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What is Manumission? A Manumittee-Centric Model of the Manumission Process in Eighteenth-Century Surinam

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Abstract

[ENG] Manumission is the release from slavery, and therefore, a transition from the most extreme form of subjugation into another position and status in society. Some historians have defined manumission as a formal act, often understood as a gift that severed the bond between slave and master. More recently researchers have emphasized that it was a lengthy process that involved pre-existing dependencies and resulted in new hierarchies. This article takes a fresh look at the process and tries to gain a fuller understanding of manumission by examining it from the position of the manumitted and their social relations.

Taking into consideration a wide range of documentary sources from colonial, notarial and Dutch governmental archives, we reconstruct the dependencies that were created in the process of manumission. The dependencies that evolved during manumission processes were related to family and other kinship ties, but also had an urban, communal, religious, economic and institutional logic. Manumission was not only an act at a specific moment, but also a process, and it was not a bilateral, but a multilateral one. With the instrument of manumission and within the limits set by economic reality and the colonial government, the manumitted tried to make meaningful life choices that transformed slave society profoundly. We find that they created complex dependencies across boundaries of status and racial categorization.

Résumé

[FR] La manumission est l'affranchissement de l'esclavage et, par conséquent, le passage de la forme la plus extrême d'asservissement à une autre position et à un autre statut dans la société. Certain(e)s historien(ne)s ont défini la manumission comme un acte formel, souvent

compris comme un don qui rompt le lien entre l'esclave et le maître. Plus récemment, des chercheurs ont souligné qu'il s'agissait d'un long processus qui impliquait des dépendances préexistantes et aboutissait à de nouvelles hiérarchies. Cet article jette un regard neuf sur le processus et tente de mieux comprendre la manumission en l'examinant du point de vue des manumis(es) et de leurs relations sociales. En prenant en considération un large éventail de sources documentaires provenant des archives coloniales, notariales et gouvernementales néerlandaises, nous reconstituons les dépendances qui ont été créées au cours du processus de manumission. Les dépendances qui se sont créées au cours des processus de manumission étaient liées à la famille et à d'autres liens de parenté, mais avaient également une logique urbaine, communale, religieuse, économique et institutionnelle. La manumission n'était pas seulement un acte qui se produisait à un moment donné, mais plutôt un processus, et elle n'était pas bilatérale, mais multilatérale. Avec l'instrument de la manumission et dans les limites fixées par la réalité économique et le gouvernement colonial, les manumis(es) ont essayé de faire des choix de vie significatifs qui ont profondément transformé la société esclavagiste. Nous constatons qu'ils ont créé des dépendances complexes au-delà des frontières du statut social et de la catégorisation raciale.

Keywords

[ENG] slavery, manumission, emancipation, Atlantic world, Suriname

[FR] esclavage, manumission, affranchissement, monde atlantique, Suriname

1. Limits in Common Understandings of Manumission

Freedom and slavery are commonly understood as binary opposites. In the private sphere, freedoms are the limits within which people can make meaningful life choices. In public life, freedom is the protection of rights and the ability to participate in the political process. Slavery is then the absence of both: extreme limits set by a master on personal and bodily control, and the absence of a natural personhood in relation to the state. The binary understanding of slavery and freedom finds its origin in Roman laws and the slave societies that used these laws as their legal foundation. However, in most historic societies we actually find gradations of dependence that configure enslavement, mastership and freedom.

The theorizations of manumission have often centered the wishes, concerns and agency of the slave masters. Historians have sought to theorize the motivations of the masters to free some of the enslaved as a deliberate way to keep the majority of the enslaved population in bondage (Klooster 1994; Kleijwegt 2006; Blackburn 2009: 12; Patterson 2009: 18; Fede 2011;

Ryden 2018). A compelling line of reasoning about the nature of manumission in the Atlantic world has been that manumission was used as an incentive for slaves to remain obedient while striving for their release, and that the release from slavery resulted in a continuation of the subservient status of former slaves after manumission. There are plenty of examples of this dynamic: self-purchase that provided the owners with loyal workers who saved money to pay for their replacement or *plantocratic cooptation*, that is to say, owners amended their small numbers by manumitting people into their social circle (Patterson 2009: 24). Manumission, according to these scholars, was primarily a release valve that helped to ease the pressures of a slave society, either by ensuring the loyalty of the enslaved or by strengthening the social base of the slave holding elite.

Scholars have often limited themselves to asking if manumission was a disruption of the bond between master and slave, or if it entailed a continuation of the master's power. Particularly in the Atlantic world and its racialized slavery regimes, manumission led to an erosion of the slave system. This erosion was not the result of a premeditated plan, but families and kin groups are documented as having made impressive efforts to manumit their members (Brana-Shute 2009; Neslo 2015; Libby and Dantas 2020). The size of the community of former slaves is understood to be a major factor in the erosion of slavery because the community of former slaves had a natural inclination towards spreading their newfound freedom. More recently, interest has grown in the process of manumission as an act of resistance, or at least as the outcome of a slave-directed action towards freedom. Self-purchase and filing for freedom papers are two of those methods. In her article "Affective Debts," Adriana Chira (2018) has argued that some forms of Cuban manumission agreements can be interpreted as a way to monetize the emotional and affective labor that the enslaved had performed before manumission. By centering the manumitted in the manumission process we gain valuable new insights.

Building on this historiographical trend, we have centered enslaved/manumitted lifeways in studying manumission. We have done this by tracing the connections that developed during the process of manumission and life after slavery in the emblematic slave society of colonial Suriname. We distinguish two types of connections: dependencies and relationships. Relationships are reciprocal, while dependence is one-sided. By making this distinction we can see how manumission resulted in both reciprocal as well as more strictly hierarchical connections. This distinction therefore enables us to analyze the power dynamics in the lives of the formerly enslaved. Doing this allows us to see to what extent manumission changed the hierarchical position of people in society, answering the question if manumission

mattered at all while also affording us a glimpse at the structure of society beyond the clichés of “Atlantic Slavery” recently addressed in this journal (Zuñiga 2023; Ekama 2020).

The site of our study is one of the most emblematic slave societies of the modern era. Suriname had been part of the Dutch colonial empire since the seventeenth century and was its most important plantation colony. Internationally it shared many characteristics with places such as Jamaica, Saint Domingue and plantation areas in Brazil. By 1742 there were approximately 500 plantations where mostly sugar, coffee and some cacao and cotton were cultivated. Mid-eighteenth century the colony produced about twenty per cent of the coffee on the world market. Life on the plantations was incredibly hard, resulting in high mortality among the enslaved population. Despite the rates of manumissions being below one percent, the free population expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and lived almost exclusively in the colony’s urban center, Paramaribo (Van der Voort 1973; Van Stipriaan 1993; Fatah-Black 2018). The literature points to the years between 1760 and 1790 as the time when the manumission rate increased and a community of freedmen was founded (Brana-Shute 2009, Fatah-Black 2020).

This study uses documentary evidence from various archives to trace the connections forged by freed people. The main archive consulted for this study is the archive of the Governing Council of Suriname, which holds the manumission requests and the decisions made in their regard. We furthermore used notarial documents, including last wills and testaments that offer further background on the manumission process and other information regarding affective relationships and formal obligations.¹ Manumission cases and last wills sometimes resulted in legal conflicts, which we have traced in the archives of the colonial authorities and the courts. The data from the manumission requests for the period between 1760 and 1790 was collected by Camilla de Koning (2022) and entered into a database. The register of last wills and estate inventories provide us with a deeper understanding of the process of manumitting: showing how manumitted individuals perceived their relationships with their former owners and with those who remained enslaved.²

Our findings show that while manumission requests indeed functioned to regulate or negate the master-slave relationship, they also resulted in various new relationships. As

¹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie en voorgangers, in Suriname, 1669-1828; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, Notariële archieven van Suriname, 1699-1828; NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie; NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.01, Gouvernementssecretarie der Kolonie Suriname, 1722-1828; NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, Sociëteit van Suriname; NL-SAA, Notariële Archieven Amsterdam; NL-LdnRAL, 0501A, Akten van cautie, indemniteit of readmissie personen die zich willen vestigen, Leiden.

² We thank Eline Rademakers for her help with locating some of the inventories used in this research.

mentioned, manumission was not a moment, but a process, and it was not a bilateral, but a multilateral one. This meant that more than monetizing and therewith closing ties, the manumission contracts created new obligations between and among people. These new ties were contractual, in cases where debts were incurred, but were clearly also affective. As other research has shown, kinship was often at the core of the manumission process. However, we also found that the post-slavery networks of the manumitted went beyond the bonds of kinship.

2. Manumitters and Manumitted

There were several different processes and institutional methods through which enslaved people could be manumitted in Suriname: *post-mortem*, *inter vivos*, military, and self-purchase. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, *post-mortem* manumissions, i.e. slaveholders expressing their wish to manumit someone after their deaths through last wills, were common in Suriname. Through last wills, slaveholders ordered their chosen executors of their wills to petition the Council for the freedom papers of the enslaved they wished to manumit after their deaths. In this sense, the slaveholders had no involvement in the act of manumission as they had delegated the process to others. For the enslaved people involved, *post-mortem* manumission was precarious as it not only required them to maintain their relationship with the slaveholder until the latter's death—for which they sometimes had to wait several years—but it also depended on the willingness of the executors and heirs to manumit them. If the executors refused to hand in a request for freedom papers, the enslaved in question would remain enslaved, even though their former owners had promised them otherwise. There are examples of enslaved people taking matters into their own hands and petitioning the Governing Council themselves to claim their freedom papers, but this required several means that most of the enslaved did not possess: literacy (writing a manumission request), knowledge of the manumission process (where to send the request), financial means (paying fees and proving that they could provide for themselves), or knowing people who were willing to help them.

Other slaveholders chose to manumit enslaved people while still alive themselves. This is referred to as *inter vivos* manumission. In such cases, the slaveholders petitioned the Council for the freedom papers and thus were not only involved in the process *before* the manumission, but also *during* and *after* the manumission of the manumitted. In *inter vivos* manumission the dependent relationship continued. For example: a manumitter sometimes provided the manumitted with housing. The relationship could also be continued on the initiative of the manumitted who often elected their manumitter as his/her universal heir in their will.

The state became a prominent manumitter late in the eighteenth century. After a series of attacks by Maroons in 1772, the Governing Council recruited an army of around 300 enslaved men. These men were manumitted at the end of their service and received plots of land as well (Vrij 1998; Muntjewerf 2021). They were arguably in a different relationship with their former enslavers. They did not procure loans to pay for their freedom. They did however form bonds with the military establishment and with those with whom they served (Fatah-Black 2018). The agency of the manumittee is most obvious in the case of self-purchase, a practice that was found across the Americas, mostly in cities. In Paramaribo, enslaved people were sometimes hired out and could be allowed to keep some of their earnings. They could also receive small sums for special tasks or earn money that circulated among the enslaved. After several years of saving, some of them were able to buy themselves free from their owners. Related to this is the purchasing of enslaved people from others in order to free them later. The motivations for this could vary but were often related to kinship or arrangements for providing care or services (Negrón 2022).

3. Shaping Relationships through Manumission: Formal and Informal Conditions

Manumission agreements and last wills contained varying clauses regulating the post-manumission relationship between formerly enslaved, former master and third parties (executors and guarantors). These agreements could be obligations of the formerly enslaved to the owner, like taking care of elderly people or the obligation to continue to live in a household or on a plantation. The obligations could also be allowances to be paid by the former owner. In manumission agreements we find annual payments, usufruct of property (including enslaved people), housing and slaves. This is also found in last wills, where it commonly includes ownership of beds, silverware, textiles, jewelry, land, housing and slaves.

Legally, manumission could only take place with the assurance of the owner that the manumittee would be able to earn a living.³ Without a trade or occupation, manumittees were assumed to become dependent on poor relief. In 1760, the colonial government regulated that manumission requests would only be approved if they clearly stated how the manumittees would provide for themselves or if a sufficient amount of bail was posted for them.⁴ In the margins of manumission requests dating from after 1760 we find statements as to whether or not this condition had been met. By insisting on guarantees for the self-sufficiency of the former

³ SCHMIDT & LEE 1973: 411. Nr. 350.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 690. Nr. 573.

slaves, the colonial government created a necessity for the involvement of more people in the manumission process.

Bail or guaranteeing someone's livelihood took three forms in the manumission requests in Suriname. First, the trade or skill of the manumittee was stated. Acquiring a skill often involved a trajectory involving training by fellow slaves or free artisans. The Council then decided if there was sufficient proof that the manumittee was able to earn their own living. Second, the manumitter could bestow a sum of money and/or property that would ensure the financial stability of the manumittee. The third type of request was that, someone could act as a guarantor. This could be the former owner of the manumittee, their *straatvoogd* (temporary legal guardian), or another third party.⁵ Exact agreements on what the position of guarantor entailed are not included in the historical records and the legislation did not specify a financial minimum of bail. This implies that informal factors, such as the reputation of the manumitter, played a part in the Council decision. The guarantor was charged with the financial stability of another and in some cases these manumittees were not able to earn their own money. A variety of dependencies were created as a result of these conditions and the process of manumission itself (De Koning 2022).

It was not unheard of that the same person stood as guarantor for several people at a time. Although the guarantor agreement was a lengthy financial agreement that could span a lifetime, these relationships seem to be rooted in affective relationships and a wider community network, rather than kinship. In contrast, bequeathing manumittees money and/or property was often done when there were kinship ties between manumitted and manumitter. The presence of guarantors in many manumission requests after 1760 and the importance and longevity of the guarantor-manumittee relationship are a clear indication that relationships other than that between the manumitter and manumittee were at play and that these were established during the manumission process. The relationship between guarantor and manumittee developed on the basis of providing financial security, property, money and care in the post-slavery community.

What should be noted is that not all relations that were created in the process of manumission were benevolent. A lasting connection by living on a plot of land or in a house that was the property of former masters or being dependent on their financial aid was not always the desired situation. Through the manumission requests and following documents such as last

⁵ *Straatvoogden* acted on behalf of a manumittee when their owner was not able or willing to approach the court for them to procure their letters of freedom. *Straatvoogden* represented manumittees as the enslaved were not recognized as legal persons, after procuring the manumission their role as legal representative was ended.

wills, we see a group of free(d) people distancing themselves from their former owner, plantation, or other representatives of their enslaved lives (Fatah-Black 2020; Negrón 2022). The money or property they received can therefore be seen as a divisive transaction, compensation for their previous (emotional) labour that enabled manumission. Yet another dependency lies within the transferring of property and money: without it free(d) people had no opportunity for social mobility and emancipation. The principle of gathering property and financial stability by manumittedes therefore builds on a paradox: to emancipate themselves from the plantocracy, they first had to rely on them for the ‘starting’ means to do so. The networks featured in the remainder of this article will show multiple sides of the connections that were formed through and after manumission.

4. Modeling the Shape of Network(s)

Table 1 offers a fresh conceptualization of the relationships and dependencies created through and after manumission by presenting a correlation between the types of manumission and the types of connections that were continued and/or created in the process. The types of manumission are ranged from least to most slave agency in this table. The circumstances of the manumissions led to new relationships and dependencies. Table 1 therefore does not speak of networks, but of types of networks. To determine the types of connections we give a relative weight of the separate components present in each network: property, enslaved or free(d) kin, skill/trade, and religion. The origins of these components are often already visible in the motivation of a manumission, as explained in the previous section. These origins represent the point from which a newly manumitted person could shape and solidify their position (and that of their kin) in free society by engaging in various relationships and engaging in dependencies. These components largely instigated manumission and shaped the dependencies that were maintained and created in freedom.

Dependencies in this context are the hierarchical connections in a wider social network, through which the manumitted were able to navigate society. The criteria of the five types of networks are as follows. Property relates to the matter in which the manumitted is bestowed property, registered property, and/or passed on property. Enslaved or free(d) kin refers to the presence of such persons at the moment of manumission and afterwards. Skill/trade reflects the abilities the manumitted possessed upon manumission or gained after the fact, and which positively impacted their financial chances and well-being. Finally, religion is a more complex component. The access to religion before manumission was rare, and therefore significant. Being baptized, especially in the Christian religion, granted a (potential) manumitted person a

certain moral and legal protection, as fellow Christians could not be enslaved. Additionally, the network of coreligionists was extensive and influential in Paramaribo society.

In table 1 the indications of + and - represent the correlations between enslaved-agency in manumission and type of social network after slavery, based on an analysis of 392 manumissions in Paramaribo between 1760 and 1795 (according to the database in De Koning 2022). By covering four different types of manumissions in this article through the case studies of four manumitted individuals: Hazard, Waij Waij, Jan Jacob, and Colinette, this framework shows conceptual benefit of exploring manumissions and lifeways from the perspective of enslaved and free(d) agency.

As the number of manumissions increased throughout the eighteenth century (Brana-Schute 2009), existing and new relationships and dependencies were transformed into an interconnected community of both descendants of the enslaved and European colonists living in Paramaribo. The four cases selected for this analysis are based on a wide range of primary sources, spanning the eighteenth century. Although we initially thought of these as individual cases and networks, manumission-based connections appear to have resulted in links between all cases. This finding offers further food for thought regarding the structure of this society and possibly the bias in the documentary evidence.

Table 1. Model of correlation between slave-agency in manumission and type of social network after slavery

TYPES OF MANUMISSION	Types of Networks				
	Property	Enslaved Kin	Free(d) Kin	Skill/Trade	Religion
<i>POST-MORTEM</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>INTER VIVOS</i>					
a. KINSHIP /CONCUBINAGE	+	+	+	-	-
b. SERVICE				+	+
SELF-PURCHASE			+	+	

Hazard or Philip Hazard van Pichot

Hazard (the free Philip Hazard van Pichot) was manumitted on 8 August 1764 through the will of his owner Samuel Paul Pichot, a prominent planter and council member.⁶ In his last will and testament, Pichot expressed his wish to manumit Hazard, his aide/caretaker (*oppasser*), who had served him for many years, and to bequeath him the sum of 200 guilders.⁷ In the years that followed his manumission, Hazard frequently appeared at the notary's office to draw up new wills for himself. The way he changed his will over time provides insight into his social life as a freedman.

After his manumission, Hazard clearly maintained close ties with the family of his former enslaver Samuel Paul Pichot after the latter's death in 1763. In his various wills, Hazard frequently elected the Pichots as his universal heirs. Hazard's manumission thus had not ended the relationship between him and his former owner Pichot nor the latter's family. Moreover, the fact that Hazard frequently elected Pichot's heirs as his executors attests to Hazard's trust in them to carry out the wishes in his last will and testament and to provide for his loved ones.

What his will further emphasizes is how Hazard tried to provide for his own family, who had remained enslaved. He mentioned his four enslaved children conceived with the enslaved woman Patres: namely, Chocolaad, Saratje, Welkom, and Santje. To Patres and his children, he bequeathed several of his belongings. In one of his wills from 1780, Hazard urged his executors to buy Chocolaad and Santje, after which the executors were to petition for these two children's freedom papers. He further elected them as his universal heirs.⁸ While it is unclear what happened to Saratje, Welkom, and Santje, Hazard was in the end able to buy and manumit his son Chocolaad by himself. In the manumission request from 1790, Hazard requested the freedom papers for Chocolaat, now a carpenter, under the condition that Chocolaad would take care of him in his "very old age" until his death, thus creating a new kind of dependency (or indebtedness) between the two.⁹

Hazard's last will and testament also shows how he created complex new dependencies with others, that is, people of different social strata with whom he probably had no previous relationships. These included other free(d) people in the community, for example, his neighbor, the free woman Cornelia or Neebie van Enkhuijsen. To Cornelia, Hazard bequeathed some of

⁶ National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague, (hereafter NL-HaNA), 1.05.10.02, Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie en voorgangers, in Suriname, 1669-1828, inv. nr. 392, fo. 125, 8 June 1764.

⁷ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, Notariële archieven van Suriname, 1699-1828, inv. nr. 32, fo. 369, 28 June 1763.

⁸ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 44, fo. 133, 13 September 1780.

⁹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 449, fo. 16, 21 December 1790.

his money; in one of his wills, he even elected her as his universal heir.¹⁰ Yet, whereas Hazard wished to bequeath some of his belongings to his neighbor Cornelia, the opposite was not the case. Cornelia's last will shows that she was well off, but there is no mention of Hazard (Negrón 2022).¹¹

Other examples of new connections in Hazard's network are the free men Gijsbert and Frans Nicolaas van der West, previously owned by Volkert Saffin. Hazard bequeathed to each of them the sum of 25 guilders in 1784.¹² Hazard also created a new relationship with Saffin as he elected him the guardian of his children in 1780.¹³ These connections increased the weight of the owner's influence in Hazard's network.

At some point, Hazard became a slaveholder himself: he not only owned his son Chocolaat—possibly with the sole purpose of freeing him—but also an enslaved man called Avantuur, a painter, who was manumitted along with Chocolaat in 1790. Avantuur's manumission had the same conditions applied as for his son Chocolaat: caring for Hazard until his death.¹⁴ The significant role that Avantuur fulfilled in Hazard's life becomes clear in his last will and testament dated 1787. He intended to grant Avantuur his letters of freedom, his clothing, and arrange for him to live out his life on Hazard's property in the *Nieuwe Keijzerstraat*. After Avantuur's death, the property was to go on to Daniel Pichot, Samuel Paul Pichot's son. Hazard's bequest for Avantuur reflects the importance of home and usufruct, but also creates a connection between the formerly enslaved Avantuur and the Pichot family based on their relationship with Hazard. Hazard might not have expected to be able to free both Chocolaat and Avantuur before his death, but the ability to do so reflects that Chocolaat and Avantuur were deemed equally deserving of their freedom. This indicates that manumission goes beyond the traditional definition of kinship and extends into other relationships and dependencies. In this case, we note the importance of granting property in the building of networks.

That Hazard drew up several wills during his lifetime as a freedman is striking. The series of wills also demonstrate the relative flexibility of some of the connections formed after manumissions, as well as the rigidity of others. It is well to note that while the presence of free(d) people and Hazard's kin fluctuated throughout his wills, only the presence of the Pichot

¹⁰ See for example: NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 44, fo. 127, 11 September 1780; 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 44, fo. 133, 13 September 1780.

¹¹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 46, fo. 188, 26 September 1781.

¹² NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 51, fo. 26, 15 April 1784.

¹³ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 44, fo. 133, 13 September 1780.

¹⁴ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 449, fo. 16, 21 December 1790.

family remained constant. Through his wills, Hazard tried to build a legacy: he considerably divided his belongings among those he loved and/or to whom he was indebted. The subsequent wills, sometimes separated by merely two days, reflect events in Hazard’s life that moved him to include or exclude people from his last wills.

Table 2. Model of correlation between slave-agency in *post-mortem* manumission and type of social network after slavery: Hazard

TYPES OF MANUMISSION	Types of Networks				
	Property	Enslaved Kin	Free(d) Kin	Skill/Trade	Religion
<i>POST-MORTEM</i>	+	+	-	-	-

Waij Waij or Mandro/Madelon van van den Balk

Enslaved women who had children by their owner or by free white overseers were in a dangerous position, given their physical closeness to (often drunk and violent) men who wielded an extreme amount of power over them (Fatah-Black 2018). However, their closeness to the owner or lower ranking overseers also meant that they were more likely to be manumitted than others on the plantations or in households (Brana-Shute 2009).

Waij Waij, also called Mandro or Ma(n)delon van van de Balk, was manumitted *inter vivos* (while her owner was still alive). She was most likely born in West Africa early in the 1730s and the stated reason for the manumission was her loyal service.¹⁵ However, her manumission and the developments afterwards suggest a more complex process of a type that resembles that of other women in her position.

At first glance, it seems as if Waij Waij’s manumission process and the fate of her kin group seem to be almost completely shaped by the interests and wishes of their former owner. Waij Waij and her children were enslaved on the Des Tombesburg plantation along the river Cottica, colloquially still known as Nieuw Accaribo despite a name change in 1760. In 1766, Waij Waij and two of her children, Jacoba and Jan (both classified as mulatto), were manumitted by Pieter van den Balk after he had purchased them from the plantation.¹⁶ Her four other children remained enslaved at Des Tombesburg. Waij Waij’s children Jacoba (c. 1757) and Jan were integrated into the Van den Balk family after their manumission. Their father was not the family’s manumitter Pieter, but his brother Lammert van den Balk (1737-1775). Days

¹⁵ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 396, fo.179, 12 May 1766.

¹⁶ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 396, fo.179, 12 May 1766.

after their manumission in May 1766, the two were sent to Amsterdam and were raised by their paternal grandmother, the mother of both Pieter and Lammert van den Balk, Jeannetie van Dijk.¹⁷ Jan presumably enlisted with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1779 and died on his second voyage a year later. Jacoba married Anthonie Anthonisz Kappel in 1789 and, in 1807, they moved to Leiden.¹⁸ Other than being their mother, Waij Waij seems to have had little influence over the lives of her two children. The extent of the dependent relationship between Waij Waij, her children and the Van den Balk family is hard to define and therefore remains unclear.¹⁹

Similar to Hazard, Waij Waij appealed to the notary's office to procure the freedom of her children and secure her wealth. Between 1767 and 1802, Waij Waij drew up at least five wills. In 1767, Waij Waij elected Pieter van den Balk as her universal heir, clearly maintaining the dependency on her former owner.²⁰ Remarkably, it is only from her later wills that we learn that Jacoba and Jan were not Waij Waij's only children. Like many women in similar positions, Waij Waij also had children with enslaved men. Her other children and grandchildren were Trompé, Hendrik, Amerentie (with her children Jansie, Flip, Madelijjn, and Jan Willem, whose father was Charles Weitzel) and Amimba (with her children Samuel and Johannes, whose father was Philip Samuel Hanssen) had remained enslaved, but it was Waij Waij's intention to free them. In her last will and testament from 1783, Waij Waij requested the executors to either sell all of her belongings and use the revenue to purchase her enslaved (grand)children, or if they were already in her ownership, request their freedom papers.²¹ Waij Waij was able to leverage her acquired rights and property to free her enslaved kin, even if it took her several years to really get out from under the control of her former owner and his family.

Amarentie and her four children were bought from Van den Balk by their father Weitzel and manumitted in 1789.²² Amimba and her two children were manumitted that same year by

¹⁷ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 38, fo. 128, 10 March 1775.

¹⁸ NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 6673, fo. 101, Jan van den Balk; NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 6699, fo. 91; NL-SAA, 5001, inv. nr. 633, 16 January 1789; Stadsarchief Leiden (hereafter NL-LdnRAL, 0501A, Akten van cautie, indemniteit of readmissie personen die zich willen vestigen, inv. nr. 6318, 23 June 1807; "Mulat Jan van P. van den Balk" in Dataset *Scheepsregisters* by John de Bye.

<<http://www.johndebye.com/scheepsregisters/schip.htm>> (last visited on 29 May 2022). This information was extracted by R.A.J. van Lier from NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.01, inv. nrs. 1–12.

¹⁹ A notarized deposition from 1795 reveals that Jacoba and her husband had received a loan of 3,000 guilders from one of their relatives, Matthijs van den Balk. NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 17731, deed 4, 6 January 1795.

²⁰ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 36, fo. 13, 6 January 1767.

²¹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 49, fo. 265, 27 February 1783.

²² NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 446, fo. 46, 21 August 1789.

Waij Waij and a year later Trompé and Hendrik also received their freedom papers.²³ From the position of the owner, Waij Waij's wish to free her kin might look like a profitable enterprise. Centering on Waij Waij and her kin, we see a series of life choices and a subsequent network that was importantly shaped by the property she was able to acquire and influenced by her kin (in this case children and grandchildren) who were both enslaved and freed.

Table 3. Model of correlation between slave-agency in *inter vivos* kinship/concubinage manumission and type of social network after slavery: Waij Waij

TYPES OF MANUMISSION	Types of Networks				
	Property	Enslaved Kin	Free(d) Kin	Skill / Trade	Religion
<i>INTER VIVOS</i>: KINSHIP/ CONCUBINAGE	+	+	+	-	-

Jan Jacob van Paramaribo

The manumitted Jan Jacob van Paramaribo had clearly discernible agency in shaping connections after slavery. His manumission was motivated by loyal service and took on its specific form as a result of his religious network and kinship ties. Jan Jacob van Paramaribo was manumitted by the directors of the Suriname Company (*Sociëteit van Suriname*, SvS, the institution that governed the colony from Amsterdam) in 1747, a couple months after he was baptized by the Reformed Church of Paramaribo.²⁴ He was born around 1722, named Benjamin, and spent his youth as a company slave.²⁵ From at least 1728, Benjamin worked at the company mills until he started working at the offices of the colonial government as a cook.²⁶ He also learned to read and write and received a Christian education in preparation of his baptism. He was baptized while still enslaved and this paved his way towards manumission. Once manumitted, religion continued to play a big part in the network Jan Jacob built (Fatah-Black 2018: 147-148). After his manumission Jan Jacob remained in the service of the SvS and lived on the premises of the colonial government (Vrij 2002).

²³ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 447, fo. 13, 14 December 1789; NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 449, fo. 11, 27 December 1790.

²⁴ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.01, inv. nr. 4, 31 May 1747; NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 98, fo. 121, 2 November 1747.

²⁵ NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 255, fo. 984, 6 December 1728.

²⁶ NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 261, fo. 160, 9 February 1734; NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 269, fo. 76, 1 January 1742.

Jan Jacob's manumission trajectory resembles that of a manumitted named *de vrije* (the free) Cornelis van Maerssen, but not coincidentally. Cornelis received his letters of freedom after his baptism and several pleas to the directors of the SvS in 1740 (Beeldsnijder 1991). Just like Jan Jacob, Cornelis was a trained cook and it is likely that Cornelis was Jan Jacob's father. In his first testament, dated 1764, Jan Jacob points to Cornelis, his equal in life, trade and religion to be his universal heir, along with the unknown Angelica de Lilien.²⁷ Just as Hazard and Waij Waij, Jan Jacob van Paramaribo was a frequent visitor to the notary and four wills drafted over the years 1764-1785 grant us a view of his life and priorities before his death in 1791 (Vrij 2002; Ben-Ur 2015; Fatah-Black 2018).

Jan Jacob's network was built from three important sources: the government (his former owner), the church and kinship. After his manumission, Jan Jacob maintained his earlier relationships, but more importantly created new connections in which his former owner, religion and kinship increasingly overlapped. The spacing of Jan Jacob's testaments seems to follow life events he saw as influential to his estate, just as in Hazard's case. We can deduce these events according to the changes perceivable in the testaments. The earliest set of wills from 1764 and 1766 reveal Jan Jacob's focus on elders in his life. Cornelis van Maerssen died in 1766 and his focus then shifted to his own family and, in particular, to his younger children. Only in his last will and testament did Jan Jacob renege on his earlier clauses that bequeathed part of his inheritance to the colonial government.²⁸

The second set of wills dated 1780 and 1784 reveal the development that had taken place in Jan Jacob's life.²⁹ He had moved away from the premises of the colonial government and procured his own house in the (Rust en) Vreedestraat in Paramaribo. It seems that all his kinship ties with company slaves had revolved around purchasing and manumitting those close and important to him. Religion had played a key role in his manumission, and was also deeply entwined with his family life. He insisted on the baptism and Christian education of all close members of his family and may himself have seen this as a requisite for manumission. In 1781, Jan Jacob manumitted his sister Brinkina, baptized as Christina, after purchasing her from the colonial government in 1780. As Jan Jacob was born around 1722 and a Brinkina is not mentioned in the inventory of the slaves owned by the government, it is unclear if he saw Christina as a sister in Christ, or if she was his blood relative. After her manumission Jan Jacob

²⁷ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 33, fo. 241, 3 May 1764.

²⁸ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 33, fo. 241, 3 mei 1764; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 35, fo. 452, 4 November 1766.

²⁹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 44, fo. 37, 1 augustus 1780; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 54, fo. 73, 13 August 1785.

depends on her to carry on his ambitions. From 1780 on, Christina was Jan Jacob's universal heir and executor of his will, which included the care for his underage children: Daniel and Esther.

Jan Jacob's 1780 testament reveals more kinship ties, as well as the way in which he used religion to cement the nascent community. His brother Willem was to inherit all his clothes and jewelry. His still enslaved children Daniel and Ester were to receive their letters of freedom, along with their mother Martha, and his house at the Vreedestraat. Aside from this he grants partial guardianship of his estate and children to the free Andriesa Henrietta Borghart. She is his presumed partner, who was once also in the service of the colonial government but was baptized and manumitted by George Zielhelder in 1780. In addition, Jan Jacob mentions Dorothea van Paramaribo and in his 1785 testament, Joost van Nieuw Amsterdam, both Christian members of the free colored and black community in Paramaribo. Jan Jacob meant to leave his property to those connected to him by service and religion and continued that connection by pressing the importance of the baptism of his children.³⁰

Before his death in 1791 Jan Jacob had already fulfilled some of the wishes he expressed in his will, which he had been able to do with the help of his kin. In 1789, he manumitted his daughter Esther van Paramaribo, although his son Daniel seems to have died before this.³¹ In 1795, Martha (Esther and Daniel's mother) was manumitted by Jan Jacob's sister Christina, who stated that she had bought Martha from her brother under the condition of freeing her after Jan Jacob's death.³² Distinctive in Jan Jacob's case is the tightly knit nature of his network that shows multiple overlapping structures of dependence and relationships.

This tightly knit network also created sharp boundaries between those inside and outside of his care. Jan Jacob's (half)-siblings were treated decidedly differently than his children. In 1766, Cornelis van Maerssen named Jan Jacob his executor and guardian of his children in his testament. The single most important task Jan Jacob was entrusted with by Cornelis was to *immediately*, upon his death, procure the letters of freedom for his sons named Johannes Joseph and Nicodemus van Maersson. The boys were to become his universal heirs and were required to ensure that their mother Justina be manumitted before they had both died.³³ A conflict brought to light in 1794 by Joost van Nieuw Amsterdam (Jan Jacob's own executor) reveals that Jan Jacob had never manumitted his sons. Both Johannes Joseph and

³⁰ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 54, fo. 73, 13 August 1785.

³¹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 445, fo. 41, 9 February 1789.

³² NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 460, fo. 24, 2 June 1796.

³³ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 35, fo. 488, 5 November 1766.

Nicodemus had continued to live in slavery for thirty years. Joost had only discovered this in his task as executor of Jan Jacob's will, and out of *menschlievendheid* had taken it upon himself to manumit the sons.³⁴ This case reveals the precarious nature of both manumission and connections. Cornelis as a father, a manumitted company slave, and co-religionist, for all intents and purposes, had counted on kin, Jan Jacob, to carry out his wishes. But Jan Jacob had not done so. After Cornelis' death he had put his own interests and those who depended on him before his (half) siblings or at least more distant kin.

Up until his death, Jan Jacob's network was less flexible and more stable than Hazard's, for example. His service and kin-based network resembles more that of Waij Waij, securing the safekeeping, both financially and religiously of those depending on him, without him depending heavily on others or taking this into account.

Table 4. Model of correlation between slave-agency in *inter vivos* service manumission and type of social network after slavery: Jan Jacob

TYPES OF MANUMISSION	Types of Networks				
	Property	Enslaved Kin	Free(d) Kin	Skill/Trade	Religion
<i>INTER VIVOS: SERVICE</i>				+	+

Colinette van De Cacheleu

The manumission of Colinette, a woman categorised as mulatto and presumably born in the colony, demonstrates the particular way in which networks of dependence were shaped when they involved self-purchased manumissions. Colinette was born on the Egmond (Commewijne River) plantation between 1751 (when she does not yet appear in the plantation inventory) and 1755, in which year we find her as an enslaved, Creole girl valued at 100 guilders (table 5).³⁵

Table 5. The enslavement of Colinette van De Cacheleu on the Egmond plantation, 1755-1775.

Year of Inventory	Age Group	Administrative Categorization of	Value (in guilders)
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³⁴ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 456, fo. 53, 8 June 1794.

³⁵ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 691, fo. 159, 10 April 1751; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 198, fo. 224, 20 September 1755.

		Race and Function	
1755	Girls	Creole	100
1764	Girls	Mulatto	400
1766	Girls	Creole, mulatto	-
1770	Women	Mulatto	1,200
1775	Women	Creole, mulatto, housemaid	-

Source: *Nationaal Archief*, National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague³⁶

The inventory of 1775 shows that Colinette worked in the household, often characterized by historians as a privileged position as opposed to fieldworkers. Whereas proximity to the slaveholder also entailed other dangers, as with Waij Waij, it provided Colinette an opportunity to build a personal relationship with her owner, thereby increasing her chances of freedom.

The Egmond plantation changed owners several times during the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1785, Colinette's new owner Dirk Luden "donated" her to François de Cacheleu.³⁷ It was not uncommon that enslaved people were granted to another owner without payment being part of the transaction. De Cacheleu was no stranger to Colinette as he had previously been part owner of the plantation. Her donation seems to have been linked to a strategy to free her, perhaps in collaboration with Johannes de Bije (c.1761-1802), who posed as Colinette's *straatvoogd* (guardian) and assisted her in her manumission.

As continuous manumission led to the formation of a growing community of free(d) people of colour in Paramaribo, networks frequently latched into each other, as was the case with Johannes and Colinette as well. De Bije was a son of Mariana van de Bije (d. 1814), who was enslaved on the Paracabo (Pauluskreek) plantation, and planter and council member Pieter Hendrik de Bije (d. 1789). His grandmother, Jacoba, also lived at Paracabo.³⁸

³⁶ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 691, fo. 159, 10 April 1751; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 198, fo. 224, 20 September 1755; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 693, fo. 418, 9 October 1764; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 223, fo. 227, 15 February 1766; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 698, fo. 270, 8 February 1770; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, fo. 200, 15 April 1775.

³⁷ NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 15626, deed 551, 25 August 1785.

³⁸ The development of this family and their transition into freedom can be traced through the inventories of the plantation and the personal documents of the owner Ephraim Comans Scherping, who died in 1763. In 1763, Jacoba, an "old cook," Marianna "a seamstress," and a small mulatto boy Jan are named in the inventory of the plantation. In 1767, none of them appeared on the inventory of this plantation. Based on their manumission records we know that Pieter Hendrik de Bije bought the family from the estate of Scherping after his death. NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 32, fo. 285, 25 August 1763, NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 215, fo. 351, 8-20 September 1763, NL-HaNA, 1.05.03.01, inv. nr. 445, scan nr. 287, fo. 38, 23 February 1789.

Johannes most likely received his freedom papers through the Free Corps in the 1770s and made a career in the military. Perhaps he was stationed at Egmond plantation, where he met Colinette.³⁹ Johannes later became a copyist and eventually a clerk for the colonial government. It is from this position that Johannes became a frequent *straatvoogd* and manumitter. In the 1780s, Johannes not only manumitted his mother and grandmother, but also several others (De Koning, 2022).

In this network, Colinette was manumitted in 1790.⁴⁰ Five years prior, her son Jacques Lambertus, a *mestizo*, had already been manumitted by De Cacheleu. The boy's father must have been De Bijé, who was also present at his baptism in 1792.⁴¹ The two would later conceive another child, Johanna Maria de Bijé.⁴²

While Colinette bought her own freedom, her manumission was thus clearly kin-determined. It is no coincidence that Johannes, the father of her (future) children, posed as *straatvoogd*. In her last will and testament from 1800 she elected him executor of her estate, which was to be divided among the children she would have upon her death. She did not instruct Johannes to ensure the manumission of any enslaved individuals, suggesting that her whole family was already living in freedom.⁴³ What is striking, furthermore, is that neither Johannes nor Colinette affirmed their relationship with each other financially in their respective wills.

This confirms that self-purchased freedom led to smaller networks of relationships rather than dependencies. Often skilled laborers had a higher level of autonomy and thus greater agency in acquiring their freedom. Subsequently, they were less dependent on their former owners, as they were financially self-sufficient. Colinette distanced herself from her former owner and instead focused on her free(d) family. Furthermore, there are no signs that she intended to manumit any enslaved outside her family group.

Feelings of kinship were the main factor in determining whether old relationships were continued or not. People who only purchased their own freedom either had no (enslaved)

³⁹ The military or militias were also a factor in manumission, dependency and new relationships/antagonisms also between Maroons and the manumitted. The *Korps Vrije Negers* [Corps of the Free Negroes] was one of these "*vrijkorpsen*" in which manumitted fought for the colonial government against Maroons, whereas others included, in the 1770's, the *Lands Vrijkorps* [The Corps of Rangers], a militia of both people born in freedom and those who were manumitted and drafted to serve. Others included the *Korps Vrije Negers* (also known as *Korps Zwarte*), the Corps of the Black runaway slaves, the Corps of Red Berets, etc. For more on how these and other groups and networks came to form a "non-white elite" in Paramaribo, see NESLO (2015).

⁴⁰ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 447, fo. 139, 19 May 1790; NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 448, fo. 9, 25 May 1790.

⁴¹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv. nr. 437, fo. 6, 5 May 1785; NL-HaNA, "Suriname: Gereformeerden": Jacques Lambertus, 1 January 1792.

⁴² NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 77, fo. 13, 12 February 1800.

⁴³ NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 77, fo. 13, 12 February 1800.

relatives or did not have the funds to free them. Consequently, this meant that self-purchased freed people had no incentive to secure the manumission of other enslaved people or distribute their belongings. As a result, those who were manumitted by self-purchase either rarely appealed to the notary or remained vague in their wishes, like Colinette. Their autonomy and agency enabled them to distance themselves from dependence on the colonial elite.

Table 6. Model of correlation between enslaved-agency in self-purchased manumission and type of social network after slavery: Colinette

TYPES OF MANUMISSION	Types of Networks				
	Property	Enslaved Kin	Free(d) Kin	Skill/Trade	Religion
SELF-PURCHASE			+	+	

CONCLUSION

Theorization of the question ‘what manumission is’ has mainly dwelt on the motivations of the masters and only more recently on enslaved-agency within the process. As a result, the study of manumission has mostly revealed its impact on the master-slave relationship and the development of the community of freedmen and women. In this study we have taken a fresh look at manumission as a societal process by centering on the manumitted and their social networks. In so doing, we traced how manumission created new connections, including forms of dependence, not just between owners, the state, and the formerly enslaved, but also between the formerly enslaved and other members in society. Although kinship was important in determining connections, the manumitted developed ties beyond the inner familial circle. As our research shows, the process of manumission was important in shaping the networks after slavery, including the continuation or formation of forms of dependence.

By placing the manumitted at the center of a network we found that when a person or a kin group was manumitted, this unleashed a potential for new and diverse connections. This was the case for enslavers, enslaved, social climbers, money-lenders and entrepreneurs alike. Manumission crucially offered the opportunity to engage with people outside the dependent relationship with the former master. For the colonial government, manumission expanded the number of citizens with a category of people who were more limited in its franchise than the plantocracy. Taking into account that in urban environments, the beginnings of relationships and dependencies had already been developed to a certain extent under conditions of slavery,

they could only develop further after manumission. Modes of manumission were important in determining the post-manumission networks of individuals, and as a result also of kin groups and the beginnings of the community of freedmen.

This new view of manumission and its social effects calls for a reviewing of the structure of (urban) slave society by accounting for relationships and dependence. Connections were transformed, rather than disrupted by manumission. Moreover, the cases studied herein show that manumission did not obstruct the social linkages of freed people that were constructed pre-manumission. Instead, newly freed people maintained contact with former enslavers and enslaved while simultaneously creating new and sometimes hierarchical connections with others. The type of manumission correlates with enslaved agency and dictated the relationships of manumitted people after slavery. With the instrument of manumission and within the limits set by economic conditions and the colonial government, the manumitted were able to make meaningful life choices that transformed society profoundly by creating relationships and complex dependencies across boundaries of status and racial categorization.

Reflecting on the merit of our chosen methodology and its outcomes, we can surmise that increasing the dataset will reveal hitherto hidden structures in society. Making stricter distinctions between hierarchical dependencies and reciprocal relationships will possibly show clusters of connections tied around specific people in the social fabric. Holding this against racial classifications, religious identities and gender norms in society will possibly offer a critical new perspective on questions surrounding the workings of societal power in Suriname. How the multiple and increasing number of manumissions and accompanying transformations shaped society is not yet entirely clear. By continuing to trace the relationships and dependence in the networks of freed individuals further in using our manumitted-centered multi-archival methodology we are confident that we can arrive at fresh conceptualizations of the social structure of this emblematic Atlantic slave colony.

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