back the way she came was the exception.

When studying the ship movements out of Paramaribo we see a sudden change. The proportion of ships sailing from North American ports to Paramaribo and back to North America declined from around fifteen to around five ships annually. The ships declaring they arrived from Bristol Massachusetts and left for Madeira increased from nil to more than ten a year. In 1734, twenty bilateral ships sailed between Paramaribo and Bristol Massachusetts. There were no ships that arrived from Bristol Massachusetts that left for Madeira. By the year 1739 no ships that arrived from Bristol Massachusetts announced they would sail back the same way. All twenty of them stated Madeira as their destination.²³¹ Did all these merchants really divert their course all of a sudden? Had the Madeiran molasses industry grown explosively, while the distillers on the North American East Coast had all closed their businesses at a similar pace? Not at all.

The North Americans at the time were faced by the Molasses-act which attempted to curtail Dutch and French molasses supply to the North American colonies, to support molasses sales from the English colonies such as Barbados and Jamaica. International trade was eased after the Peace of Utrecht (1713) when England and France agreed that “there shall be a reciprocal and entirely perfect liberty of navigation and commerce between the subjects on each part ... concerning all and singular kinds of goods’ and that they should be ‘secure, and free from all trouble and molestation.” This ended hostilities between the key nations in the Atlantic, and re-opened the ports of the French and the English to shipping.²³² This openness was however not long lasting. From within the British empire opposition rose from West Indian planters who wished to have sole access to the North American molasses market. The prices paid by the North American colonists for the molasses and rum from the non-British West Indies were sixty to seventy per cent of what they paid in their own West Indian colonies. One year after the Peace of Utrecht the sugar planters already voiced their

²³¹ A less frequently used, but similarly unlikely a destination for ships sailing out of the Surinam River was Fayal, an island in the Azores archipelago, not too far North West of Madeira.

²³² ‘The treaty between France and Great Britain, Navigation and Commerce signed in Utrecht in 1713’, in: George Chalmers (ed.), *A collection of treaties between Great Britain and other powers* 2 (London 1790) <<http://www.heraldica.org/topics/france/utrecht.htm>>.

complaints to parliament about the intensified inter-imperial trade and unfair competition. The West Indian opposition remained constant and culminated in a bill that completely banned the trade between North America and non-British colonies. It passed parliament in 1731, but did not make it through the House of Lords. A second bill was milder, it chose not to ban but to levy a higher tax on non-British imports of molasses, sugar and rum. This was passed in 1733 and came to be known as the Molasses Act.²³³

Suriname served as a connection where skippers and merchants discussed strategies to evade imperial taxes. One can understand how skippers who spent months organizing return shipments of molasses discussed how to fool the British custom office. Within a relatively short period all the merchants skippers had aligned their strategy, and the Governor of Suriname complied. By signing the destination to be Madeira the skippers would not have to pay tax when they arrived in North America. They would claim to be in transit on their way to Madeira and therefore not bringing the molasses into the British Empire. If the molasses was not being brought in destined for the British colonies they would not have to pay tax. Of course, once the ships had passed the patrolling navy vessels the molasses would be unloaded and distilled all the same. The Surinamese Governor signed every single false statement made by captains declaring their destination to be Madeira. Approximately nine hundred of them. That is why Madeira seems the single most important destination of non-Dutch ships sailing out of Suriname in the whole period if the tax data is taken at face value.²³⁴ If we would include Dutch shipping into it, it would be second only to Amsterdam. The North American skippers and merchants very successfully evaded a trade restriction that the metropolis tried to impose. In the table below (Table 6 Shipping data of Madeira and the corrupt data from Suriname compared, 1735-1740) the increase of ships allegedly sailing from Suriname to Madeira are compared to the actual shipping figures of Madeira itself. It shows that Madeira's shipping actually declined in the period when an increase should have been expected based on the large numbers of Surinamese ships arriving there.

Table 6 Shipping data of Madeira and the corrupt data from Suriname compared, 1735-1740

	Ships departing Suriname to Madeira	allegedly from	Total ships departing from Madeira
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²³³ Southwick, "The Molasses Act."

²³⁴ See PSNADC and Appendix 1.

1735	0	180
1736	15	161
1737	28	152
1738	38	156
1739	37	96
1740	36	118

Source: PSNADC and Livros dos Entradas (1727-1807) e saidas (1779-1807), Provedoria e Junta da Real Fazenda, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Portugal cited in: David Hancock, “‘A revolution in the trade’: wine distribution and the development of the infrastructure of the Atlantic market economy, 1703-1807” in: John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000) 105- 153

The network of regional trade went through a major transformation during the first phase of the expansion of sugar production in the first decade of the eighteenth century. The contact between Suriname and its former colonizer Barbados with which it had maintained a symbiotic relation for many decades was fading away and was being replaced by trade more fitting to the changing nature of the colony. The Molasses Act was the result of lobbying by the English West Indian planters, like those operating from Barbados. The initial mutual exchange between the two colonies came under pressure now that there was a competition between the two, both with regard to the sales of molasses, as well as the buying up of North American provisions. The falling apart of this connection coincided with the converging of the markets the two colonies were operating in. A fissure grew between the North American and British West Indian colonies.

The connection between Barbados and Suriname dried up completely. Research on the export wood production of Suriname shows that this came to a standstill at around the same time. The increasingly bilateral nature of the connection shows that the image of adventurer captains sailing to various Caribbean harbours looking for the best price²³⁵ should be replaced by an image of steady and durable connections between colonies and across imperial boundaries. The planters suggested the encouraging of, and reliance on circuits of exchange outside the control of the Suriname Company. When these freedoms were not granted, the colonists did not hesitate to take them, and local officials such as the Surinamese Governor

²³⁵ Pares, *Yankees and Creoles*, 67.

appeared to have been facilitating the evasion of both the Dutch and English orders in this regard.

3.6. Dutch connection

A good illustration of the difference between the preceding period of consolidation, and the one in which the colony had stabilized are the careers of Samuel Cohen Nassy – discussed in the previous chapter – and coffee pioneer Stephanus Laurentius Neale in the years after the war. Neale had been born in the colony in 1688 on a plantation along the Commewijne River, and received his education in The Hague. His father, previously an ordinary sailor who owned 21 enslaved Africans²³⁶ died when Neale was still an infant. His mother Anna Verboom²³⁷ remarried a Frenchman from Rouen, Paul Amsinck. After his return to the colony in 1710 Neale played a key role in the start-up of coffee production. Neale, his brother-in-law Nicolaas van Sandick and his mother Anna Amsinck - Verboom were among the first to send coffee to the Republic in 1723.²³⁸ When Neale had amassed enough wealth he emigrated to Europe and bought himself into the Prussian nobility, received several freedoms, and became a well-known figure at the Prussian court where he was nicknamed “*Le Roi de Surinam*.”²³⁹

Neale left the colony for Europe by the time he had acquired enough wealth, just as Nassy had done, who moved to Amsterdam. Before they left the colony their success as planters had made both men important middlemen for merchants or merchant companies who sought a trustworthy representative in the colony. Neale was recommended to the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie as a good contact in Suriname, and fulfilled the role of correspondent for that company for several years.²⁴⁰ By the time he went to Europe to enjoy his fortune he consequently had the Governors Gerard van de Schepper, Johan Jacob Mauricius, and Wigbold Crommelin working for him to administer his property while they were simultaneously occupying the colony’s most important executive position.²⁴¹ Although Nassy had been excluded from formal governing positions in the colony because of his religious background, he had been an important representative of the Jewish

²³⁶ SvS, *Hoofdgeld en akkergeld 1684*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 213.

²³⁷ Sister of the Commander Verboom. The commander died from his injuries during the mutiny against Aerssen van Sommelsdijck.

²³⁸ C.F Gülcher, “Een Surinaamsche koffieplanter uit de 18de eeuw (SL Neale),” *West-Indische Gids* 25, no. 1 (1943): 41–59.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ MCC, *Minutes of the board of MCC directors 1720 - 1723*, entry 20 inv.nr. 13.

²⁴¹ Gülcher, “Een Surinaamsche koffieplanter.”

community as well as a notary public. Neale was nominated by the planters of Suriname for the position of councillor in the Political and Criminal Council. He was elected to this position in 1725, and held it until 1731.²⁴² When he moved to the Republic, Neale – like Nassy before him – engaged in actively lobbying for the planters' interests to the directors of the Suriname Company.

Despite the similarities there were several marked differences between Nassy and Neale. Nassy's business had stretched out into many different aspects of colonisation: founding regional networks, sustaining the slave trade, shipping goods between the Republic and the colony, as well as managing plantations. Neale did not engage in all branches of business in Suriname. He appears to have had no dealings in the regional trade, and he also did not own or partake in ships sailing to and from the colony. Rather than owning ships like Nassy, he was a correspondent for a specialised shipping company, playing the role of middleman. The differences between Neale and Nassy are telling for the shift from a period in which colonists were trying to consolidate their precarious settlement, to one in which more and more companies and merchants trusted the stability of the colony and were starting to offer specialized services to the colony, like regional trade, shipping to the Republic and private slave trade. This was no longer concentrated in the hands of a few well-connected people on both sides of the Atlantic. Neale was among the first who had been born in the colony and risen to riches and can be counted among the first creole planters of the colony.

Proponents of the colonisation of Suriname rarely missed a chance to emphasize how not only colonial production, but shipping itself was beneficial to the Dutch Republic. The argument was that the shipping industry created trained sailors and provided business for shipping companies. The poor conditions in Suriname's tropical waters would demand a permanent repairing and rebuilding of ships returning from there. The rhetoric in support of colonisation clearly distinguished between shipping and trading. A note on the benefits of Suriname for the city of Amsterdam from 1738 calculated that the income generated from shipping tropical produce was three hundred thousand guilders per year.²⁴³ With the present-day knowledge on the amount of produce shipped from the colony to the Republic, that estimate appears to be rather low. When calculating 5 *duyten* per pound of cargo the actual money spent on shipping was much

²⁴² OAS, *List of nominated and elected councillors to the various councils, 1684 - 1795*, entry 1.05.10.02 inv.nr. 235.

²⁴³ SAA, *Archief van de familie Bicker en aanverwante families, Voordeelen die de Stad van Amsterdam treckt van de Colonie van Suriname*, entry 195, inv.nr. 1025A9.

more; for the period under investigation an average of five hundred and fifty-five thousand guilders per year was charged by shipping companies for carrying of the sugar and coffee to the Republic.

During the consolidation of the connection between Suriname and the Dutch Republic a merchant-planter-shipowner like Nassy controlled all aspects of colonisation, both the bringing in of enslaved Africans, the overseeing of sugar production, the hauling in of supplies, and the shipping of sugar to the Republic. This was a common pattern in the consolidation phase of such trade connections. In the period of the colony's build-up and the consolidation of the connections between the Republic and the colony, the methods by which sugar ended up in the Republic were mixed, both traders buying up goods in the colony, and sending them to the Republic, direct consignment by planters, as well as captains buying up sugar directly. The WIC had chosen separate shipownership from its trading activities in an early stage. The company began to rent ships both for their bilateral African trade as well as their slave trade in the period after 1674 until the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713.²⁴⁴ More generally there was an increased separation between the ship owners and the company owning the cargo after the War of the Spanish Succession. That way the plantation owners only risked losing the cargo, rather than both the cargo and the ship.

In the period during which the connection between the colony and the metropolis consolidated, the market for shipping services changed from one in which there was far too much shipping space available for the amount of cargo that needed to be shipped, to one in which there was a balance between the two. This drove down waiting time in port, as well as increasing the number of pounds loaded per ship on its way to the Republic. In the following period between the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1713) and the end of the WIC monopoly on Suriname's slave trade (1738) the average waiting time per ship went down, while the average load per ship doubled. After the 1690s ships were no longer returning to the Republic carrying only ballast. This indicates that the shipping connection between the colony and the Dutch Republic had stabilized. A dependable number of ships was coming to port, and the relation between the amount of sugar produced and the shipping space available was in balance. The number of ships in Paramaribo increased to an average of 27.4 ships per year, and never less than 15. The average load of tropical produce on outward sailing Dutch ships had grown to seven hundred thousand pounds at the end of the War. This remained the common weight loaded on board ships sailing to the Republic. This centennial highpoint in terms of load per ship declined with

²⁴⁴ Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740* (Leiden: Walburg Pers, 1997), 391–404.

the upsurge in ships sailing to the colony in the late 1730s. This decline in the load per ship should partly be attributed to the comparative weight of coffee taking more space per pound than sugar, as well as to an increased arrival of ships.²⁴⁵ For slave ships it was more common to sail back to Europe carrying between one and seven hundred thousand pounds, while most of the bilateral ships loaded between seven and nine hundred thousand pounds. After the War of the Spanish Succession the number of waiting days decreased steadily, while the load per ship dropped below war-time levels for several years. The 1720s and 1730s see consistent high loads per ship, the longest period in which ships load above the 1680-1795 average. The period was a golden age for shipping companies servicing the route directly between Suriname and Amsterdam.

The separation of shipping and trading fits a period of intensification of the stable connection after the war. The *Juffrouw Margarita* under the command of captain Jan Neyman intending to sail to Suriname before it stranded on Texel is a good example of the separation between loaders and ship owners. The ship had a group of *reeders*, and on the other hand a group of so-called *inladers*. The *St. Jan* under captain Jan Carstens returned from Suriname in 1719 had 17 *reeders*, the *Juffrouw Cornelia* under captain Claas Backer returning from Suriname had 13. On these ships tasks had become separated through the introduction of the commission trade, or, due to the large debts of planters with merchants in Amsterdam resulting in an arrangement in which goods were loaded and consigned between the indebted planters and their creditors in the Republic. The change to a consignment system coincided with the increasing debts of the planters trying to pay for the WIC's enslaved Africans. The MCC in contrast was trying to get a foothold in the colony in the 1720s. To be able to enter the shipping market they had to combine the shipping of consigned freight, as well as trading their own goods to buy tropical products for their own accounts in the colony.²⁴⁶

3.7. Infringement on Amsterdam's position

The directors of the SC not only dealt with North American interloping, they also had to combat two Dutch circuits of interlopers to their colony, one was through Ireland, and specifically Cork, where meat and horses were loaded as provisions for the colony. The other route was through Madeira, where captains loaded Madeira wine. This was infringing upon the protectionist

²⁴⁵ See PSDC and Graph 3 in Appendix 1.

²⁴⁶ Corrie Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel: de Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie 1720-1755* (Leiden, 2000), 210–211.

XIIth article in the charter. The colonists had already managed to dent this article in the previous period, and now Dutch shipping companies were actively trying to undermine the rule that traffic had to take place directly from the Republic by buying up goods in ports on the way to the colony. Ships without a commission of the directors of the SC were prohibited from being admitted to the colony.²⁴⁷ But still captains and shipping companies tried to get permissions to sail to Ireland and Madeira before crossing over to Suriname. The requests to open the shipping through Madeira came from both planters as well as freighters, but was refused based on the charter.²⁴⁸

Despite the reiteration of the ban in the years after the War, ships kept visiting non-Dutch Atlantic ports. The *Elisabeth Galije* was an interloper, which used its permission to sail for the West Indies, to sail past Ireland, and then adjusted its course to go to Suriname to sell its Irish horses there. The *Elisabeth Galije* was a regular Atlantic crosser, both to Suriname as well as other West Indian destinations such as Curaçao to load cacao.²⁴⁹ The directors were unhappy with this form of interloping, but they also appeared rather powerless to stop it. In July 1719 the directors scolded the Governor for the smuggling of the Irish horses, and reminded him of his duty, both in the charter, as well as his instruction.²⁵⁰ But both the demand of the colonists and the geographic openness of the Atlantic prevented efficient policing. Captains increasingly came to the SC directors to lobby for the opening of the connection, as can be seen in the requests that are made to the directors by captains and representatives of shipping companies. On the sailing through Madeira there were increasingly conflicts between the SC and ship captains, and in 1720 the order was given that ships stopping over in other ports were held to pay double the *lastgeld*, which can be seen as a fine, rather than an outright ban.²⁵¹

As seen in the previous chapter, Zeeland's ports were initially disconnected from Suriname despite the many guarantees in the Charter that specifically allowed the Zeelanders unhindered access to the colony. The years after the War of the Spanish Succession saw a dramatic increase of Zeelandic interloper activities in the Atlantic trade, including the slave trade.

²⁴⁷ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1711-1716*, 1714, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 24; *Resoluties directeuren, 1711-1716*, 1715, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 24.

²⁴⁸ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721* Meeting 3-Nov-1717, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

²⁴⁹ Sailing in Nov 1716 to Curaçao, and from Curaçao in 1717 to Amsterdam. In 1718 the ship claims to make a voyage from the Dutch Republic to the Spanish West Indies, but arrives in Suriname sailing via Ireland. After that voyage it never returned to Suriname, but did ship cacao out from Curaçao to the Republic three times (Postma & Klooster database).

²⁵⁰ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1717-1721*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 25.

²⁵¹ SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1726-1729*, Resolution 9-Aug-1726, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 27.

The idea was “to repair the damage done by the last war and let trade return to the city.”²⁵² Paesie notes that the above citation of Cornelis Versluys in 1720 skips over a period of seven years in which the merchants of Middelburg had invested their capital in interloping. According to Paesie Versluys argument is mistaken, the war had been over for quite some time, but the founding of the MCC was directly aimed at attacking the dominant position of Holland in (Atlantic) trade. Several directors of the newly found MCC had been involved in evading the monopoly of the WIC in the years before.²⁵³ The interlopers in the slave trade had ignored Suriname as a destination. The only Zeelandic ships sailing to Suriname before the founding of the MCC were the WIC slave traders of the Zeeland chamber, most notably the *Adrichem* on three voyages and the *Emmenes* on two. For the Zeeland chamber of the WIC the connections to Suriname became of secondary importance, compared to Essequibo, which was under their command.

The MCC attempted to pry open the Suriname market of colonial products, and re-establish the connection between Zeeland and Suriname. Since the slave trade was still the monopoly of the WIC, they first tried to get involved in the goods trade. While the MCC initially had the plan to sail to the Spanish Caribbean colonies, they also went to Suriname.²⁵⁴ To get access to Suriname, the directors of the MCC contacted their Amsterdam agent Arnold Cloeting.²⁵⁵ The contacts to Suriname went through him, and Cloeting made the contact between the MCC and their Surinamese correspondent J.S. Neale. The connection between Zeeland and Suriname was such an uncharted territory for the MCC directors that the early MCC ships loaded their Suriname consignments in Amsterdam rather than Middelburg. Cloeting was the one who was to decide what the flute *Cornelia* was to load on board.²⁵⁶ In all this the directors were mostly active in bringing together the capital for the ship and the shipments, leaving details of the goods to be loaded for Suriname to the discretion of their representative in Amsterdam.²⁵⁷

On both the voyage to the colony as well as back to the Republic, the MCC combined their own trade with shipping consigned goods. The MCC ship *Nieuwerwerf* sailed to Suriname, where it was received by Neale.

²⁵² Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 17.

²⁵³ Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa*, 72–73.

²⁵⁴ Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 210.

²⁵⁵ MCC, *Letters from the MCC to its correspondents 1720 – 1723*, entry 20 inv.nr. 85.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ MCC, *Minutes of the board of MCC directors 1720 - 1723*, entry 20 inv.nr. 13.

The return cargo was to be a mix of both MCC goods, as well as freight for others. Neale wrote to the MCC directors that he loaded 743 hogsheads of sugar, 238 of these were on the account of the MCC, the others as cargo.²⁵⁸ Once in Suriname captain Reynolds van Overwijk of the *Cornelia* was to deliver the orders of the loaders, advertise that they had arrived, and make sure that the goods that had been taken in in Amsterdam on consignment were picked up. The captain was to emphasize to those people that his ship's services would be available to friends to carry goods to Zeeland shortly. The directors on several plantations were expected to load a good amount of sugar for Middelburg. The captain was pushed to take sugar as old as possible, so it would not cure too much on the way. If planters insisted that they wanted their sugar to be brought to Amsterdam, the *inlanders* could agree to send the sugar to Amsterdam after it had been brought to Middelburg and shipped from there to Amsterdam.²⁵⁹

Part of the problem for the captains of the MCC ships was the perishable nature of the goods they tried to ship to Suriname. A captain complained that the beer started smelling strange, and adding some sugar to it did not help getting it sold. Instead of a consignment system, the MCC's reliance on trading the goods slowed them down. Only on half of the cargoes sent to the colony was there a profit made, and this does not include the cost of equipping the ships, which diminished any chance to have a successful conclusion to a voyage.²⁶⁰ The MCC realised that they needed to speed up the voyage, and both in Suriname as in Zeeland the waiting time should be reduced. Plans were made to ensure that a bilaterally sailing ship, such as the *Nieuwerwerf* could return to Suriname from Zeeland within five or six weeks.²⁶¹ The long waiting times were to be shortened, in part, by the use of a correspondent who could use his knowledge of the local markets to smoothen the loading and unloading of the ships. The correspondent also had a task in increasing the trustworthiness of the MCC by reporting on successful sales of loaded sugars in Middelburg.

To get a correspondent, the directors of the MCC managed to get into contact with Laurentius Stephanus Neale, who was at that time still residing in the colony, and as a major plantation owner and businessman, was a good candidate for representing the MCC. The correspondent was used to spread good news about the way the MCC handled return-goods. So they told Neale the amount of sugar that arrived, and the good condition it

²⁵⁸ MCC, *Letters from Neale to the MCC*, 7-Sep-1722, entry 20 inv.nr. 54.

²⁵⁹ MCC, *Lias van de Fluit Cornelia, reis Suriname, 1721-1722*, entry 20 inv.nr. 311.

²⁶⁰ Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 210-211.

²⁶¹ ZA, MCC, *Letters from the MCC to its correspondents 1720 - 1723*, entry 20 inv.nr. 85.

arrived in. He had to try to make the voyages profitable and beat the competition by selling the goods on board and helping to organise the return.²⁶² Neale also gave advice on how the MCC directors could advance their operations in Suriname by making special deals with planters, therewith turning to a consignment system. In return for his help Neale could profit from preferential treatment by the MCC. When Neale filled up an MCC ship with 59 hogsheads because it had not been fully loaded, the cost (with expenses) of *fl* 3,158 were paid to him by the captain “pr. Quite.”²⁶³ He did not have to wait for the sugar to be sold in the metropolis as would be the case if anyone else had loaded the barrels, an exceptionally lucrative deal for him. On top of the lucrative deals in the beginning of the contact, the MCC directors adopted a friendly tone in their letters by the time Neale had organised the first return shipments. They asked him to organise the same for the other ships that they sent and they provided Neale with goods for which he did not have to pay any shipping costs.²⁶⁴ Despite the requests by the MCC to discuss the organisation of the return shipment with the captain; Neal “refuses to discuss such matters with a ship’s captain.” He said he did so because he hoped that the trade of the *Commercie Company* would be a stable one, something he wanted because he had “a very good heart for the Zeelanders”, and as he said himself, a financial interest in their success.²⁶⁵ Neale had considerable trouble convincing the Surinamese planters to load their sugar because they did not trust the new company. The mistrust partly stemmed from the founding of the company during the hey-day of a speculative bubble. Plantation owners thought that ships had been insured for too high a price, and were destined to be captured by a pirate that had been ordered by the MCC.²⁶⁶

Also in the consignment and freighting system the competition was tough. The correspondent of the MCC was thanked if he managed to reach the price of 5 *duyten* per pound.²⁶⁷ From the 1680s until the 1720s the WIC had the practice of lowering their shipping price down to 4 *duyten* per pound.²⁶⁸ Commissioners were allowed to drop the price of shipping with one *duyt* below the ordinary price to make sure they could load quickly and

²⁶² Ibid. 2-Jan-1722.

²⁶³ Ibid. 3-Dec-1722.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 26-Aug-1722.

²⁶⁵ MCC, *Letters from Neale*, 23-Apr-1723, entry 20 inv.nr. 54.

²⁶⁶ Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 13.

²⁶⁷ MCC, *Letters from the MCC to its correspondents 1720 – 1723*, 26-Aug-1722, entry 20 inv.nr. 85.

²⁶⁸ MCC, *Letters from Neale*, 22-Mar-1722, entry 20 inv.nr. 54.

fully.²⁶⁹ Neale reported how a returning WIC slaver would sound drums on the waterfront to inform the planters that he shipped for as little as 3 *duyten*.²⁷⁰ The SC also shipped for as little as 3 *duyten*.²⁷¹

In these competitive conditions new bilateral connections were not easily set up. In the early period of the MCC activity in Suriname (1720s) only the *Maria Elisabeth* undertook a successful voyage. The shipping by the MCC to Suriname and Essequibo between 1721 and 1727 resulted in a net loss of *fl* 11,010 for the MCC. This result was not only caused by the loss of three of the twelve ships. If the lost ships and the ship that sailed to Essequibo are not included, the shipping to Suriname resulted in a net loss of *fl* 5,254 for the MCC. Of this unfortunate trade the most successful part was the selling of the return shipment. The ships that did not make it back to Middelburg understandably failed to make a profit selling the goods that they had bought up in the West Indies. The return shipments would sell at at least double and sometimes almost ten times the price they were bought. The great losses at the selling of goods in the colony and the equipping of the ships made the connection unprofitable.²⁷²

As mentioned, only the *Maria Elisabeth* managed to make money, albeit only the insignificant sum of *fl* 174. The regular price to be had for a shipment was 5 *duyten* per pound, and could rise to 12 *duyten* in war time.²⁷³ Under Neale the MCC ships had an average waiting time of 198 days, as compared to 167 days for the ships sailing back to Amsterdam, a difference of 31 days. When the MCC was engaged in freight-shipping to Suriname (1721-1726), the average difference was 44 days. So while the MCC did relatively better in Neale's days, they did worse than the general Amsterdam shipping.²⁷⁴ Despite having one of the formidable planters of the era as their representative in Suriname, the MCC was unable to compete with the ships sailing to Amsterdam, or with the slave ships which were also mostly sailing to Amsterdam. The connection between Suriname and Amsterdam was in its

²⁶⁹ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Gideon Bourse and Pieter Sanderus in Suriname* 20-Dec-1691, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

²⁷⁰ MCC, *Letters Neale*, 9-Apr-1722, entry 20 inv.nr. 54.

²⁷¹ On 19-Aug-1733 the directors discuss the case of commies La Vernhe afgeladen 6 oxhoofden suiker tegens vier duijten, dog niet hoger standgrijpen als volgens afspraak met de schipper tot 3 duijten. The directors order that in case La Vernhe "sigh gefundeert vind tot repetitie van d'eene duijt hij dieswegen op bij Retour van deselve schipper in Suriname zijn actie aldaar sal moten institueeren." SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1733-1735*.

²⁷² Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 210–211.

²⁷³ SAA, Archief van de familie Bicker en aanverwante families, *Voordeelen die de Stad van Amsterdam treckt van de Colonie van Suriname*, entry 195 inv.nr. 1025A9.

²⁷⁴ Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 210; PSDC.

most successful period in the 1720s in terms of loading time and load average. Two basic elements of the Dutch connection between Suriname and the Republic were playing against the MCC. First, that they were trying to not sail to Amsterdam, which had a large concentration of sugar refiners. It is unclear why Zeeland did not manage to develop this industry sufficiently to compete with Amsterdam. Secondly, that they did not sell enslaved Africans in the colony. The exchange of enslaved Africans for sugar would have sped up the organisation of return-shipments considerably, and might have given them a chance against the dominance of Amsterdam.