SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION

The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade

New Methods, Perspectives and Sources

Edited by Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, Karwan Fatah-Black

Amsterdam University Press

The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade

Slavery and Emancipation

This series contributes to breaking the mold of slavery studies by offering a platform for a wide range of historiographical approaches springing from a critical re-examination of primary sources. As the history of slavery and the legacy of its global abolition continue to fascinate scholars, this series takes as a starting point the idea that any understanding of slavery and its societal afterlife necessarily calls for an analysis of the distribution of historical power, as well as an acknowledgement of the fact that – while varying in scale and intensity – forms of enslavement can be found throughout human civilisation and across the globe.

As such, it pays close attention to the legacies of slavery, such as cultural production, cultures of remembrance and forms of exclusion, as well as the struggle for equality and emancipation. We welcome proposals that deal with topics such as, but are not exclusive to, enslaved lifeways, legal foundations, economies of slavery, abolition of slavery, representations, cultures of resistance, and emancipation.

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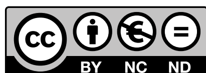

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Introduction: Sources Revisited and Perspectives Included

Karwan Fatah-Black, Camilla de Koning, Ramona Negrón, and Jessica den Oudsten

Abstract: This edited volume, *The Dutch Slave Trade. New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*, reexamines the historiography of the Dutch slave trade through innovative methodologies and underutilised primary sources. Traditionally, research has focused on the business practices of the MCC and WIC, often overlooking the lived experiences of the enslaved and the complexities of illegal trade and violence. The future of research in this field is promising, with Dutch archives offering new avenues for exploration beyond the traditional focus. This volume reveals the potential to uncover perspectives of enslaved people aboard slave ships, investigate unstudied areas like sexual violence, and examine the roles of Dutch nobility and elite in the trade. It also highlights emerging research on previously marginalised or overlooked groups, like the involvement of women in slave revolts, the activities of private traders and their families, and the experiences of captives in the African interior and coastal forts. By encouraging historians to engage with these rich sources, the editors aim to inspire new research that broadens our understanding of the diverse social and economic networks within the Dutch transatlantic slave trade, offering a more nuanced view of this history.

Keywords: Middle Passage Studies, Dutch slave trade, slave ship, methods, perspectives, sources

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History from the Crow's Nest

In 1934, the Surinamese author Anton de Kom offered a gripping description of the Dutch slave ship, capturing the contradiction between the imagined past of the age of sail and the reality of slave transportation:

> No spectacle matches that of the square-rigged three-master in full sail [...] we do not begrudge you your imagined seat in the crow's nest of that old ship [...] but we do wish to warn you [...] Up here you hear the cry of the albatross, the song of the sailors, and the crash of the waves. Down here you hear the cries of the slaves, the wails of a woman in labour and the crack of the whip coming down on the back of the blacks.[1]

With this passage De Kom pointed at the positive place that the Age of Sail held in the Dutch public imagination and how it glossed over the reality of the slave trade, a significant part of that history. Maritime hardship was certainly discussed by historians, but primarily when it concerned the crews of ships lost at sea. The hardships of the enslaved and the crews guarding them aboard slave ships were not part of the national narrative or its research agenda. By connecting a darker aspect of Dutch maritime life with clichés about Dutch history, De Kom was far ahead of his time. There had been virtually no reference to the history of the slave trade in the 120 years since the abolition of 1814. When the trade was abolished, its horrors were not a central concern to legislators; in fact, the decision to abolish came on a whim during negotiations for the Treaty of Vienna.[2] Different from the situation in Britain and France, the horrors of the trade had not been a rallying point of the Dutch abolitionist movement. After its sudden abolition, the memory of the slave trade vanished and became a silence in the historical consciousness of the Dutch.

This silence on the Dutch slave trade persisted despite authors like De Kom calling attention to it. In the twentieth century, scholarly investigations remained sparse. A pioneering work on the history of the Dutch slave trade was done by the Zeeland archivist Willem Unger in the 1950s. In the heavily damaged archives of Zeeland, he recovered and inventoried the records of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC).[3] The inventory made by

1 De Kom, *We Slaves of Suriname*, 60–1.

2 The convention of London of 1814 emphasised that the Dutch abolition was "spontaneously issued" by the sovereign.

3 Unger, *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse slavenhandel*.

Unger showed that the MCC had started out as a cooperation of Zeelandic merchants with a diverse portfolio, but that it had turned towards the slave trade in the mid-eighteenth century. Unger found that the archive held a treasure of information on the business practices of the company. By tracking the meticulously kept purchases during the slave ship voyages, the company records were used to calculate the profit margins of the company, and Unger found a downward trend in the economic success of the MCC. In the 1960s, the Dutch-Ghanian historian Albert van Dantzig provided an important overview of the Dutch involvement in the slave trade and the Dutch and British fortresses on the coast of Ghana.[4] With those studies, the groundwork was laid for a broader Atlantic historiography that included the slave trade. The sources produced by the Dutch West India Company were studied by Cornelis Goslinga who wrote an impressive collection of chapters on the Dutch transatlantic slave trade under the Dutch West India Company (WIC).[5]

These studies showed the wealth of material that was available in Dutch company archives, and specifically those of the MCC and WIC. There was a clear link to the work of Philip Curtin whose 1969 *The Atlantic Slave Trade. A Census* offered Dutch scholars a model for studying the trade with statistical methods. This model offered a way to compare findings between national histories and seemed to make it possible not only to tackle the basic question of the scale of the trade, but also do more intricate analysis regarding mortality on board and how this related to various parameters, such as point of departure, length of voyage, or size of ship. Interestingly, despite the gathering of numerical data, the analysis by Dutch scholars remained limited to an exploration of size and shape of the trade rather than the more complex analytical questions. Historians were striving to create overviews of the scale and profitability of the slave trade. The pioneering work of Unger, Van Dantzig, and Goslinga was followed by Johannes Postma who wrote the unrivalled *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, stretching across the WIC and private slave trading era in a spirit similar to that of Curtin.[6]

After this first exploration of the slave trading sources, more specific questions were asked regarding the functioning of the business side of the trade. Corrie Reinders Folmer van Prooijen spent thirty years working on her dissertation on the transition of the MCC from a regular shipping and

4 Van Dantzig, *Het Nederlandse aandeel in de slavenhandel*.

5 Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast*.

6 Johannes M. Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

trading company to a slave trading operation.[7] Her work created valuable overviews of the corporate aspects of the slave trade. Such business-oriented studies would prove to be typically Dutch, using both MCC and WIC sources. More than the WIC, the MCC was a peculiar company that lends itself to the business-oriented exploration of the slave trade. The main Dutch slave trading company had been the WIC, officially chartered by the States General in 1621 to unify the Atlantic strategy of the young Republic. Initially, the company considered the slave trade only as a strategically important supporting trade for building an Atlantic empire centred in Brazil. The collapse of Dutch power in Brazil led to a reorientation of the WIC to focus almost exclusively on the inter-imperial slave trade. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, the WIC supplied the Spanish Americas with enslaved labour within the framework of the *asiento de negros*.[8] The WIC archive is notoriously incomplete and the functioning of the *asiento* has long remained somewhat of a black box to Dutch scholars. Research by Alejandro García Montón, Ramona Negrón, and others, across various national archives, and including notarial deeds and correspondence in addition to Dutch company archives, is offering better insight into the *asiento* period of the WIC trade. It proved important to take not only the Dutch perspective, but also take non-Dutch, and specifically Spanish, perspectives and sources into account. The WIC archive does contain gems such as the full journal of the slave ship *Coninck Salomon*, which has been used as a crucial source for exploring the practice of the WIC slave trade. However, it is clear that other archival collections are needed to supplement what is left of the documents of the WIC. Many of the company directors contributed to family archives which contain minutes of board meetings and other informative documents. The States of Holland and the States General archives are also littered with traces of the history of the trade.

The study of plantation societies developed alongside that of the slave trade, with scholars sometimes switching between the two fields. Also in the study of slave societies, statistical methods were used to understand demographic and economic developments, especially after the 1974 study by Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman. However, in the 1970s the fields of slavery history and the history of the slave trade seem to have diverged. The maritime history of the slave trade became increasingly focussed on the

7 Reinders Folmer-van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*.

8 Scelle, *La traite négrière aux Indes de Castille*; García-Montón, *Genoese Entrepreneurship and the Asiento Slave Trade*; Antunes and Negrón, "The Dutch Republic and the Spanish Slave Trade".

business practice of the companies WIC and MCC and remained limited in its methodological approaches and debates, to such a degree that it could be deemed methodologically naïve. Meanwhile, the history of slave societies in Dutch colonies diversified. The maroons of Suriname, the social structure of the slave society of Curaçao, and the plantation economy and its linguistic and cultural peculiarities became the topic of different investigations. Why the history of the slave trade remained a somewhat isolated and business-oriented field is not readily explained. It is clear that the structure of the archives has something to do with this. While the WIC archive proved to be difficult to navigate and not well suited for studying the slave-trade in depth, the MCC archive also seems to have steered the researchers in the direction of business histories of the trade.

Departing from the Companies' Perspectives

After both the WIC and the MCC archives had gained UNESCO Memory of the World status in 2011, their digitisation quickly followed and so did historical research. The value of the early explorations of the historical material is undisputed and the digitisation has clearly added new possibilities. Over the course of time, however, the material produced its own myopia. The focus on the declining profits of the MCC gave historians the impression that the importance of the slave trade was declining throughout the eighteenth century, contrary to the growing importance of the trade internationally. In 2012, Matthias van Rossum and Karwan Fatah-Black argued that the 'company perspective' which has been dictated by the sources hindered macro-economic understandings the slave trade.[9] By departing from the profits and losses of one company, they argued that the gross profits of the trade were in fact rising, and reached a high point in the second half of the eighteenth century.[10]

Another important way in which historians departed from the company-centred history writing was by studying the scale of smuggling, illegality and

9 Van Rossum and Fatah-Black, "Wat is winst?".

10 A finding more in step with the general growth in the Atlantic system and its related economic activities in Europe. Pepijn Brandon and Ulbe Bosma assessed the importance of all Atlantic slave-based activities to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Dutch Republic during the second half of the eighteenth century. They concluded that in 1770, 5.2 per cent of the Dutch Republic and 10.36 per cent of the GDP of the wealthy province of Holland was based on Atlantic slavery. This meant that in the decades around 1770, around forty per cent of all economic growth of Holland can be traced back to slavery. Brandon and Bosma, "Slavery and the Dutch Economy".

inter-imperial connections. The importance of Curaçao as a slave entrepot was pointed out by other historians such as Wim Klooster.[11] In 2008 the study by Ruud Paesie of the smugglers who evaded the WIC monopoly showed that this evasion was significant; it also offered various new methodologies to employ sources outside the company archives. On the WIC side of the trade, similar corrections are being made. In a recent contribution, Cátia Antunes and Ramona Negrón demonstrate how, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Amsterdam merchants dealt with the limitations imposed by the WIC charter by supplying other empires with enslaved labour, most importantly the Spanish Americas.[12] Through Curaçao, and to a lesser extent Jamaica and Barbados, Amsterdam merchants laundered enslaved people and the silver that paid for them and thereby found a solution to the problem of illegality regarding the participation of foreigners in the Spanish Empire.

The combined focus on the WIC and MCC left the Amsterdam private slave trade to be an underexplored area, until Ramona Negrón and Jessica den Oudsten discovered the archival documents of a hitherto unknown firm of Amsterdam slave traders, Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt. The father and son Smitt turned out to be the largest private slave traders of the city, both in relative and absolute terms.[13] These new findings show that the business side of the historiography is still producing new and surprising results. The common thread in the new findings is that the institutional arrangements that produced the sources are no longer the departure point of investigations.

The institutional structures are contextualised historically, and the way that these institutions produced archives which perpetuate a sense of their own centrality is actively questioned. In part this questioning is the result of technological innovation. By being able to link data across nationally and institutionally organised archival collections, new patterns emerge.

Towards Dutch Middle Passage Studies

Several attempts have been made to heed the call by Anton de Kom to leave the crow's nest and change the perspective of slave trade studies.[14] In *Slavery*

11 Klooster, "Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade".

12 Antunes and Negrón, "The Dutch Republic and the Spanish Slave Trade".

13 Negrón and Den Oudsten, *De grootste slavenhandelaren van Amsterdam*.

14 Arguments in this section were presented in April 2021 in the Rijksmuseum in the lecture by Karwan Fatah-Black "Towards Dutch Middle Passage Studies".

at Sea Sowande' Mustakeem coined the term 'Middle Passage Studies' for research that takes on board the business-oriented findings, but asks new questions regarding the lives, experiences and perceptions of those who were enslaved on board the ships.[15] This research includes an attentiveness to health, environmental and gendered aspects of the trade in a way that is already visible in the passage quoted from Anton de Kom but has escaped scholarly investigations. Surinamese-Dutch historian Leo Balai used the WIC archives to write a biography of the slave ship *Leusden*, one of the largest WIC slave ships of the eighteenth century, and changed the perspective of the investigation.[16] The ship sailed ten times across the ocean and suffered extremely deadly disasters on two of its voyages. After Laurens Priester in the 1980s, Balai was among the first to investigate the life on board of these ships. He argued that the ship was akin to a total institution.[17]

These new approaches reveal that the material in the Dutch archives recorded more than just the business transactions and the perspective of the enslavers. Letters, ship logs and journals from captains, first mates, and surgeons have been handed down. It was to these sources that Henk den Heijer referred in his inaugural lecture in 2011. The new professor of maritime history urged researchers to further explore the possibilities of archives on the Dutch slave trade: a call to action that had been inspired by Den Heijer's own research in the MCC-archive, in which he found that the sources allowed researchers to analyse the distinctly Dutch experience of life and working on slave ships, and to no longer assume that the experience of those aboard was interchangeable with being trafficked by the British, the French or another nation.[18] He argued that the British and American historiography was based on biased abolitionist sources that exaggerated the violence on board of slave ships. In turn, he argued that the sources on Dutch ships revealed that this trade was 'business as usual' and that (sexual) violence only occurred rarely and was not condoned by the captain of the ship and the directors of the shipping companies. In this volume, various authors take up the challenge to use the sources available on the Dutch slave trade to better understand the life on board. However, they also show that the sources should be approached with care. Official correspondence that emphasises the regulated and peaceful nature of the trade in fact appears to hide an ingrained practice of extreme violence, even by the standards of the time.

15 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*.

16 Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*.

17 Priester, *De Nederlandse houding ten aanzien van de slavenhandel en slavernij*.

18 Den Heijer, "Het slavenschip".

New Data and New Perspectives

Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument that power produces historical silences, scholars are now consciously looking for the way in which archives were constructed, historiographies developed, and new questions could be asked.[19] Accordingly, the result of this volume is two-fold. On the one hand, the authors show how different approaches to historical research into the companies' archives allow for the inclusion of *other* perspectives on, and more in-depth knowledge of, the slave trade. New information regarding still understudied aspects of the slave trade is uncovered and histories are rewritten. On the other hand, recent digitisation projects facilitate the research in and combination of large archival collections, and thereby enable the creation of new datasets that can be used either to test old hypotheses or to present new conclusions on various aspects of the slave trade.

In the first part of this volume, Florian Herrendorf, Ben van Yperen and Philipp Huber show how the WIC and MCC archives offer new perspectives on the mechanisms behind the slave trade along the African coast. Herrendorf points to the versatility of the island of São Tomé and shows how it fulfilled an important role in the slave trade system during its occupation by the WIC in the 1640s. Using large sets of data, Huber tests the slave-gun cycle hypothesis. He explains how the trade in guns and gunpowder expanded in the eighteenth century and convincingly demonstrates that, aboard MCC ships, these military goods fulfilled more important roles than on British slave ships. Van Yperen's research on the slave trade on the return voyages of the company furthermore touches upon a very understudied aspect of the slave trade. Constructing a large dataset, Van Yperen shows how 5.6 per cent of the revenues made on the bilateral trade can be ascribed to the sale of enslaved people.[20]

In the second part of the volume, Camilla de Koning, Luc Meijboom, and Lucas Oosterwijk approach the archives with a new set of questions relating to the experiences of the enslaved during the Middle Passage. Inspired by the work of Sowande' Mustakeem, De Koning's analysis of the slave voyages of the ships *Zeemercuur* and *Geertruyda en Christina* provide new insights into the experiences of the enslaved.[21] She shows how, by reading between the lines, information on kinship ties between the enslaved can be extracted from administrative sources such as surgeons' journals and trade

19 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

20 See their chapters in this volume.

21 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*. See their epilogue in this volume.

books. Meijboom investigates the policy of the MCC with regards to slave revolts. Looking at the surprising number of slave insurrections on the ship *Philadelphia* under the command of captain Jan Menkenveld, he points to a correlation between ship captains and slave insurrections on slave ships. Oosterwijk relates the experience of the enslaved to the food provision (and lack thereof) on board of MCC ship *Middelburgs Welvaren*. Looking at how the food supply of slave ships was organised, he shows that the enslaved on board were malnourished, questioning the role of malnutrition in the slave trade. Approaching the MCC archives from the perspective of the enslaved, these authors refute the claims of Den Heijer and instead point to structural forms of violence on Dutch slave ships.

The last part of the volume questions conflict management and discourse in the slave trade. Matthias Lukkes examines the role of African mariners, so-called *bombas*, on Dutch slave ships. Combining several archival collections from companies and private traders, Lukkes points to the ambiguous and complex role of bombas in the Dutch slave trade. Michael Rowland argues that the MCC sources betray a complication of the human-product binary that is often used to describe the slave trade. He argues that by using linguistic strategies, captives were commodified and racialised, proving that the language in MCC sources is far from neutral. The contribution of Aviva Ben-Ur examines the period of illegal slave trade in Suriname after the colony came under British rule. She analyses the life and career of Christopher Edward Lefroy, a British Commissary Judge who was sent to Paramaribo in an effort to suppress the illegal slave trade. Ben-Ur reconsiders the positionality of colonial officials to either try to suppress, tolerate, or enhance the illegal trafficking of humans, and concludes that their ambitions became creolised as soon as they were confronted with the realities of a slave society.

The Future of the Field

The value of Dutch primary sources regarding the transatlantic slave trade is undisputed. In fact, this volume shows how much more is possible than has hitherto been attempted. There is no telling in which direction new investigations will go, but it is certain that interaction with the written record will remain fruitful. This volume points towards several questions that could be explored further.

The combined chapters show how archives that were previously mainly used to enhance the understanding of the mechanisms behind

the transatlantic slave trade can also be used to learn more about the perspectives of enslaved people on board slave ships. By reading between the lines, company archives can be used to reconstruct other perspectives.

The prevalence of (sexual) violence on board slave ships has not received systematic study yet. This volume makes clear that answers to the questions in this field need studies that cover multiple voyages and careers of sailors. Chapters in this volume suggest that networks of captains and higher-ranking personnel were important in propagating practices or even cultures of extreme violence.

Furthermore, it is clear that patterns of involvement and influence can be found amongst the Dutch nobility and elite, and intertwined with this engagement was the practical experience that many of these wealthy individuals and families had. They too sailed on slave ships as captains, passengers, or as future plantation overseers or investors. By analysing the patterns of as many socio-economic groups that were actively involved with the Dutch slave trade as possible, the diversity and complexity of the Dutch slave trade and ships can be mapped. The sources available on the Dutch slave trade make it possible to find networks of knowledge, influence, and experience, paving the way for a new generation of historians that will diversify our understanding of the Dutch slave ship.

Promising avenues that have already been opened up are those focussing on marginalised groups within the history of the slave ship and trade, or groups and perspectives that have hitherto been left out of historical research as the source material was either restricted or deemed too difficult to interact with. Examples of this are the re-evaluation of the role of women in slave revolts, research into private traders in the slave trade and their families (amongst which are the Dutch and British monarchies), and investigation of the experience of slave trade in the African interior and the following periods of captivity at the coasts and possibly in forts.[22]

As editors we hope that by reading this volume new historians will cultivate interest in, and enthusiasm for, research driven histories based on primary source material. The following chapters show a diverse set of research angles, and research initiated from varying starting points. To create room for these variations we chose to leave the choice of terminology to each author; their choices are explained in corresponding footnotes on the first page.

22 Historians working on these subjects are amongst others: Rebecca Hall, Aviva Ben-Ur, Stephanie Smallwood, Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Ruud Paesie, Angus Dalrymple-Smith, Gert Oostindie, Karwan Fatah-Black, and Camilla de Koning.

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Part I

West Africa

1. A Versatile Island: The Role of São Tomé in the Slave Trade During the Period of WIC Occupation, 1641-1649

Florian Herrendorf

Abstract: Despite their acknowledgement of São Tomé's position as the principal market for Dutch slaves in 1646–1648, historians have largely neglected to investigate the nature of the slave trade with and via this island during the period of occupation by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), 1641–1649. Likewise, they have failed to address the importance of São Tomé for the activities of Dutch, foreign, and interloper slavers and how this island was incorporated into the already existing slave trade networks of the WIC. This article attempts to fill this historiographical void by examining São Tomé's involvement in the slave trade during the period of WIC occupation. By using a large variety of primary sources, we can paint a picture of a versatile island that not only functioned as an entrepôt for the re-export of slaves and a market for the sale of captives, but also as a victualling station for passing slavers and a haven for foreign crews and local merchants alike.

Keywords: São Tomé, entrepôt, victualling station, slave trade, Dutch West India Company

> By 1614 the slave trade was bypassing São Tomé altogether, as the port of Luanda gained dominance over the Congolese port of Mpinda and slaves were shipped directly to the New World.[1]

This quotation stems from the Chilean anthropologist Pablo Eyzaguirre. He claims that the island of São Tomé, situated in the Gulf of Guinea, had lost

1 Eyzaguirre, "Small Farmers", 79.

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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its role in the slave trade by the seventeenth century. São Tomé's inhabitants had been active in this trade ever since the island's colonisation in the 1490s. In the early sixteenth century, the island developed into an important entrepôt for the re-export of African slaves to Portugal and Elmina and later Brazil and Spanish America. After 1570, the slave trade via São Tomé declined because of increasing competition from foreign slavers and new regulations, which gave Portuguese merchants holding royal trading licenses direct access to the West African coast.

Contrary to Eyzaguirre's claim, however, recent studies have shown that São Tomé never truly lost its role in the slave trade. For example, Gerhard Seibert has shown that São Tomé still functioned as a transit port for the export of slaves in the seventeenth century, albeit on a smaller scale than in the sixteenth century, whilst Stephanie Smallwood has stressed the importance of the island in the provisioning of English slavers in the late seventeenth century.[2]

São Tomé also played an important role in the Dutch slave trade in the period from 1641 to 1649, when the Dutch West India Company (WIC) governed the island. Although historians such as Johannes Postma, Pieter Emmer, and Ernst van den Boogaart have acknowledged that São Tomé was the principal market for Dutch slaves between 1646 and 1648, relatively little is known about the nature of the slave trade with and via São Tomé during the period of Dutch occupation.[3] This gap is not due to a lack of primary source material but is caused by the fact that studies have only focused on the conflicts with the Portuguese, the sugar export, and the WIC's organisation on the island.[4] This article will try to fill this historiographical void by examining São Tomé's involvement in the slave trade during the period of WIC occupation. Therefore, the research question reads: what was the role of São Tomé in the slave trade in 1641–1649?

As historians have paid little attention to São Tomé's involvement in the slave trade in the 1640s, the historiographical debate concerning the period of company rule over the island has focused on other issues. One of which is the question as to why the WIC decided to conquer São Tomé in 1641. One

2 Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 18; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 148–9, 185–6, 190–1, 206, 210, 225–6, 295; Silva, "African Islands", 562; Eyzaguirre, "Small Farmers", 34–8, 44, 57, 73, 79–80; De Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living*, 59–60; Seibert, "São Tomé & Príncipe", 66–8; Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 149.

3 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 26; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 372.

4 Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*; Silva, "African Islands"; Garfield, *A History of São Tomé*.

group of authors, consisting of Robert Garfield, Yda Schreuder, Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, Emmer, and Van den Boogaart, claims that the island's conquest was motivated by the high demand for slave labour in Dutch Brazil, which necessitated accessing new supply markets in West Africa.[5] Wim Klooster agrees with these scholars. Yet, he also points out that the WIC wanted to use São Tomé as a bridge connecting the new possessions in Angola to the trading posts on the Guinea Coast.[6] Robert Porter, for his part, rejects their claims. He believes that the main reason for the conquest was to deprive the English Guinea Company of the revenues from the export of sugar from the island, thereby strengthening the WIC's position on the Gold Coast.[7] Contrary to the other authors, Klaas Ratelband and Willem Unger argue that the WIC had more than one reason to capture São Tomé. Adding to the previously mentioned assertions, these two historians claim that the WIC intended to use the island both as an entrepôt for the re-export of slaves to Dutch Brazil and as a victualling station for Dutch ships operating between West Africa and Dutch Brazil.[8]

In order to answer the research question, this article will first discuss the beginning of Dutch interest in the island. In the two subsequent sections, attention is shifted to the 1640s, and these will look into the role that São Tomé played in the Dutch, foreign, and interloper slave trade during the period of WIC occupation.

These latter two sections will be based on primary sources originating from the archive of the First West India Company and the notarial archives of the Amsterdam City Archive. Thanks to the digitisation of these collections, it has become far easier to gather information and establish connections between different sources. In addition, this development enables us to shed new light on documents extensively used by previous generations of historians by applying insights gained from source material never examined before. By using many sources and comparing documents from different archives, we are able to push the boundaries of scholarship and reconstruct São Tomé's role in the slave trade in the 1640s.

The primary sources used in this study consist of a variety of letters, journal excerpts, sales registers, declarations, inventories, notarial deeds,

5 Garfield, *A History of São Tomé*, 248–9; Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, 71; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 32–3, 245, 251–2; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 358.

6 Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 71, 160.

7 Porter, "European Activity", 131, 191, 206.

8 Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 136, 146–7; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XL–XLI; Unger, *Bijdragen*, 140.

and resolutions. Due to the diverse nature of these documents, we can reconstruct several aspects of the slave trade. The sources written by senior WIC personnel (i.e. directors, factors, and fiscals) provide us with an institutional perspective. They enable us to talk about the organisation of the slave trade and determine the number of enslaved Africans bought and shipped by the company. The notarial deeds and the documents drafted by low-ranking WIC employees (i.e. skippers, sailors, and soldiers) enable us to move beyond the numbers game. These sources give us insights into life on board slavers and the hardship suffered by captains, crews, and slaves alike. The documents' diversity notwithstanding, one perspective is lacking: that of the enslaved Africans. Always present in the sources, yet voiceless and nameless, these men and women remain elusive shadows.

A Budding Interest, 1590-1640

Dutch vessels first appeared in the Gulf of Guinea in the 1590s as Dutch merchants developed trade routes to West Africa. Although they were mostly interested in obtaining African commodities, such as gold and ivory, through direct trade with coastal areas, some were also involved in the sugar trade with São Tomé. For example, in 1591, the Dutch ship *Den Salvador*, freighted by the Amsterdam merchant Pieter van der Moere and his Portuguese business partner Gonsalo Alfonso Mayor, visited the island to obtain sugar.[9] This sugar was produced locally by the many African slaves who worked on the island's plantations and were vital for maintaining São Tomé's position as one of the main suppliers of sugar for the European market.[10]

Dutch ships and capital were also used in the re-export of slaves from São Tomé to Iberia and Spanish America. For example, in 1596, Captain Cornelis Jansz. Boer transported fifty-eight captives from São Tomé to the Portuguese town of Lagos on account of a Portuguese merchant. However, Dutch involvement in the slave trade was mostly limited to providing insurance for Iberian vessels and cargoes. In 1617, for example, Duarte Fernandes, a Jewish trader resident in Amsterdam, obtained for Simão Pereira, a merchant living in Madrid, insurance for a cargo of goods for the

9 Unger, *Bijdragen*, 135–6; Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 15; Porter, "European Activity", 19; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 31–2; Silva, "African Islands", 560–1.

10 Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 149; Eyzaguirre, "Small Farmers", 36–7, 45; Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, 41–2.

Nossa Senhora do Amparo e Santo António's voyage to Spanish America by way of São Tomé. It would take until the consolidation of Dutch Brazil in the mid-1630s for the Dutch to get actively involved in the transatlantic slave trade.[11]

One of the most important Dutch merchants active in the trade with West Africa in the 1590s was Balthasar de Moucheron, the head of the influential De Moucheron trading firm. To stimulate Dutch trade in West Africa and acquire a victualling station for ships sailing to Asia, De Moucheron tried to seize one of the Portuguese settlements in the Gulf of Guinea. Having failed to take Elmina in 1596, De Moucheron turned his attention to the islands in the Gulf. As São Tomé boasted too strong a defence, De Moucheron sent a military expedition to the neighbouring island of Príncipe, which was smaller and less well-defended. This expedition, which comprised five ships financed by De Moucheron and the States General, captured the island in August 1598. There, the Dutch began constructing a fortress and cultivating food crops to provide victuals for passing East Indiamen. However, from the start, the Dutch were plagued by disease, internal strife, and Portuguese attacks from São Tomé, leading them to abandon Príncipe after a mere three months.[12]

Despite this failure, De Moucheron remained determined to capture one of the islands in the Gulf. He eventually persuaded the States General to organise a naval expedition to take São Tomé. This expedition was led by Admiral Pieter van der Does, whose fleet of seventy-three ships set sail in May 1599. After having wreaked havoc near the Portuguese coast, Van der Does reached São Tomé in October 1599. There, Dutch forces swiftly captured the town of São Tomé and its fortress, São Sebastião, whilst the Portuguese inhabitants withdrew into the interior. However, having arrived at the start of the wet season, the Dutch soldiers quickly experienced the negative effects of the local climate as provisions spoiled and diseases spread. After just three weeks, the Dutch were forced to leave São Tomé because of the death of Van der Does and over 1200 of his soldiers. Before they left, the Dutch torched the town and destroyed sixty-four of São Tomé's 118

11 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 11–2, 294, 299; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 353–4; Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 73, 76; Porter, "European Activity", 149–50; Silva, "African Islands", 561; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, LXXIX–LXXX; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 34, 92; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 160.

12 Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 20; Porter, "European Activity", 10, 20–1; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, LXVI; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 32–6; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 22, 26–7; Silva, "African Islands", 563; Seibert, "São Tomé & Príncipe", 62.

sugar mills, thus aggravating the island's economic decline.[13] The hardship suffered during the short occupation of São Tomé caused the Dutch to avoid the island for the next four decades.

São Tomé and the Dutch Slave Trade, 1641-1649

In February 1641, the High and Secret Council, the governing body of Dutch Brazil, began to discuss a possible attack on São Tomé. The council stated that such an endeavour would strengthen the company's position on the Gold Coast since the English Guinea Company would no longer be able to make a profit on its voyages to West Africa by buying sugar in São Tomé. Yet, the Council eventually decided not to send an expedition to São Tomé since it would put too much strain on Brazil's military resources.[14]

This situation changed in mid-March 1641 when news of Portugal's rebellion against the Spanish Crown and the beginning of peace negotiations between Portugal and the Dutch Republic reached Recife.[15] Now that the threat of an attack on Dutch Brazil had disappeared, talks of a possible assault on São Tomé were resumed in April. This time, the council stated that, apart from strengthening the WIC's position on the Gold Coast vis-à-vis the English, the conquest of São Tomé would provide the company with a secure entrepôt for the storage and re-export of slaves. This outcome would be highly beneficial since captives would no longer have to be shipped directly from West Africa but could be stored on the island. There, they would be able to recuperate before embarking on the voyage to Brazil, thus decreasing the death rate on board. However, the Council realised that it would be hard to maintain control over São Tomé because of its unforgiving climate and the inevitable resistance of its population. It, therefore, decided to abandon the conquest of São Tomé in favour of an attack on the northern Brazilian state of Maranhão.[16]

13 Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 22–3; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 36–7; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 27; Silva, "African Islands", 563; Seibert, "São Tomé & Príncipe", 56, 62, 75.

14 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 56, scans 1321–2, 1347–8; Porter, "European Activity", 191, 206; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XL; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 97–8.

15 Between 1580 and 1640, Portugal and Spain formed a dynastic union under the Spanish Crown.

16 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 56, scans 1349–51; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 360–1; Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 48; Porter, "European Activity", 205; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XL, LXXX, XC; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 98–9,

The arrival of a letter from the Gentlemen XIX, the WIC's governing body, on April 13 halted the preparations for this assault. In this letter, the council was urged to expand the limits of the company's territories southwards. The council subsequently began to prepare an attack on Luanda, as the capture of this centre of the slave trade would ensure a steady supply of captives for Dutch Brazil. This endeavour would furthermore halt the flow of slaves to Spanish America, as Angola was Spain's main source of enslaved labourers. A fleet commanded by admiral Cornelis Jol consequently set sail from Recife and captured Luanda in August 1641. Jol was also instructed to seize São Tomé after completing his attack on Luanda. Although Jol's instructions do not mention any motivations for the assault on São Tomé, these were likely identical to those discussed by the council in April. On October 16, 1641, the town of São Tomé and its fortress, São Sebastião, fell to the Dutch attackers.[17]

Following its conquest, the island was quickly integrated into the WIC's slave trade networks. The WIC yachts, which operated from Elmina and were responsible for the acquisition of slaves on the Guinea Coast, were now ordered by the company director on the Gold Coast to ship their captives to São Tomé. There, they were stored and transferred to larger ships that would take them to Dutch Brazil. As a result, the use of the old shipping route, which used Cape Lopez as a victualling station and loading place for slavers from Dutch Brazil, was discontinued. This shift was in line with the council's orders, which stipulated that, in the absence of Brazil-bound ships, Elmina should store its slaves in São Tomé.[18] As such, starting with the arrival of the yacht *Benijn* in February 1642, the island received a steady number of captives destined for re-export to Dutch Brazil (Table 1).[19]

Despite its use as a transit port, the volume of the island's re-exports to Dutch Brazil remained small. Table 1 shows that in 1642, a total of 252 slaves

146–7; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 69–70; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 219; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 117.

17 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 56, scans 374–9, 392; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 358; Unger, *Bijdragen*, 140; Den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 48, 76–7; Porter, "European Activity", 151–2, 198–9, 205–6; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XXVII; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 97, 101–5, 113, 125, 130, 136, 140, 143–7, 167–8; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 32–3; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 69–71, 160.

18 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 57, scans 19, 48, 65–7; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 58, scans 593, 619; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 116, 163; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 360–1; Porter, "European Activity", 152, 195, 223–4; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, LXXX, LXXXVII–XC; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 136, 147; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 75, 182, 200, 219–20; Silva, "African Islands", 562; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 117; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 68.

19 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 59, scans 19, 48.

Table 1. WIC slave shipments to Dutch Brazil via São Tomé, 1642-1646

Departure date São Tomé	Vessel name	Total number of slaves embarked	Arrival date in Dutch Brazil/ Date of public auction in Recife	Total number of slaves disembarked	Name of vessel(s) responsible for the shipment(s) to São Tomé	Number of slaves transported to São Tomé	Principal place of slave purchase	Voyage ID
02/1642	Hasewint	26	Sold: 04/11/1642	25	Benijn	26	Calabar	11321
05/1642	Loanda	181	Sold: 07/21/1642	132	Loanda, Gulden Ree, Witte Duyf	64, 67, 100	Calabar	11322
05/1642	Haen	25	Sold: 07/21/1642	23	Loanda, Gulden Ree, Witte Duyf	64, 67, 100	Calabar	11323
05/1642	Henderson	25	Sold: 07/21/1642	23	Loanda, Gulden Ree, Witte Duyf	64, 67, 100	Calabar	11324
07/1642	Leyden	65	Sold: 08/18/1642	49	Benijn	65	Calabar	11325
03/1644	Leyerdorp	160	Sold: 04/06/1644	130		160 (?)	Guinea Coast	11311
02/12/1646	Eendracht van Enckhuizen & Eendracht van Amsterdam	39	Arrival: 03/20/1646	25	Speedwell (English slaver)	39	Calabar	11603 & 11602

Source: NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scans 975-6; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 57, scans 19, 65, 67–8, 607, 887; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 59, scan 709; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 125–6; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 150–2, 163; TSTD.

reached Brazil via São Tomé, which was but sixteen per cent of the colony's total slave imports from the Guinea Coast, which amounted to 1616.[20] This small number of re-exports resulted from the fact that São Tomé's entrepôt function was seriously hampered by shortages of food and men. Like in 1599, the Dutch soldiers and sailors were continuously plagued by tropical diseases, claiming the lives of many. Company personnel furthermore suffered from increasing food shortages throughout 1642. As such, the company was unable to house slaves in São Tomé for long periods of time since it lacked the provisions to feed the captives awaiting transport to Brazil. Consequently, the slaves that arrived in São Tomé on the *Benijn*, *Loanda*, *Gulden Ree*, and *Witte Duyf* were all shipped directly to Dutch Brazil on vessels already present on the island.[21]

The arrival of an expeditionary force commanded by Lourenço Pires de Tavora, the former Portuguese governor of São Tomé, in November 1642 and the subsequent revival of hostilities between the WIC and the local population put a temporary halt on São Tomé's involvement in the Dutch slave trade. For the majority of late 1642 and 1643, the town of São Tomé remained in Portuguese hands, whilst the Dutch were stuck in their fortress and plagued by desertion, diseases, and food shortages.[22] WIC yachts carrying slaves from the Guinea Coast were thus no longer able to ship their captives to São Tomé, and again reverted to using Cape Lopez as a loading place for vessels bound for Dutch Brazil.[23]

In late 1643, the trade via São Tomé was revived. The signing of a provisional truce between the WIC and the Portuguese in November allowed for a return to normal relations between the two parties. As a result, the company yacht *Leyerdorp* was able to ship 160 slaves to Dutch Brazil in March 1644. However, this revival was short-lived. Dissatisfied with the situation on the island, the Gentlemen XIX had sent a military expedition to São Tomé in early 1644. In April, this force, headed by Jan Mulder, the new company commander of the island, arrived in São Tomé and launched an offensive against the Portuguese. The Dutch troops

20 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 21; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 369.

21 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 57, scans 19, 65–8, 607, 886–7; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 59, scan 709; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 147–52, 162–3; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 71, 131–2.

22 Porter, "European Activity", 225; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 152, 176–9, 207–8; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 71, 83.

23 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 58, scans 619–20, 730–2; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 360–1; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XC; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 219.

succeeded in recapturing the town of São Tomé but failed to drive the Portuguese from their stronghold to the south of the town. Confronted with a stalemate, the two warring parties decided to renew the truce of November 1643. In June 1644, a new treaty was signed, in which the planters were obliged to sell victuals to the Dutch and ship their sugar in company vessels, whilst the WIC was given control of the town and pledged itself to provide the Portuguese with the goods and slaves necessary for the sugar production.[24]

Following the treaty's conclusion, the planters requested the WIC to provide them with slaves. Consequently, in January 1645, Mulder asked the director in Elmina to send 'some slaves' to the island, stating that the Portuguese offered to pay 735 kilograms of sugar per captive.[25] After all, money was scarce in São Tomé, and of all locally produced commodities, the company was only interested in sugar. The first shipment of slaves arrived in São Tomé in August 1645 and consisted of 282 captives from Calabar bought by the yachts *Enchuysen* and *Dolphijn*.[26]

Fuelled by local demand, the WIC increasingly directed its slave shipments to the island, turning São Tomé into an important centre for the sale of captives. The island's position in the Dutch slave trade also benefitted from the decline of slave exports from the Guinea Coast to Brazil, which had begun in mid-1644. This decline stemmed from the advantages Angola had over the Guinea Coast. Whereas a voyage from Elmina to Recife could take up to four months, one could reach Dutch Brazil from Luanda in less than four weeks. In addition, the Brazilian planters preferred Angolan slaves, whom they regarded as diligent labourers. As Dutch Brazil increasingly began to rely solely on slave imports from Angola, the council stopped sending vessels to the Guinea Coast, forcing Elmina to find new markets for its slaves. Hence, the development of a market for slave labour in São Tomé was wholeheartedly welcomed by Elmina.[27]

The shift of Elmina's slave trade to São Tomé was also supported by the Gentlemen XIX, who informed director Jacob Ruychaver in July 1645

24 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 59, scan 709; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 207–11; Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)."

25 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scan 780; Original citation: 'eenige slaven'.

26 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 8–10, 80, 346–9; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 209–11.

27 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 21; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 361, 369; Porter, "European Activity", 223, 262–3; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 8, 25, 346; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 211–2, 223–4; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 219–20; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 67.

that slaves from 'Allada, Calabar, and Rio Furcado could best [...] be sent thither', instead of to Recife.[28] They also advised Ruychaver to investigate the preferences and the demand of the islanders since rumours had reached them that São Tomé could accommodate 2000 slaves a year, of whom most had to be 'boys and old women'.[29] These rumours, however, were false, as the planters preferred men and women aged twelve to twenty, and the annual demand was much lower than 2000.[30] This shows that, contrary to what Van den Boogaart and Emmer claim, São Tomé's transformation into a market for company slaves predated the Portuguese uprising in Dutch Brazil, which began in June 1645.[31]

However, that does not mean that the island did not benefit from this revolt. Following the collapse of the market for slaves in Dutch Brazil, the authorities in Angola were ordered to stop sending captives to Recife. To alleviate the pressure on food supplies caused by this cessation of trade, the Company directors in Luanda began to ship slaves to São Tomé. There, they were exchanged for soap and foodstuffs, such as sugar, palm oil, and palm kernels, which were used to feed the many slaves still present in Luanda. Developments in Angola and Brazil thus turned São Tomé into the sole market for company slaves between 1646 and 1648.[32] This new reality was also acknowledged by the Gentlemen XIX since they ordered director Jacob van der Wel to continue the acquisition of captives on the Guinea Coast and focus on shipping them to São Tomé.[33]

The volume of Dutch slave exports to São Tomé continued to increase until 1647 (Table 2). After having reached totals of 376 and 1307 in 1645 and

28 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 9, scan 248; Original citation: 'Ardere, Calbarij, en Rio Furcado, beter [...] derewaerts sal senden'.

29 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 9, scan 248; Original citation: 'jongens en oude vrouwen'.

30 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scan 796.

31 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 26; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 372; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 223–4.

32 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 21, 26; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 371–2; Unger, *Bijdragen*, 143; Porter, "European Activity", 263–4; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 224–5, 231–2, 235, 244–8, 284, 299; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 163; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 68; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 117–20. Only around 1650 did the WIC begin to turn the Caribbean into a market for its slaves. One notable exception, however, is the voyage of the *Tamandare*. Departing from Recife, this company vessel carried a cargo of slaves to Barbados and New Netherland in 1645–46. See Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 224–5, 229–30, 259, 278; Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)."

33 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 10, scans 25–30; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Porter, "European Activity", 263; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 244–5; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 68.

Table 2. WIC slave shipments to São Tomé, 1645-1648

Departure date from the West African Coast or São Tomé	Vessel name	Rig of vessel	Total number of slaves embarked	Arrival date in São Tomé	Total number of slaves disembarked	Principal place of slave purchase
03/11/1645 (from Elmina)	Dolphijn	Yacht	297 (together with the Enchuysen)	08/09/1645	282 (together with the Enchuysen)	Calabar
	Enchuysen	Yacht	297 (together with the Dolphijn)	08/09/1645	282 (together with the Dolphijn)	Calabar
				Between 07/04/1645 and 09/1645	47	Angola
	Nieuw Enckhuysen	Yacht	50	11/22/1645	47	Angola
12/08/1645 (from Elmina) 01/25 (26)/1646 (from Allada)	Fortuyn	Yacht	197	02/1646	156	Allada
12/15/1645 (from Elmina) 03/09/1646 (from Allada)	Dolphijn	Yacht	162	After 03/09/1646	160	Allada
After 02/1646 (from São Tomé)	Fortuyn	Yacht	150	06/11/1646 or 06/15/1646	150	Calabar
	Reyger	Yacht	38	05/14/1646	38	Angola
06/1646 (from São Tomé)	Nieuw Enckhuysen	Yacht	115	08/20/1646	103	Calabar
07/21/1646 or 07/30/1646 (from Elmina)	Dolphijn	Yacht	150 (estimate)		150 (estimate)	Calabar and/or Rio del Rey
08/23/1646 (from Elmina)	Fortuyn	Yacht	129	Before 09/15/1646	106	Calabar and/or Rio del Rey
	Witte Hoop			08/19/1646	79	Angola
10/16/1646 (from Elmina) 01/02/1647 (from Allada)	Regenboogh		373	Before 01/03/1647	365	Allada
06/29/1647 (from São Tomé)	Fortuyn	Yacht	150 (estimate)	08/21/1647	140	Calabar
09/1647 (from Loango)			94		94 (?)	Loango
	De Vlucht	Yacht	98	10/09/1647	94	Angola
	Heemste			Between 01/31/1647 and 01/31/1648	2	Angola
	Miscellaneous			Between 01/31/1647 and 01/31/1648	17	Allada and Guinea Coast

Source: NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 10, scan 9; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 118; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 10, 25, 80, 91, 94, 112, 117, 148–53, 157–8, 198, 207, 210, 217, 222, 241, 245, 284, 287–9, 299, 303, 346–9; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 231–2, 247, 254, 284, 299.

1646 respectively, slave imports dropped to 347 in 1647.[34] This sudden drop was caused by Van der Wel's decision to refrain from trading on the Slave Coast in 1647, as he was short on trade goods. Table 2 also shows that São Tomé was home to slaves from various regions: Allada, Calabar, Rio del Rey, Loango, and Angola. Most of these slaves were sold to local planters, whilst some twenty captives worked as porters in the WIC's warehouses on the island.[35]

Although the planters bought every slave they could get, they preferred captives from Allada. Consequently, they requested the WIC to increase its shipments of slaves from Allada, stating that the ones from Calabar died swiftly, refused to work, and were prone to run away. These preferences were also reflected in the selling prices: slaves from Allada were sold for 882 kilograms of sugar, whilst those from Calabar and Angola only fetched 735 kilograms.[36] In line with prevailing practices in São Tomé, all slaves were sold on credit, with the company only receiving payment after the sugar harvest. Notwithstanding the higher selling price, the planters failed to persuade the company to focus exclusively on acquiring slaves from Allada since Elmina claimed that these were almost twice as expensive as those from Calabar. Information from company sales registers from 1645 corroborates this, as male slaves from Allada could be bought for ten iron bars (approximately thirty guilders), whilst in Calabar, they only cost six (approximately eighteen guilders).[37]

Table 2 also shows that nearly all Guinea Coast slaves were transported on yachts. These yachts operated from Elmina and were part of the fleet used for trading with the coastal areas along the Gulf of Guinea. In response

34 The low number of slave imports in 1645 can be explained by looking at Table 2. It shows that the first shipments of enslaved Africans only began to arrive in São Tomé in the last four months of the year. Hence, the number 376 can hardly be called representative. However, if we multiply it by three, the product is 1128. This is close to the total imports of 1646, showing that 1646 was not exceptional.; Dutch sources are silent on whether the WIC continued to ship slaves to São Tomé in 1648.

35 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 243–5, 250; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 117–20.

36 These amounts could be sold in the Dutch Republic for 450 and 410 guilders respectively. See Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XCV, 8, 303; Idem, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 234.

37 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 10, scan 7; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XCV, CIX, LXXXI–LXXXII, 8, 112, 303, 320, 327; Unger, *Bijdragen*, 139; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 211, 233–4, 299; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 68, 80; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 117–20. In reality, slaves were never bought for one trade good only. Furthermore, there are many ways to calculate slave prices, each having its flaws. See Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 78–82; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 44, 47.

to instructions from the WIC in São Tomé, the director would order these yachts to sail to Allada, Calabar or Rio del Rey to buy slaves for the island. Once in Allada, the Dutch had to travel to the court of the king, whom they had to present with many gifts, consisting of European commodities, to be allowed to trade. Only then could the Dutch return to Allada's main harbour of Offra to buy slaves from local traders and royal representatives. Apart from receiving commodities, such as iron bars and cowries, in exchange for slaves, these merchants also received many gifts from the Dutch. This was also the case in Calabar, where the Dutch had to pay customs, consisting of coarse bracelets, to local rulers before being allowed to trade. There, and in Rio del Rey, most slaves were exchanged for coarse bracelets, iron bars, and copper rods.[38]

Following the completion of the trade, the yachts crossed to São Tomé, where they unloaded their cargoes. Most subsequently returned to Elmina via the Grain and Ivory Coasts, whilst some made an extra voyage to the Bight of Biafra. Such extra voyages were sanctioned by Elmina and were organised by the company in São Tomé to meet the local demand for slaves.[39]

In January 1649, the Dutch occupation of São Tomé came to an abrupt end as a result of developments that had taken place in Angola in 1648. In September 1648, word reached the island that Luanda had surrendered to a Portuguese armada in August. This news caused relations between the Dutch and the Portuguese to deteriorate. Trade stopped, and the islanders cut their ties with the company. Only Pires continued to visit the Dutch in São Sebastião. During his visits, he offered them to hand over their possessions and leave the island, for which he was willing to compensate the WIC financially. Faced with an increasingly hostile population and the prospect of a Portuguese attack, the company eventually accepted Pires' offer and sold its possessions in São Tomé to him for 90,000 guilders.[40]

38 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 56, scans 260–3; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 88–9, 96–7, 116, 260; Van den Boogaart and Emmer, "The Dutch Participation", 360; Porter, "European Activity", 152, 223–4; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, LXXX, LXXXIV–XC, XCVIII, CII–CIII, CIX, 8–9, 25, 207, 217, 245, 287–9; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 96; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 347; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 49, 75, 181–2; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 59, 66–9, 79–85; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 12, 29–33, 37–48, 198–9.

39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, XC, 80, 198, 210, 284, 299, 303; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 210, 245, 284, 299, 303.

40 Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 274, 277, 286–9; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 83.

Foreign and Interloper Slave Trade, 1641–1649

The signing of the truce between Mulder and Pires in June 1644 marked the beginning of extensive trade on the island. However, the treaty also stipulated that the islanders were forbidden to undertake commercial ventures and were only allowed to trade with company vessels. The WIC, consequently, introduced measures to monitor all trade on the island. As such, yachts, used to ship slaves to São Tomé, were ordered to remain on the island to patrol its surrounding waters. These ships were instructed by the director in Elmina to prevent foreign vessels from trading in the island's inlets and were allowed to use force to accomplish their goal. The WIC also began to station soldiers at sugar mills located near the three inlets out of Fort São Sebastião's sight. This measure's aim was twofold: monitoring the arrival of foreign vessels and discouraging illegal trade. However, the stationing of soldiers was a temporary measure since it was used only in response to rumours of the imminent arrival of foreign vessels.[41]

Besides worrying about the arrival of foreign ships, the WIC was also concerned about the commercial activities of São Tomé's inhabitants, whom Van der Wel suspected of re-exporting slaves to Portuguese Brazil. Although he did not have any concrete evidence, he noticed that the annual imports of slaves were much higher than estimates of the island's annual demand as given by the sugar planters. Whilst the planters claimed that their plantations required only 200 slaves a year, company imports to the island reached almost 1300 in 1646. Yet, the re-export of captives did not harm the company's slave trade. After all, the Dutch were the planters' only suppliers of slaves. Nevertheless, Van der Wel ordered WIC personnel in São Tomé to prevent all forms of private commerce in accordance with the treaty of 1644.[42]

Given his view on private trade, the director was shocked to receive word of the arrival of a Portuguese barque belonging to Pires in São Tomé in May 1645. The former governor had sent for the *Nostra Sinjora de Rosado* to undertake a trading voyage to Rio Furcado on the West African coast. There, he intended to buy 140 slaves that were to be shipped to Bahia in Portuguese Brazil. Since such private voyages were forbidden, Pires asked Mulder to provide him with a WIC license, which would safeguard the *Nostra*

41 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 9, scan 250; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 10, scans 6–7, 26, 28; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 315–20, 348; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 209–11, 284.

42 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Van der Wel's estimate that the company had shipped around 1300 slaves to São Tomé in 1646 is corroborated by Table 2, which shows that it was actually 1307.

Sinjora from attacks by Dutch yachts. In exchange for such a permit, Pires promised that the barque would return to São Tomé to pay the tithes levied by the WIC on all private exports from the island. Realising that a good relationship with Pires was crucial in maintaining the company's hold over the island, Mulder gave him a license, after which the governor's barque set sail on August 31. Mulder's decision shows that WIC policy in São Tomé was pragmatic and thus much more lenient than the orders from Elmina, which stated that the governor's vessel should have been confiscated upon arrival.[43]

In March, the ship returned to the island and transferred fourteen of its 140 slaves to the WIC to cover the tithe. However, the voyage to São Tomé would be its last since Pires deemed it unwise to send his barque to Bahia given the uprising in Dutch Brazil.[44]

Whilst the company in São Tomé thus allowed for some private trade to be conducted by the islanders, commercial activities were strictly forbidden for all inhabitants of the Dutch Republic. The company was, consequently, authorised to seize Dutch vessels operating within its charter's limits.[45] However, it was only in the 1640s that the number of private Dutch voyages to West Africa experienced a remarkable growth, which coincided with a decline of WIC shipping caused by the uprising in Dutch Brazil. This expansion of private trade was characterised by Dutch merchants' increasing use of foreign ship owners to circumvent the WIC monopoly. Although most of these merchants were involved in the commodity trade, this scheme was also used in the transatlantic slave trade. The company stations in West Africa were thus increasingly confronted with interloper slavers.[46]

Table 3 shows that this case also held true for São Tomé, as the island was visited by two Dutch interlopers in 1647. The first of these was the *Hertoch van Holstein*, which reached São Tomé in May 1647. This was a Swedish fishing vessel, or dogger, that had been equipped in Amsterdam and carried a crew that consisted entirely of Dutchmen. Its captain, Rutger Jaspersen, intended to sail to Calabar to buy slaves that would then be shipped to the English island of Barbados. There, the slaves and ship were to be sold, after which the *Hertoch*'s crew intended to return to Holland on an English vessel. Yet, the voyage did not go as planned since a leak in the ship's hull forced Jaspersen to make port in Sierra Leone. There, the ship's factor, Albert

43 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11.

44 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scans 22, 1159, 1417.

45 For Africa, these limits were the Tropic of Cancer (north) and the Cape of Good Hope (south).

46 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 79–81; Porter, "European Activity", 79, 252, 264–70, 287, 370–1; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 246, 251; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 222, 284; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 185–7.

Table 3. Foreign and interloper slaving vessels that visited São Tomé, 1645-1647

Departure date from home port	Vessel name	Rig of vessel	Flag	Captain's name / factor's name / name of the owner(s)	Arrival date on the Gold Coast	Total number of slaves embarked	Arrival date in São Tomé	Total number of slaves disembarked	Principal place of slave purchase	Destination	Voyage ID
11/21/1644 (St. Kitts)	Speedwell (Spoetwel)	Yacht	England	Jooris Isaacx (captain) / Matheus Bachus (factor)	04/26/1645	100 (estimate)	08/21/1645	39	Calabar	St. Kitts	21971
(The Downs)	John (Jan) of London	Yacht (40-50 last)	England	John Amory (captain and factor)	12/20/1644		11/22/1645		Calabar	Barbados	27327
08/31/1645 (São Tomé)	NS do Rosario (Nostra Sinjora de Rosado)	Barque	Portugal	Lourenço Pires de Tavora (owner)			03/09/1646	140	Rio Furcado (Auwera?)	Bahia (Portuguese Brazil)	52002
Beginning of 1645 (Sanlúcar)	Nuestra Señora de Concepción	Ship (110 last)	Spain/ Papal States	Juan Bernardo Vulcano (captain)			03/29/1646	148	Calabar	Spanish West Indies	11352
08/1646 (London)	Our Lady (Lieve Vrou)	Little ship (40 last)	England	John Ladd (captain) / Samuel Vassal (owner)	11/20 (21)/1646	100	01/28/1647		Winneba (Gold Coast) and Calabar	Barbados	21990
10/21/1646 (Texel)	Hertoch van Holstein	Dogger (+/- 40 last)	Sweden	Sybrant Jansz. Paelman (captain) / Albert Smient (factor)	04/1647		05/24/1647	11	Sierra Leone and Calabar	Barbados	
09/18/1646 (Texel) or 10/21/1646 (Honfleur)	Eendracht	Ship (+/- 150 last)	France	Pieter Meyndertsen (captain) / Isaac Carvalho, Anthonio Mendes, Pedro Dias (owners)		240	07/01/1647	155	Calabar	West Indies	11353
(London)	Hopewell	Dogger	England	Thomas Chrikelij (captain)		28	08/17/1647		Calabar	Barbados	
		Galjoot	England	Pieter Els (factor)		60	09/10/1647		Rio del Rey	Barbados	
12/1646 (London)	Philip	Ship (+/- 100 last)	England			More than 90	10/23 (24)/1647	36	Calabar	West Indies	26258

Source: NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 10, scan 7; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; NL-SAA, 5075 inv.nr. 1690A, scans 254-5; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 40-1, 45, 80, 114-5, 125-6, 264-5, 272-3, 293-4, 307-8, 331; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 118; Porter, "European Activity", 244-5, 271-2; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 234, 246, 248, 251; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese*, 222, 284; TSTD.

Smient, managed to separate the keel from the hull, causing the vessel to fill up with water. To salvage what was left of his ship, Jaspersen made a deal with the merchants of the French vessel *Eendracht*. In exchange for repairing the *Hertoch van Holstein* and providing it with trade goods, Jaspersen was obliged to accompany the *Eendracht* to Calabar, where he would help the French acquire 200 slaves.[47]

However, upon arrival in Calabar, the French cancelled the agreement since there was a shortage of captives in the village. Abandoned by the French, disaster struck again, as both Jaspersen and Smient died, and Sybrant Jansz. Paelman took the helm. Paelman decided to leave Calabar to find a safe port for his sick crew and damaged ship. Yet, the *Hertoch van Holstein* failed to reach any harbour, as it was found adrift in the Gulf of Guinea by a WIC yacht, which guided the ship to São Tomé. Upon arrival, the company inspected the ship's papers and discovered that Paelman did not have a trading license. The WIC consequently confiscated the *Hertoch van Holstein* and its cargo of eleven slaves on May 25; five of its six surviving crew members joined company ranks.[48]

In July 1647, the French vessel *Eendracht* sailed into São Tomé harbour and requested the company for assistance, as it was running low on water and firewood. The ship was also rapidly taking on water, and many crew members had fallen ill during their stay in Calabar. Its captain, the Dutchman Pieter Meyndertsen, asked Mulder to provide him with 'firewood, water, [...] and [...] sailors to continue his voyage'.[49] However, upon inspecting the ship, Mulder noticed that Meyndertsen's trading license was false: the king of France had granted the document to someone else whose name had been replaced by that of Meyndertsen. Claiming to be unaware of this forgery, the *Eendracht*'s captain blamed it on the Jewish merchants who had organised his voyage. These had left the ship in Calabar and were presumed to have been killed by the local population since they had failed to return to the *Eendracht*. The WIC concluded that the *Eendracht* was a Dutch interloper and seized the vessel and its cargo.[50]

Apart from transporting commodities used in the slave trade, such as cowries and bracelets, the *Eendracht* also carried 155 captives. These were

47 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 246, 251; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 293–4.

48 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 246, 251.

49 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scan 475; Original citation: 'branthout, water, [...] ende [...] matroosen om haer reyse vorder te doen'.

50 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; NL-SAA, 5075, inv.nr. 1690A, scans 254–5; Porter, "European Activity", 268–9; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 246, 251.

the survivors of a failed revolt the slaves had staged whilst the ship laid at anchor in the Calabar River, which had cost the lives of two sailors and dozens of slaves. In São Tomé, all 155 captives were sold to local planters, with six injured ones only fetching a total of 2352 kilograms of sugar. After the seizure by the WIC, seven of the *Eendracht*'s thirteen surviving crew members, including Pieter Meyndertsen, were employed by the company, as the Dutch were short on sailors, whereas the ship itself was used to send victuals to Luanda.[51]

Between 1645 and 1647, São Tomé was also frequented by English slavers. The English slave trade experienced a remarkable growth during the 1640s because of the expansion of sugar production in Barbados and the spread of sugar cultivation to other English Caribbean islands, which caused a significant rise in the demand for slave labour.[52] Although the Guinea Company held the English slave trade monopoly, the trade was firmly in the hands of private businessmen from England and the West Indies, who benefitted from Parliament's anti-monopolist sentiments. This significant expansion of the trade is also reflected in Dutch sources, which speak of thirty-seven different English slavers active in the Gulf of Guinea between 1645 and 1647.[53] Of these thirty-seven, only six visited São Tomé (Table 3).

The first of these was the *Speedwell*, which arrived on the island in August 1645. This yacht had sailed from Saint Kitts to Calabar to buy captives for the local planters. However, when it arrived in São Tomé, only eight of the original seventeen crew members were still alive, whilst the ship itself was in desperate need of repairs. Although the ship's factor, Matheus Bachus, merely intended to restock on water and victuals in São Tomé before departing for Saint Kitts, the *Speedwell* proved to be beyond repairs. The crew and their cargo of thirty-nine slaves were thus stranded on the island. The crew eventually managed to leave São Tomé on the English slaver *John of London*, which visited the island in November 1645 to buy victuals for the crossing to Barbados. The slaves, on the other hand, were sold to the WIC, which re-exported twenty-five of them to Dutch Brazil.[54]

51 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scans 475–6, 493, 513, 566, 1192; NL-SAA, 5075, inv.nr. 1690A, scans 254–5; Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika*, 246–7, 251.

52 Porter, "European Activity", 199–200, 232, 243–4, 271; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 168–9; Law, "The Slave Trade in Seventeenth-Century Allada", 68–9; Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, 101–2, 115.

53 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 6, 9–12, 19, 22–4, 29, 40–1, 45, 54–6, 73–5, 80, 94, 114–5, 125–6, 146, 165–6, 169–71, 195, 211, 230–41, 251–2, 264–5, 272–3, 282–6, 289, 292–7, 307–8; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 118.

54 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 40, 45, 80, 125–6.

Like the *John of London* and the unnamed vessel of Factor Pieter Els, the slaver *Our Lady* visited São Tomé to stock up on supplies. However, its request for water and firewood was refused by the company in January 1647 since its captain, John Ladd, had insulted Van der Wel upon visiting Elmina in December 1646. The dogger *Hopewell* followed the *Our Lady* and arrived in São Tomé in August 1647 to repair its rudder. Apart from the original crew and twenty-eight slaves bought in Calabar, the *Hopewell* also carried three extra crew members that had been picked up at Cape Lopez. These three were the survivors of a slave revolt on an unnamed English vessel. The ship's captain, Christoffel Bishop, was one of these survivors and was himself an experienced slaver, as he had successfully completed two previous slave voyages with the *Prince Maurice*. Bishop explained that, upon arrival at Cape Lopez, the slaves had managed to seize control of the ship and had it run aground. Although the fate of the captives remains unknown, we do know that the three surviving Englishmen did not escape unharmed, as Bishop had lost one of his eyes. Having repaired its rudder, the *Hopewell* was on its way again.[55]

In October 1647, the *Philip* visited São Tomé. As it had lost fifteen of its nineteen original crew members, WIC personnel noted that 'it was only thanks to luck that [...] [the ship] had managed to arrive' on the island.[56] The *Philip* had also lost over half its captives since it had left Calabar. As such, the surviving crew members requested the company to be allowed to stay in São Tomé to await the arrival of another English vessel on which they and their slaves could depart. However, since no such ship arrived, the crew eventually sold the remaining thirty-six slaves to the WIC for twenty guilders each whilst they themselves joined the company.[57]

Conclusion

Dutch interest in São Tomé dated from the 1590s as Dutch merchants became involved in the sugar trade with the island. Dutch vessels and capital were also used to re-export slaves from São Tomé, albeit on a small scale. The Dutch were not interested in the island because of its role in the slave trade

55 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scans 118–9, 476–7, 685; Ratelband, *Vijf dagregisters*, 11–2, 264–5, 272, 293–4, 297, 307–8.

56 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scan 479; Original citation: 'dat [...] alleene door geluck sijn aengecomen'.

57 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 11, scans 479, 499, 1177–8, 1240–1; Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, 118.

but for its strategic location in the Gulf of Guinea. This is illustrated by De Moucheron's attempt to conquer São Tomé to turn it into a victualling station for Dutch ships sailing to Asia.

During the period of WIC occupation, São Tomé played several different roles in the slave trade. Between 1641 and 1644, the island functioned as an entrepôt for storing slaves and re-exporting them to Dutch Brazil. Actual exports of slaves, however, remained small since São Tomé's transit function was hampered by food shortages, lack of personnel, and periods of renewed hostilities between the Dutch and the Portuguese. After 1644, São Tomé lost its transit function altogether, as it developed into an independent market for the sale of captives, and the WIC increasingly directed its slave shipments to the island to meet the demand of the local sugar planters. Following the collapse of the demand for slaves in Dutch Brazil, São Tomé became the sole market for company slaves between 1646 and 1648. The flow of Dutch slaves to São Tomé ended when the WIC lost the island in 1649. Besides its involvement in the Dutch slave trade, São Tomé also fulfilled a role in the activities of foreign and interloper slavers which visited the island to buy victuals and make repairs before crossing to America. The island also provided a haven for shipwrecked slavers, as the WIC reemployed stranded crew members and purchased their slaves. In addition, São Tomé served as the operating base for the islanders' slave trade with Portuguese Brazil.

As regards the historiographical debate, this article supports the claim of Ratelband and Unger that the attack on São Tomé was primarily motivated by the company's desire to use the island as a victualling station and entrepôt for the re-export of slaves. Yet, at the same time, it adds an extra element to this claim by arguing that the WIC also wanted to capture São Tomé to hinder the English sugar trade with the island. As such, this study is also in line with Porter's findings. In addition, this chapter has shown the incorrectness of Van den Boogaart and Emmer's assertion that São Tomé only developed into a market for slaves after the revolt in Dutch Brazil. After all, this development dates back to early 1645, showing that there was no direct link between the collapse of the demand for slaves in Dutch Brazil and São Tomé's transformation into a market for enslaved labourers. In reality, the island's sugar planters were the prime movers behind this transformation: their demand for captives caused the WIC to ship slaves to São Tomé.

Given São Tomé's entrepôt function in the re-export of slaves to Dutch Brazil and its importance as the sole market for company slaves in 1646–1648, the island deserves to be included in new narratives on the Dutch slave

trade. Accordingly, historians of this trade need to expand their geographical scope to include not only the Atlantic and Indian Oceans but also African Atlantic islands, like São Tomé, that have hitherto been neglected.

About the Author

Florian Herrendorf is a PhD candidate at Tilburg University. He is interested in early modern business networks with an emphasis on the Atlantic colonial world, slavery, the Dutch West India Company, and the agency of individuals and institutions.

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2. Arming the Slave Trade: Evidence on the Gun-Slave Hypothesis from Dutch Slavers*

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Abstract: Firearms and gunpowder were among the most important goods bartered between Europeans and Africans in the transatlantic slave trade, as highlighted in the literature on the gun-slave hypothesis. The data backing this theory to date is very limited and draws exclusively from British sources. This article uses the archives of the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC), a Dutch slave trading company, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, to properly chart regional differences and changes over time in the export of military goods for the first time. The weapons export of the MCC expanded strongly throughout the eighteenth century, with gunpowder playing an especially important role. The rise in the volume of this arms trade is explained by the increase in the volume of the slave trade, not by an increasing African demand for firearms specifically.

Keywords: transatlantic slave trade, gunpowder, firearms, gun-slave cycle, bartering

More than 12 million enslaved Africans were transported in the transatlantic slave trade. These millions of captives were bought by European slavers from African slave traders, but not for coin. Lacking both a common currency and institutions allowing purchases on credit, bartering dominated this

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European-African exchange. This barter usually took the shape of one enslaved person being exchanged for a combination of different products.[1] This practice forced slave ships to carry a wide variety of goods to Africa, including luxury goods such as Indian textiles, Venetian glass, and Brazilian tobacco, as well as sundries such as knives and needles from Europe.[2] Among the most important items of merchandise were European military goods. Both firearms and the gunpowder necessary to use them were exported in enormous amounts to Africa. When one considers the share of expensive Indian cottons amongst the textiles that dominated the cargoes of slavers, military goods formed the most important export produced in Europe in the African slave trade and were therefore vital for facilitating the purchase of enslaved persons.[3]

But beyond being crucial as a means of payment for Europeans, these firearms also had important effects on African history. Firearms have been linked to the emergence of several African powers in the period of the Atlantic slave trade, such as the Dahomey and Asante kingdoms, by giving those states that obtained guns a military advantage over their neighbours.[4] Joseph Miller has found that in West Central Africa guns could shift power from established kings to upstart warlords leading small bands armed with guns.[5] Military success enabled the capture and exportation of slaves. This relation between the trade in slaves and firearms has been dubbed the gun-slave cycle, a popular concept in the historiography of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Warren C. Whatley distinguishes four different types of gun-slave hypotheses. *Guns-for-slaves-in-production* argues that guns made slave hunting easier. *Slaves-for-guns-derived* sees gun exports increase in reaction to intra-African warfare which produced slaves as a by-product. *Guns-for-slaves-in-exchange* explains gun exports through the preference of slave traders for guns. The gun-slave-cycle finally combines the above, claiming that the firepower of the guns made slave raiding easier and therefore allowed the sale of more slaves and the purchase of more guns.[6] More guns begat more slaves, and more slaves begat more guns. The

1 Miller, *Way of Death*, 68–9.

2 For an overview of the wide range of goods taken to Africa see Alpern, "What Africans Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods"; Evans and Rydén, "Voyage Iron".

3 Zeeuws Archief, "On Board the Unity 1761–1763" gives an idea of the goods carried on ships of the MCC, especially of the textiles.

4 Kea, "Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries", 211.

5 Miller, *Way of Death*, 86–7.

6 Whatley, "Gun-Slave Hypothesis", 83–4.

potential victims of slave raids were also incentivised to equip themselves with firearms, which could force them to become slave raiders. By analysing novel archival evidence, this chapter argues in favour of the slaves-for-guns-in-exchange hypothesis as the relative importance of weaponry in the slave trade did not increase throughout the eighteenth century. Rather, the size of the arms trade increased as a result of the increases in price and volume of the slave trade.

Considering the importance of guns and gunpowder for both European traders and for African customers and users, historians have not paid much attention to their role in the slave trade. Their interest so far has mostly focused on textiles, either for their globalising tendencies (in the case of Indian cloth) or their impact for the development of European manufacturing. This interest is helped by the fact that the general literature on early modern textiles is likewise much larger than that of the military industries.[7] In fact, since a call to research the role of guns in African history was issued in 1971, only three articles have been published that focus on the role of military goods in the Atlantic slave trade.[8]

The main goal of these articles was to get reasonable estimates of the size of the arms flow from Europe to Africa. To do this, all three have relied on British data which was then extrapolated as being representative for the Atlantic slave trade as a whole. The data about guns, but not about gunpowder, is also limited to British traders at the end of the eighteenth century. There is no reason to believe that this specific British data should be applied to the whole Atlantic slave trade of the eighteenth century. Of these three articles, only the newest one, by Whatley, positioned itself as part of the literature on the gun-slave hypothesis. While the available data on the number of persons exported from Africa is nowadays quite detailed and reliable, the data about guns that can be used by theorists of the gun-slave hypothesis has not changed in the last forty years and consists of a few very broad estimations.

The goal of this chapter is to use new and unpublished data on the Dutch arms trade to investigate the role it played in the Dutch slave trade, and how it compares to what we know about the English case from the literature. This analysis is done by using a much more detailed dataset than was previously available which is able to show both temporal and regional patterns, illustrating for the first time how the Dutch firearms

7 DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic* may serve as an example for this.

8 In addition to the article by Whatley these were Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa"; Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century".

trade in Africa developed in the eighteenth century. With previous research focusing on the British case, even the modern standard work on the Dutch slave trade by Johannes Postma was unable to do more than speculate that guns and gunpowder were much more important for the Dutch slave trade in the eighteenth than in the seventeenth century, but without providing any concrete numbers.[9]

The Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC) was a Dutch company active in the slave trade, from the island of Walcheren in Zeeland. The company has left behind an exceptionally complete archive of its slaving activities,[10] including documents for all of the 114 triangular voyages it undertook. While the search for accurate information on slave ship cargoes is often a difficult undertaking, in the case of the MCC this data is very easily accessible. The type, amount, and prices of the trade goods on each voyage were recorded in a so called *scheepsboek* (ship's book). These books have survived in the archive for all but one slave ship, for which equivalent cargo lists are, however, available. These records are the source for all the data on the outbound cargo of the ships in this chapter. As these books were drawn up after the purchases were made, they are more reliable than the captain's input which is sometimes used to estimate slaving cargoes. The importance of having such a large dataset which was produced by a single entity will be demonstrated in the first section. To provide the number of enslaved persons bought with this cargo, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) was used. The database contains information for all the ships outfitted by the MCC.[11] The information contained in the archive and the entries for MCC ships in the TSTD are of an exceptional quality, making it the ideal case to study the cargo of slave voyages. It is assumed here that the whole cargo was sold, and that it was expended for the slave trade. Although ships sometimes also engaged in other trade, such as for gold and ivory, this practice always remained marginal.[12]

The first section will discuss and criticise the existing literature about the role of guns and gunpowder in the slave trade, which has focused on the British case, and show how the data from the MCC can be applied. The second section concerns itself with the content that formed the military

9 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 103–4.

10 The quality of the archive is such that it was included in the UNESCO *Memory of the World* register.

11 The numbers used are the imputed ones, which for the MCC are, however, almost always simply the sum of different embarkation ports and not calculated by an algorithm.

12 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 350–1 estimated the non-slave share of the whole British Africa trade at 9%.

cargo of the MCC ships. In the final section, the MCC data will be used to sketch out the long-term developments in this trade from the perspective of the MCC, as well as what it can tell us about the gun-slave hypothesis.

British Guns in the Slave Trade

It was only in 2018 that Priya Satia devoted a book to the early modern gun, not simply as a piece of military technology, but as a commodity and cultural artefact. Her book has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the English gun industry of the eighteenth century, its role in the industrial revolution, and also the cultural impacts of guns.[13] Her book gives hope that early modern guns as objects will receive more attention in the future, as they have so far received less attention than is due them.

Joseph Inikori wrote the first article to really analyse the gun trade itself in 1977, in response to a special issue of the *Journal for Africa Studies* of 1971 which had called for more research into the role of firearms in African history.[14] Inikori gave a tentative estimate of between 283,000 and 394,000 firearms being imported into West Africa (excluding West Central Africa) annually in the late eighteenth century.[15] He reached this estimation by combining British toll data from a parliamentary investigation of 1807, which provided the yearly value of arms exports to Africa in the previous decade, with gun prices he had gathered from a few slaving voyages that had happened in the same time span.[16] The toll data neither distinguished between destination areas nor provided any insight into the guns themselves. For this information, Inikori collected data on more than 100 slave voyages made between 1757 and 1807. The analysis of gun types and prices was done by aggregating all of them, making it impossible to see whether prices or preferred gun types changed in this half century.[17]

More problematic still was Inikori's regional analysis. Lacking the easy access to data which the TSTD allows, he only had data on the number of enslaved peoples bought by very few ships. His conclusions about which African regions received proportionally more or fewer guns were therefore based on one to three voyages per area only, making it very easy for a few

13 Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 183–90.
14 White, "Firearms in Africa"; Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa".
15 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 349.
16 Inikori, 345–7.
17 Inikori, 356–7.

outliers to distort his results, which becomes apparent when looking at Bonny, the most important slave port in the Bight of Biafra. From two actual and one planned voyage, Inikori deduced that ships to Bonny carried on average more than five guns per person purchased, while fewer than three guns per person were taken to areas other than Bonny and Senegambia.[18] If all the voyages to Bonny that Inikori provides are combined with data from the TSTD, the average number of guns taken per person falls to 3.68. It also becomes clear that Inikori's high numbers come from several voyages fitted out by the same Bristol slave trader, James Rogers. The Liverpool traders, who dominated the Bonny trade, only average slightly more than two guns per person bought. A more representative data sample might therefore easily show a completely different pattern for Bonny, or for any of the regions.

In 1980, W. A. Richards built on Inikori's work with the goal of enriching the earlier findings with data from the Second Dutch West India Company (WIC), and from the Birmingham gunmakers Farmer & Galton. The gunmakers' archives provided some interesting insights into their business, such as what determined the production costs of a gun for the slave trade.[19] But the translated Dutch letters which Richards used did not contain any useful quantitative data.[20] When Richards made an estimate for gun imports to the Gold- and Slave Coasts in 1730 he therefore had to rely entirely on Inikori's data. Lacking the embarkation data from the TSTD, he simply multiplied the average number of guns on all ships which Inikori had included in his Appendix II with the number of ships sailing to the Gold- and Slave Coasts in 1730.[21] Besides the temporal difference and the fact that only eight of Inikori's voyages went to those areas, Inikori had cautioned that his data was not representative for the British slave trade as a whole.[22]

After Richards, the topic rested until 2018 when Warren C. Whatley attempted to prove the gun-slave hypothesis in an econometric way. He concluded that the gun-slave cycle existed and that European arms exports had a strong effect on the slave exports of the following years.[23] Because

18 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 353–4.

19 Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", 51–7. The same firm was also used by Satia to tell the history of the Birmingham gun industry.

20 Ibid. The only exception from this is his statement that the Dutch were importing 20,000 tons of gunpowder into Africa around 1700. This must clearly be a typo or calculation mistake as it took the English the whole second half of the eighteenth century to import this much powder. Perhaps he meant pounds.

21 Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", 46.

22 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 353.

23 Whatley, "Gun-Slave Hypothesis", 102–3.

of the complexity of the different gun types and a lack of available data, Whatley decided to use gunpowder as a measure of arms exports instead, as gunpowder is a homogenous good that is much more easily quantified and because gunpowder exports were better recorded by British authorities.[24] Besides a correlation of gunpowder imports with increased slave exports in the following years, Whatley found that a glut of cheap powder in the aftermath of European wars allowed bigger exports and therefore started to spin the cycle.[25]

But Whatley's assertion that the British data for gunpowder exports serves as a good proxy for gun exports has two serious flaws. First, it assumes that the ratio of guns and powder sold per slave was the same for traders from all countries. If slavers from other countries specialised in either good, then British sales cannot be taken to accurately reflect the consumption of guns and powder in Africa, and therefore to determine their effect on slave 'production'. Secondly, Whatley argues that powder exports suffice because guns are durable goods, but they cannot be used without powder. Therefore, only the amount of powder is really necessary to determine the use of guns.[26] However, flintlock guns were not durable, especially in the humid climate of the African coasts. According to Joseph Miller, a gun could not be expected to be usable for more than a year in West Central Africa, owing mostly to the humid climate which corroded the guns' metal parts.[27] Even Birmingham gunmakers were worried that their guns would rot in their warehouses if they could not sell them quickly enough.[28] Guns therefore had to be used quickly after being imported and arms flows had to be constant. There were no long-term gun stockpiles in Africa. Whatley also had to treat Africa as a monolith, because his export data stems from a national level, and records neither the British port of origin nor the African destination.

Because the MCC archive is so complete, a regional analysis is possible. From the company's view, voyages were equipped for two different areas in Africa, which it called Guinea and Angola, respectively. The area called Guinea began at Cape Mount, which is nowadays at the western end of Liberia, and stretched all the way to Cape Three Points which lies in the western part of modern Ghana. The captains of the ships were instructed to

24 Whatley, 85.
25 Whatley, 97–9.
26 Whatley, 86.
27 Miller, *Way of Death*, 91.
28 Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 54–5.

begin buying enslaved persons at Cape Mount and then to sail eastwards, stopping everywhere where people were offered. This area was to be sailed back and forth until enough people had been amassed on board to start the crossing of the Atlantic.[29] The most important port here was Cape Lahou. In practice, captains of the MCC sailed even further east to the Gold Coast shortly before they started the Atlantic crossing, to complete their cargoes there.[30] The meaning of the term 'Angola' seems to have been clearer to the captains, as it was not described in the instructions given to them. Angola meant the area to the north of the mouth of the Congo river up until Mayumba in modern day Gabon. The most important places of purchase here were Malembo and Cabinda.[31] The relative importance of these regions for the slave and arms trade of the MCC can be seen in Table 4. Jelmer Vos has argued that the MCC trading patterns in both Guinea and Angola were also followed by the rest of the Dutch slavers after the end of the monopoly of the WIC in 1734.[32] The MCC's reliance on Guinea for two thirds and Angola for one third of its trade was also typical of Dutch slavers in this period. As the biggest Dutch slavers after the end of the WIC monopoly, the MCC was responsible for roughly twelve per cent of the Dutch slave trade after 1730.[33]

Table 4. Regional distribution of the MCC slave trade

Destination	Guinea	Angola
Ships sent	83* (72%)	31 (28%)
Persons purchased	19,836 (65%)	10,882 (35%)
Guns taken	101,344 (84%)	19,593 (16%)
Pounds of gunpowder taken	1,467,385 (86%)	234,655 (14%)

*Two of these ships were captured by British privateers before reaching Africa
Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

Cargo

Contrary to Priya Satia's assertion that accurate numbers are unavailable for the gun trade because 'contemporaries did not record those numbers, instead recording their weight and value as generic "iron ordnance"', the archive of the MCC contains very detailed information of the guns it bought

29 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 375.3, p. 60. A transcription of the Dutch text and a translation into English can be found at: Zeeuws Archief, "On Board the Unity 1761–1763".

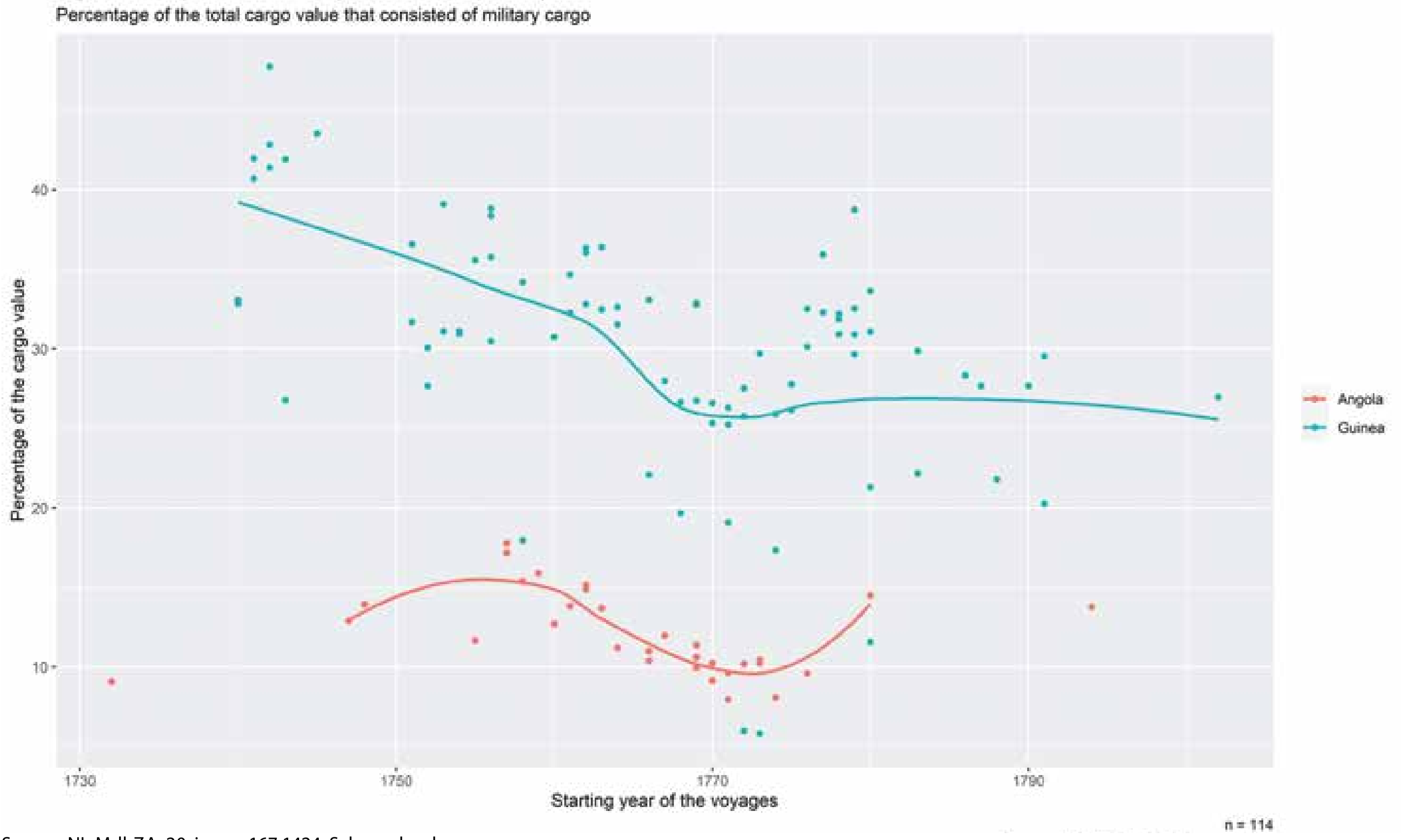
30 Vos, "The Slave Trade from the Windward Coast", 34–5.

31 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)"; For such an instruction see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 327.1, p. 127.

32 Vos, "The Slave Trade from the Windward Coast", 33–5.

33 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)".

Figure 1. Proportion of military goods on MCC ships



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

and sold.[34] The MCC diligently noted down the type, number, and price of all the guns taken to Africa on its ships. Undoubtedly similar numbers lie hidden in the archives of other slave trading companies, waiting for historians to uncover them and to arrive at more accurate estimates for the size and shape of the trade.

Guns and powder were absolutely integral to the slave trade and were taken on all slaving voyages of the company. They were generally the second most valuable category of the cargo on MCC ships after textiles. Under the bartering system employed in the slave trade, persons were always bought for a group of products, called a *sortiment* in the Dutch context.[35] This system forced slavers to take on board a wide variety of goods, and prevented them from, for example, filling their cargo wholly with guns and gunpowder or with only a single type of cloth. Yet as Figure 1 shows, guns and powder always occupied a prominent place in the cargoes of the MCC, especially on voyages to Guinea. This figure shows both individual voyages as well as the overall trend. While it is apparent that there was always a wide range in how important weaponry was for individual voyages, a general downward trend is also visible.

The size of the military cargo ranged from the mere 1,000 pounds of gunpowder and 250 guns taken to Guinea by the *Zanggodin* in 1773, to the 27,950 pounds of powder and 2,000 guns loaded on the *Watergeus* in 1778 destined for the same area. The median shipload included 17,520 pounds of powder and 1,194 guns to Guinea, but only 7,800 pounds and 603 guns if it had been equipped for Angola. Notwithstanding these large differences, the number of guns and amount of powder taken to both destinations increased both absolutely and relatively over the century. Ships not only carried more guns, they carried more guns for every person bought. As seen in Figure 1, however, the total value of the cargo grew even faster, meaning that their relative importance for the cargo value decreased.[36]

Like their English counterparts, the MCC traded in a wide variety of different guns, ranging from 'Danish' and 'English' guns to 'Angola' guns and 'French Buccaneers'. Neither English nor Dutch traders have left behind an explanation of what differentiates these guns from each other. The purpose

34 Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 189–90. Inikori, whose estimates derived from the value of exported guns Satia cites here, himself also provided accurate numbers on the guns carried on some British ships.

35 De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 144.

36 Daniel Domingues da Silva notes an even lower importance for weaponry in the Portuguese slave trade from Luanda in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with guns and gunpowder only accounting for about five per cent of the cargo value. Da Silva, *The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa*, 134–6. See his appendix for more detailed data.

of Angola and Guinea guns is quite clear, as they were only taken to their respective namesake regions. But we neither know how those two differed from each other, nor how a Danish or English gun bought in the Netherlands differed from a Danish or Dutch gun bought in England. A European name given to a gun did not denote its place of manufacture but rather the style in which it was made. Guns often had more modifiers attached to them, frequently giving information about their colour or their length. It was common for ships to carry three or four different types of guns, each in long and short versions, and sometimes even in different colours. This detail demonstrates that Africans were very discerning customers and that they were able to force Europeans to bring a large array of different goods if they wanted to trade. This should also caution one against old theories, already advanced by abolitionists in the eighteenth century, that trade guns were of such low quality that they were more dangerous for the person pulling the trigger than the one whom it was aimed at. Such dangerous, faulty guns should not have been able to survive on the competitive African markets.[37]

A large discrepancy with the British data from Inikori and Richards emerges when it comes to prices, which are much higher in the British cases than for the MCC. The mean price for the MCC guns lies at fl. 3.46 or 6 s. 3 d. in English currency.[38] Richards quotes a price list from Farmer & Galton, some of the most important producers of guns for the slave trade in Birmingham.[39] There, the cheapest guns are 'Catch Trading [guns] for the Windward and Gold Coasts' at 6 s. 8 d. or fl. 3.7. Among the pricier guns are 'Dutch Guns (Made to Dutch Pattern)' at 10 s. 6 d. to 11 s. or fl. 5.8 to fl. 6.1, with 'Danish Guns' even more expensive. While the MCC carried some guns that were as expensive as fl. 7, this was far from the norm. The ship with the highest average price for its guns was the *Afrikaansche Galei* which twice sailed with an average gun price only slightly over fl. 4.8 in the early 1740s.

There was quite a large price span within the types of guns the MCC transported, much wider than between the types. An average 'Soldier Gun', for example, cost fl. 3.26, but some were bought for as little as fl. 2.5, while especially high-quality specimens cost up to fl. 4.6.[40] Often these expensive

37 While even Inikori already argued against this sentiment, it still surfaces in almost every modern discussion of guns in the slave trade, amongst others by Miller and Satia.

38 Dutch currency values are given as full guilders with stuivers as fractional, 20 stuivers being 1 guilder. The exchange rate between Dutch and British currency used is 100 Guilders = 9 Pound Sterling.

39 Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", 53.

40 The *Groot Prooien* carried Soldier Guns for fl. 4.6 and fl. 3 in 1742. It also carried a large number of guns with copper barrels costing 5 and 6 fl.

guns were labelled as 'fine' and had copper and/or tin parts. These were most likely as much status symbols as weapons, if not more so. The same pattern seems to have been true for British guns, as Inikori reports some large price ranges: for example, Tower guns 8 s. to 16 s., Danish guns 8 s. to 20 s., and Fuzee guns 10 s. to 25 s.[41]

But while the large price span is common between the two cases, the lowest prices are much higher in the British case. While they reportedly re-exported many Dutch guns during the seventeenth century, British traders relied more and more on guns from Birmingham as the eighteenth century went on. In the Dutch Republic, on the other hand, gun-making declined at the end of the seventeenth century and the guns bought by the MCC most likely came from Liège in modern-day Belgium.[42] While the paper of Richards seems to suggest direct contact between at least Farmer & Galton and slave traders, the MCC bought its guns through middlemen, arms traders living in Zeeland, such as Jan Hendrik Slootman and Jan Baas Verdonk.[43]

It could be assumed that the price difference has to do with the provenance of the data. Inikori's most detailed price data only covers the years 1796–1807, during the wars of the French Revolution which could only have pushed up the price of guns.[44] But the price list presented by Richards dates from much earlier in 1757, admittedly during the Seven Years' War. Inikori's other data, which spans the years from 1757 to 1807, unfortunately only indicates a price range which does not specify if it is so wide because of quality differences inside of the types or because of change over time. The data from the MCC does, however, allow for tracing how prices developed over a seventy year span, and it indicates that the price difference between guns on English and MCC ships was structural.

Data from the MCC is very sparse during the wars of the French Revolution, because the company only sent out five ships between 1790 and 1802, when the *Standvastigheid* left for the last triangular voyage of the MCC. This was caused less by the effects of the revolution and the wars which followed it, than by the destruction which the fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780–1784) wreaked on Dutch shipping.[45] Notwithstanding these large

41 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 356–7.

42 Willemsen, "Dutch Muskets" has recently found a rapid decline in the Utrecht gun industry from the 1730s, attributed to competition from Liège.

43 Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", 44; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 164.

44 Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa", 346.

45 De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 36. This affected the whole of the Dutch slaving sector and therefore does not impact the representativeness of the MCC data.

wars, the average price of the guns carried by the MCC was continually trending downwards. While the Netherlands did not participate in all the large wars of the eighteenth century, their dependence on Liège should have made them feel the effects of the wars nonetheless, as even the British and the French had to resort to buying weapons from Liège in times of war.[46]

The most likely reason why the company did not exploit these price decreases by increasing its gun exports even further was the degree of African demand. Slave traders did not demand single goods, but a variety of goods for every sale. If the assortment of goods offered by a European captain did not satisfy a slave trader, he would sell his captives to another captain that offered a more agreeable mix of goods. Achieving the right mix was therefore crucial to ensure the short and successful negotiations on the coast that were necessary for a profitable voyage, and was a constant concern for the captains and their employers.

The 1740s were by far the period of the most expensive guns for the MCC, with only a single ship having an average gun price below 4 fl. in the decade, while only a single ship carried such an expensive cargo in the surrounding decades. The average price of guns trended downwards until it reached its lowest point in the late 1760s. Prices recovered slightly afterwards, but never reached old heights and were seemingly unaffected by European wars. This decrease was partially caused by a shift towards plainer weapons, but even those became cheaper. This shift in types will be discussed in the next chapter.

With wars unable to account for the price difference between the MCC and the British, we are left with a puzzle. Richards did not believe in the decrease of gun quality which Inikori posited for the late eighteenth century, rather thinking that the quality of guns from one area, such as Birmingham, increased and decreased over time with demand, and that therefore the reputation of English or Dutch guns in Africa also fluctuated.[47] Both agreed that a quality gun could not be had for less than 8 s. or fl. 4.4.[48] If this was truly the case, then the MCC either specialised in the export of low quality guns, or Liège gunmakers were able to produce quality guns much cheaper than those of Birmingham. If Liège was able to outcompete Birmingham on price so much, the importance of Birmingham guns for slavers from other countries may have to be reconsidered. Then again, Vos has argued that the Dutch free traders were squeezed out of the most attractive slaving

46 Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 103.

47 Richards, “The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century”, 56.

48 Richards, 52; Inikori, “The Import of Firearms into West Africa”, 360.

zones by foreign competition. If Dutch traders retreated to less competitive zones like the Windward Coast, the MCC's Guinea, it may be possible that lower quality guns could be sold there. To prove either point, more data is needed, ideally also from Portuguese or French slavers.

Gunpowder was as important as guns, and the demand for powder seems to have grown even faster than for guns. Guns in Africa were usually loaded with a weaker powder than was common in Europe, to prevent accidents with the supposedly lower quality guns in use there. This powder was known as Guinea powder.[49] The MCC very seldom noted down "Guinea Powder" in its accounts, but it was undoubtedly this that they loaded on their ships. Most powder for Angola was taken in small five- or seven-pound barrels, but bigger barrels up to thirty-four or even fifty pounds existed. These were taken together with the smaller barrels to Guinea, which received much bigger powder shipments than Angola.

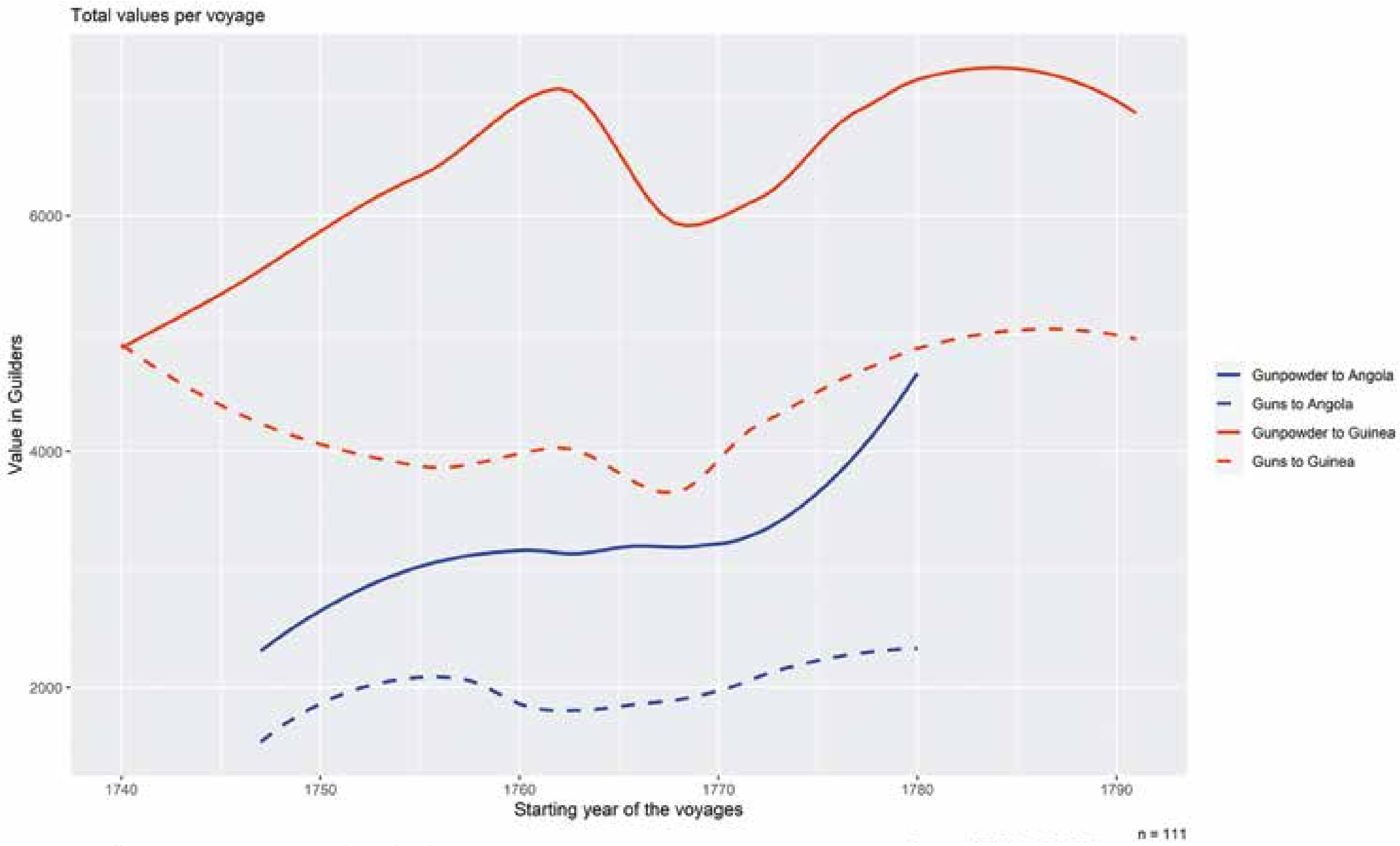
Development of the Trade

It has already been shown that, over time, guns and powder made up less of the cargo value (Figure 1). But as slave prices increased throughout the eighteenth century, so did the total value of the goods taken to Africa by Europeans. This meant that even as their relative importance sank, the total value of the military goods increased. As Figure 2 shows, this increase was especially driven by gunpowder exports to both regions.[50] While the price of powder peaked in the 1760s and after the French Revolution, the price of guns trended downwards until the 1770s, and then stabilised a bit above their lowest point afterwards, as will be seen in Figure 3. This meant that the number of guns exported constantly increased, growing especially quickly after 1770. The number of guns taken seems to have depended more on African demand than on European supply. While there was a long-term decline in gun prices, cheap guns did not correlate to large export numbers. This conclusion runs counter to Whatley's finding that English powder exports increased when large amounts could be cheaply had after European wars ended. Their increased export was therefore likely less a case of taking advantage of cheaper guns than fulfilling growing African demand.

49 De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 160.

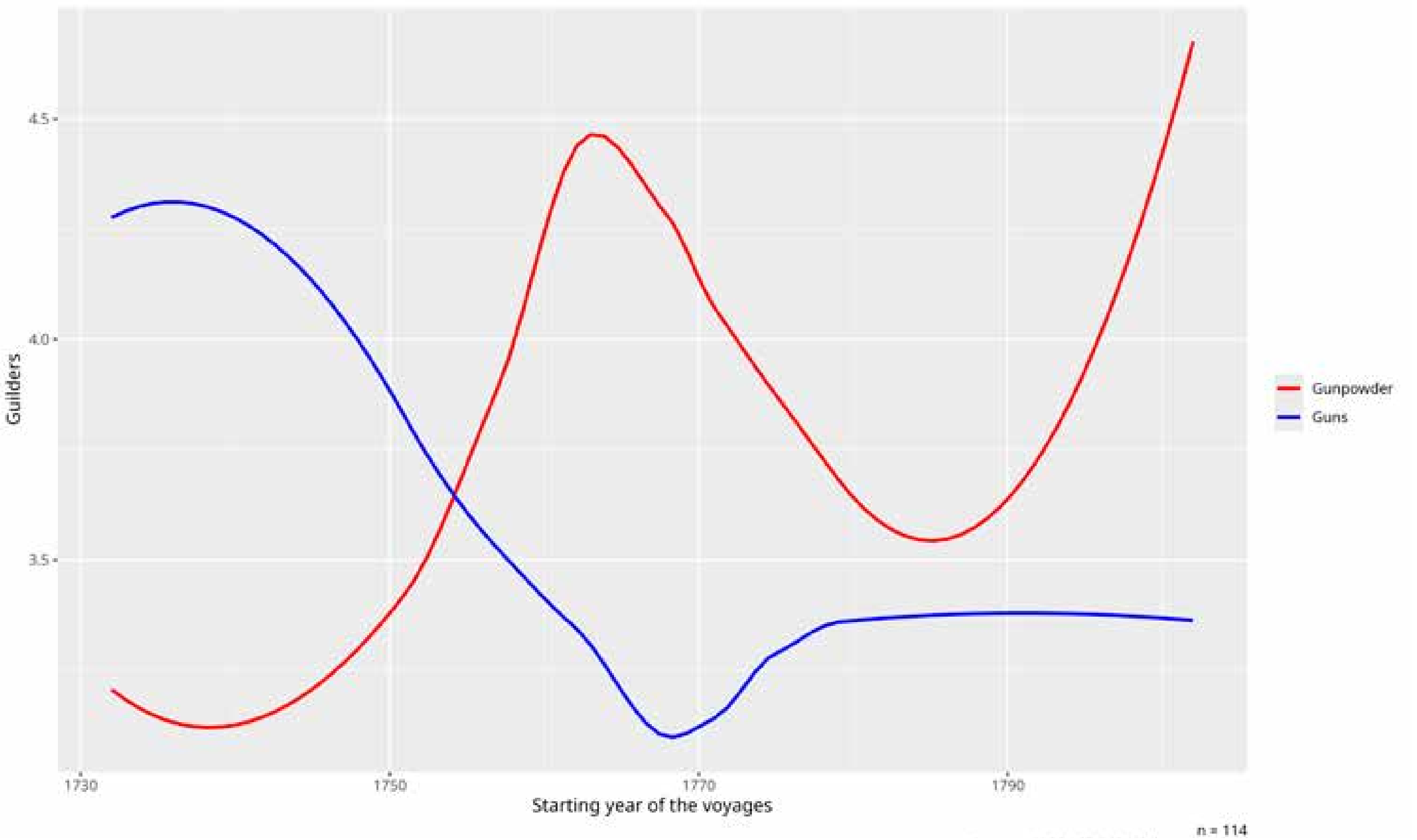
50 The last two and the first voyages were removed from this graph as they are at least ten years removed from the nearest other voyage to their destination and would therefore distort the trendline.

Figure 2. Development of gun and gunpowder exports



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

Figure 3. Average price of one gun and ten pounds of gunpowder



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

The earliest voyages of the MCC carried large amounts of expensive guns with them, but this trend stopped by the 1750s, when the common gun types such as the 'Soldier', 'Danish', 'Half Fine', and 'Company' started to dominate. Perhaps the company had initially overestimated the demand for expensive guns or decided that cheaper guns would also fulfil its needs. This switch to more common types of guns was responsible for a part of the price decrease seen in Figure 3, but the price of these common types also sank.

While guns and powder were of similar importance initially, powder quickly came to be the more important component of the cargo (Figure 4). The first voyages had paid roughly the same amount of guilders for the guns and gunpowder exchanged per captive. But the falling gun prices led to a decrease in the value of guns taken, which only started to reverse in the mid 1760s, when the value of guns taken finally recovered and then overtook earlier times. On the other hand, the value of the gunpowder taken continually rose. This rise was initially driven by the increasing price of the powder, but when prices fell more powder was taken, so that the total value of the powder continually increased. This pattern held true for both destinations, with the total values for Angola being lower, however. While the powder taken to Angola was the same, the individual guns sent there were usually cheaper than those destined for Guinea.

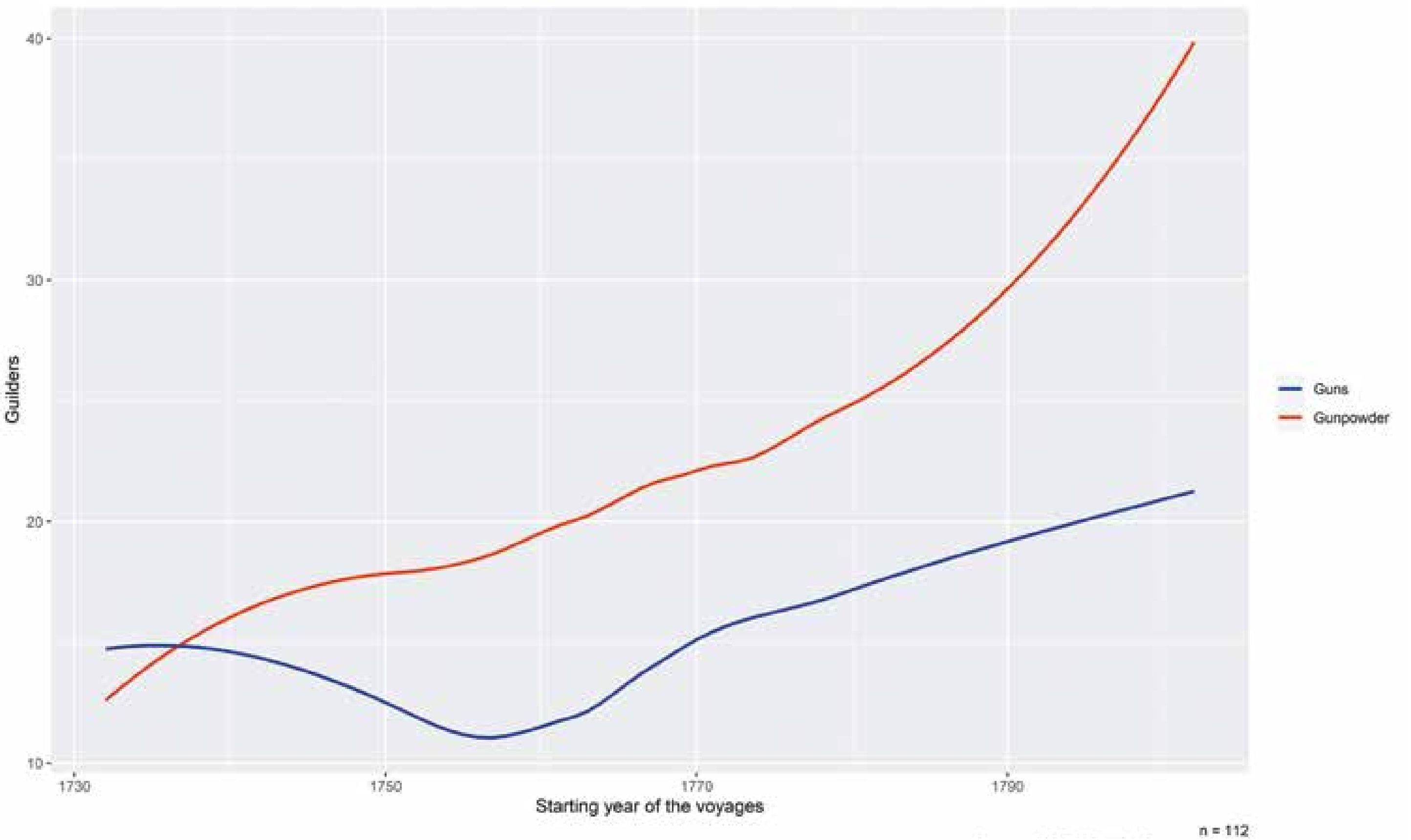
According to the data presented by Whatley for the English trade, powder only made up more than ten per cent of the cargo value for a short moment in the late 1750s, and otherwise often dipped under five per cent.[51] This data contrasts strongly with that from the MCC where values below five per cent were the exception and most ships carried more than ten per cent of their cargo value in powder. Indeed, for more than a quarter of the MCC's voyages, powder made up at least one fifth of the cargo value. The total military cargo component is more difficult to compare because Whatley only had the limited data from Inikori to complete his statistics. But for that period, it ranges from slightly over ten to twenty-five per cent. For the MCC it ranged from six to forty-eight per cent, with a median value of twenty-seven per cent. It seems safe to say that military goods played a bigger role for the MCC than for English slavers.[52]

The explanation for this difference most likely lies in the powder of which the MCC sold so much. Gunpowder was the only trade good which the MCC bought locally from Zeeland. On the island of Walcheren, up to five powder mills were active at the same time. These mills also supplied the admiralty

51 Whatley, "Gun-Slave Hypothesis", 85.

52 While keeping in mind that differences between English ports may be quite large.

Figure 4. Value of guns and gunpowder taken for every person bought



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

and the Dutch East India Company (VOC), but especially in times of peace the many slave traders based on Walcheren must have been their main customers. The MCC usually spread out its purchase of powder evenly over the three mills based in Middelburg, paying the same price to all of them. As the stakeholders of the mills were also involved in the slave trade, either through the MCC or one of the many other private slave traders, they profited doubly.[53] They made a profit on the powder sold to the company and through their involvement in the slave trade. It was therefore in the interest of the slave traders to carry a relatively high proportion of gunpowder with them.

While other slave ports, such as Liverpool, also had powder mills nearby they might not have been as intimately connected to the slave traders. These areas usually also produced other goods for the slave trade such as textiles, which did not happen in Zeeland, from where only the powder was exported to Africa.[54] The VOC, whose second most important branch was in Middelburg, played a crucial role in this. Its auctions not only provided the MCC with the opportunity to buy the Indian textiles which were so important for the slave trade, but the VOC was also a major importer of saltpetre, the main ingredient for gunpowder, from Bengal. This saltpetre was mostly bought by entrepreneurs who were related to the powder mills and the slave trade.[55]

Karwan Fatah-Black and Mike de Windt have observed that the British conquest of Bengal in 1757 temporarily ended VOC saltpetre imports into Zeeland. But by looking at the voyages of an MCC ship they also observed that this disruption did not diminish gunpowder exports by the MCC, it merely made them more expensive.[56] This was the case for the company as a whole, as can be seen from Figures 3 and 4. The price of powder in Zeeland reached its peak at the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, without negatively impacting the amount of gunpowder taken for every person bought. As prices fell afterwards, gunpowder exports kept growing. Curiously, the Fourth Anglo Dutch War did not increase the price of gunpowder for the MCC. Prices finally rose during the wars of the French Revolution, but this cost increase did not lead to lower gunpowder cargoes on the last voyages of the MCC. This fact confirms Fatah-Black's and De Windt's observation that by accepting higher prices, Zeeland was easily able to procure sufficient amounts of saltpetre from elsewhere.[57] British slave traders do not seem

53 De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 159–62.

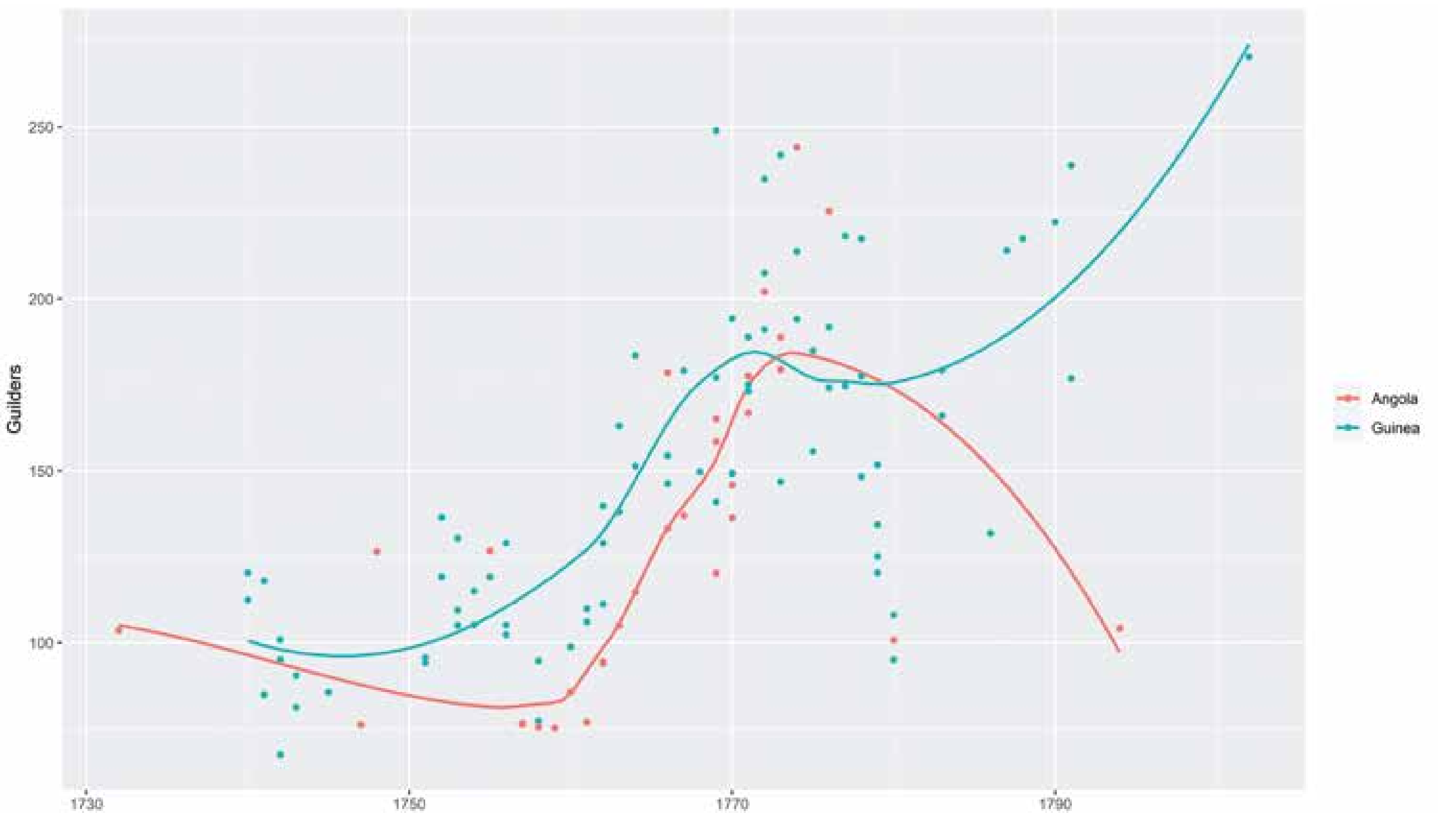
54 De Kok, 157–8.

55 Fatah-Black and De Windt, "De ontbrekende schakels tussen compagnie en consumptie", 493–8.

56 Fatah-Black and De Windt, 497.

57 Fatah-Black and De Windt, 496.

Figure 5. Cargo value per person bought



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 167-1424, Scheepsboeken.

to have profited from the British conquest of Bengal, as the importance of gunpowder in their cargoes did not increase. This may be explained by the fact that the British East India Company (EIC) did not see its monopoly on Bengal saltpetre as a tool to exclude foreign traders, but as a revenue generator. When the military situation in India allowed it, the EIC therefore also sold saltpetre to foreigners such as the VOC.[58]

What does the development of the MCC's arms trade mean for the gun-slave hypothesis? It most closely aligns with what Whatley calls "guns-for-slaves-in-exchange", meaning that guns and gunpowder played a crucial role as a means to buy enslaved persons in Africa. Whatever their importance for the process of enslavement, slavers would have been unable to make their desired purchases at the coast without bringing a large cargo of weaponry. The leading reason for the increasing arms exports of the MCC throughout the century was the rising price African slave traders demanded. As Figure 5 shows, by the mid 1770s prices were about seventy-five per cent higher than twenty years earlier. Until then, the prices of guns and gunpowder had moved in opposite directions. In real terms, the export of both had grown, if at a slower pace than that of exports as a whole. This suggests that the main reason for the increase in gun imports lay in the rise of slave prices on the African coasts, not in a "productivity" advantage for slave raiders, which would be reflected in an increase of weaponry's share in the cargo as slave raiders try to maximise their productivity to profit from high prices.

It was not the higher supply of slaves which increased the flow of guns, but rather the shortage of enslaved labourers caused by the rapid growth in European demand; therefore the exploding prices were what allowed the large-scale import of firearms technology into Africa.

Conclusions

The wealth of data provided by the archives of the MCC puts many of the assumptions made by Inikori, Richards, and Whatley into doubt. Most of all it shows that the firearms trade was not static, but that a strong expansion of the trade in military goods took place in the eighteenth century, especially after 1750. This expansion was driven by the increase of slave prices on the African coast and was visible in both Guinea and Angola. However, this price increase outpaced the increase in guns and gunpowder as their importance within the variety of cargo items shrank somewhat over time.

58 Frey, "The Indian Saltpeter Trade", 531–2.

Notwithstanding this slow decrease, arms played a more important role for the cargo of the MCC than it did for contemporary English slavers. This was especially so for gunpowder, the single most important good aboard MCC ships which often accounted for a fifth of the whole cargo value. The reason gunpowder played such an important role in the trade of the MCC is quite clear: it was produced locally and allowed the stakeholders of the powder mills who were involved in the slave trade to profit doubly. The Liège guns taken on the Dutch ships appear to have been very cheap compared to the Birmingham guns that were so important for English traders. Whether this difference was also reflected in their quality is not yet clear. If so, it may have been one of the reasons why the Dutch free traders focused so much of their attention on the less competitive, but also less productive, slaving zone of the Windward Coast.

It is to be hoped that this exploration of the MCC's case can be followed up with research into other slave traders, which will allow for the creation of a much more balanced picture of the role guns and gunpowder played in the transatlantic slave trade. This would require collecting statistical data about these goods: quantities and prices of guns and powder on individual voyages, over several years, ideally equipped by the same traders, or at least in the same port. In addition to earlier English voyages or free traders from Holland instead of Zeeland, data from ships sailing under different flags such as Portuguese and French would be valuable. While the archive of the MCC is certainly exceptional, much more information must still be hidden in the archives than has been recorded in the literature so far.

About the Author

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3. The Slave Trade on the Return Voyage

Ben van Yperen

Abstract: In the debate concerning the transatlantic slave trade the focus has mainly been on the triangular trade. However, slave trade was carried out on other voyages such as the small shipping in the Caribbean and the return voyages, the bilateral voyages between Europe and West Africa. These voyages formed a link in the whole "product chain" of the transatlantic slave trade. This article concentrates on the Dutch return voyages on which hardly any research has been done and gives an answer to questions as: how this trade took place, in what quantities, and what the financial importance for the traders was. The analysis of the ships' administrations of thirty-eight return voyages of the *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) provides insight into these questions.

Keywords: brokering, Guinea, *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC), return shipping, slave trade

Most attention in the historiographical debate on the early modern slave trade has been on the triangular trade between Europe, Africa, and America. Yet enslaved people were also purchased and sold again on the so-called bilateral voyages between Europe and West Africa, especially for gold and ivory. This trade in enslaved people on the bilateral voyages was also called the brokering trade. Part of the revenues of the return voyages was therefore based on slave trading activities. Similar smaller scale circuits, as compared to the triangular Atlantic slave trade, also existed in the intra-Asian slave trade and the Caribbean, where they were referred to as 'small shipping'.

In this chapter the Dutch return voyages to the coast of West Africa, then also called Guinea, and back to the Dutch Republic are analysed. Before the establishment of the West India Company (WIC) in 1621, the Dutch had already completed about 480 return voyages, although sometimes under

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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the Portuguese flag.[1] From its establishment on, the WIC was granted the monopoly on the Atlantic trade by the Dutch States General. From 1625 to 1630 the WIC shifted their focus to expanding their slave trading activities as much as possible.[2] However, little data is available about this so-called first WIC, which went bankrupt in 1674. A second WIC was established in 1674, and from that year on until 1730 the monopoly continued to be held by this joint-stock company. In his dataset of voyages, Den Heijer indicates that in the period from 1674 to 1740, when the WIC stopped its return voyages, 385 voyages were outfitted.[3]

The monopolies of the WIC were continually undermined by private shipowners, the so-called *lorrendraaiers* or interlopers who were active until 1730 when the monopoly was lifted. Based on the data set that Ruud Paesie has made, it is estimated that in the period from 1674 to 1730, there were 300 return voyages made by interlopers.[4] It is important to note that this number probably includes a double count of ninety-eight ships confiscated and deployed by the WIC. In 1731 private companies and ship owners took over the return trade to West Africa from the WIC. Den Heijer estimates the number of private return trips in the period from 1730 to 1791 at 300 trips.[5] If we roughly estimate the number of voyages of the first WIC at 400, this brings a total of 1767 voyages over the entire period from 1593 until 1791. Table 5 provides an overview of all the voyages.

Table 5. Overview of Dutch return voyages from 1593 to 1791[6]

Period	Participants	Number of ships
1593-1621	Private ships	480
1621-1674	First WIC	400
1674-1731	Second WIC	385
1674-1731	Interlopers	300
1674-1731	Correction	-98
1731-1791	Private ships	300
	Total	**1.767**

Source: De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 397; Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 11, 12, 294, 363; Paesie, "Traced interlopers".

1 De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*; Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 11.

2 De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 400; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 10.

3 Den Heijer, "Voyages of the WIC".

4 Paesie, "Traced interlopers".

5 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 362–63.

6 Numbers for the First WIC are best understood as rough estimates.

Historians have demonstrated that during the period before 1621 the Dutch were hardly involved in the Atlantic slave trade.[7] The first actions of the Dutch in West Africa are described by Klaas Ratelband, who showed the growth of the Dutch trade on Guinea and the start of the slave trade.[8] Henk den Heijer's book, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, gives an overview of the WIC from 1674 until 1740, which is particularly helpful as he supplies a quantification of the voyages of the WIC to Africa and many details about the trade, for example the currencies used and their values.[9] In addition to exploring his dataset of 750 shipping journeys of the WIC from the period 1674 to 1740 in the publication, the dataset is also digitally available through 'Data Archiving and Network Services repository' (DANS).[10] Johannes Postma has produced a significant study of the slave trade of the WIC from 1600 to 1815, but unfortunately the bilateral trade was not included in this study. His work remains relevant to this study as it describes the change from WIC monopoly to free trade and identifies return and triangular ships.[11] *Lorrendraijen op Africa*, by Ruud Paesie, provides insight into the group of the interlopers from 1700 until 1734, and shows that the interlopers formed a significant trade group.

As this historiography shows, data and corresponding analysis on Dutch WIC and privately organised return voyages after 1730 represent a gap in historical research on the Dutch involvement in slave trade. However, some information on this subject can be found in studies that have focused on private merchants and companies who traded on the triangular route, as their activities either intersected or overlapped with the bilateral trade.[12] The most important private slave traders were Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt in Amsterdam, Coopstad & Rochussen in Rotterdam, and Jan Swart & Zoon, Adriaan Kroef and Snouck Hurgronje & Louijssen in Vlissingen. These studies provide insight on the slave trade and the trade in goods of the private merchants, the relation with the bilateral voyages and the effects on the local economy. However, the market leader was the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC), a private company in Middelburg

7 De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 400; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade,* 10.

8 Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika 1600–1650*.

9 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*.

10 Den Heijer, "Voyages of the WIC".

11 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*.

12 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 371, 382–87; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*; De Kok and Den Heijer, "Het slavernijverleden van Vlissingen"; Negrón and Den Oudsten, *De grootste slavenhandelaren van Amsterdam*.

in Zeeland. In a private company the capital is provided by shareholders; there is no public ownership involved. The records of this company were meticulously kept and information on the early period of trading by the MCC, between 1730 and 1755, can be found in the book by Corrie Reinders Volmer-van Prooijen. It shows the transition the MCC made from 1730 onwards, after the WIC renounced its monopolies on the slave trade. The MCC was originally a trading company focused on inter-European trade, but after 1730 it specialised in slave trading.[13] Background on the functioning of the MCC and the daily practice of disembarking ships is given by Ruud Paesie and Gerhard de Kok, the latter focusing particularly on the period after 1750.[14]

Although these studies provide information on the bilateral trade indirectly, solely out-going voyages were discussed. Only Den Heijer, Paesie, De Kok and Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen pay some attention to the MCC return voyages. It was Ruud Paesie's mention of the slave trade on return voyages that inspired this research.[15] Den Heijer showed that, in the period from 1730 to 1740, the Zeeland shipping company Radermacher & Steenhart equipped seven ships for return voyages to Africa.[16] An article by Jan Parmentier contains more information proving that, in the past, these return voyages have been incorrectly labelled as triangular voyages due to the duration of the journey.[17] The studies on Radermacher & Steenhart and the Rotterdam company Coopstad & Rochussen suggest that their methods were comparable with the MCC, but there are no equivalent data available and the type of voyages is often not certain. It is possible that they made more return voyages now not recognised as such.[18]

This chapter will fill the existing lacuna in the data and analysis that exists around Dutch return voyages in the bilateral slave trade from 1730 to 1768. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) contains records of all ships that brought enslaved people from Africa to the Americas.[19] The following survey of data supplements the TSTD by providing data

13 Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*; Paesie, *De geschiedenis van de MCC*; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*.

14 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*.

15 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 89; Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 143; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 187–89; Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 357–9.

16 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 357.

17 Parmentier, "De rederij Radermacher & Steenhart (1730–1741)", 137–148, there 143–6, 148.

18 De Groot-Teunissen, "Herman van Coopstad en Isaac Jacobus Rochussen", 171–201; Hudig, "De scheepvaart op West-Afrika en West-Indië in de achttiende eeuw".

19 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)".

on thirty-eight return voyages of the MCC carried out from 1730 to 1758 which were extracted from the MCC archive held by the Zeeuws Archief. By doing so, this chapter not only provides essential documentation that has never been summarised and analysed in this matter before, it also shifts the perspective from the triangular trade to the neglected return trade from West Africa. It also takes a step forward by providing insight into the process of trading on the thirty-eight selected voyages, the extent of their trade and financial results.

As stated before, the WIC monopoly was consistently threatened by smugglers, interlopers, and privateers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. From 1713 on, the WIC took more action against this illegal trade, and it was amongst Zeeland's shipowners, who had mainly engaged in privateering, that these actions were felt.[20] After considerable losses, several prominent Middelburg merchants, mostly former smugglers and interlopers like Pieter de la Rue, Hermanus van de Putte and Hermanus Christiaensen, established the MCC to promote maritime trade from Middelburg and to allow the supporting companies on Walcheren to maintain their sales.[21]

After its foundation the MCC was initially concerned with European trade, but after the WIC renounced her monopolies, the MCC gradually changed and shifted its focus from commodity trade to slave trade. From 1755 onwards, the MCC focused entirely on trade with Africa and the triangular trade.[22] Bilateral trade with Africa ended in 1768 as a result of increasing international competition, the stagnating supply of African products, and the resulting poor financial results after 1765.[23] The chosen period 1730 to 1758 therefore provides an unique case study in which highly detailed records, although not consistently the same, are available on the bilateral trade, and especially the return voyages.

In the Zeeuws Archief, thirty-eight return ships of the MCC can be found in the period between 1730 and 1768.[24] Multiple sources were utilised to analyse these return voyages. The first were ships' books containing the financial results of the voyages and their substantiation. Of great significance to this research were the sales figures of the returned goods,

20 Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa*, 161.

21 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 24–29; Negrón, "Dubbelspel Zeeuwse lorrendraaiers en hun banden met de WIC", 59–61.

22 Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel,* 91–6.

23 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 89; De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 187,189.

24 Records also contain one ship named the *Winchester Galey,* which was an interloper in 1723; however this ship is not included in this research as it is not part of the bilateral trade.

for which financial reports were available for all voyages. The underlying details of the ships' books can be found in sub-administrations recorded by the captain and/or the first mate. The *negotieboek* (trade book) or cargo book in which all transactions were registered is especially relevant. These transactions consisted of the purchase and sale of enslaved people, gold, elephant tusks and the other commodities such as wax and redwood.[25] Also taken into account were the instructions of the management of the MCC. A final source is the book *Betreft Retouren en 't huiskomende onkosten* (Concerning Returns and homecoming expenses) which sometimes contains reports and information about the relevant voyage, in some cases recorded by a notary.

The following voyages presented less complete records. For the ship *Guineesche Galey* on its third voyage, neither the journal nor a trade book had been preserved, but the purchasing data can be found in the letters that the captain had written to the management of the MCC during the voyage. The overview that this provides is probably not complete.[26] Ultimately there were six voyages for which no purchase data were available.

Construction of Datasets

This chapter presents a detailed investigation of the bilateral trade and especially the trade on return voyages in the eighteenth century, including what part of the sales proceeds of these journeys was based on the slave trade. To do so, the collected data from the ships' administration was placed in two datasets. First is a financial dataset in which the purchase and sale of enslaved people and goods is recorded and the share of the slave trade in the financial results of the journeys is calculated. Second is a database of the transactions of enslaved persons from the records in the ships' administrations, containing information for each purchase or sale transaction: number of men, women, girls, boys, or unknown; the value of the transaction in guilders, marks, or Flemish pounds; and the date and place, details of the voyage, and the source. The deaths of enslaved people are also included in this database.[27]

25 Usually, the purchase and sale of enslaved people were also recorded in the ship's log, which can serve as an additional source; however no numbers were mentioned there.

26 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 495, scan 18.

27 These datasets and its metadata plus additional information on this research is available in the DANS data repository: Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

The way the slave trade was represented in the ships' administrations varied from ship to ship. For example, on voyages before 1740, the trade book had a separate section showing the purchase and sale of the slaves, which was included in the total count. This distinction was made because a captain had to be able to fully justify the expenditure of his cargo. Each expenditure of cargo goods was therefore noted against the value of the purchased goods. To this was added the returned cargo goods and the payment in cargo goods for expenses such as oarsmen, brokers, purchase of food and water, funerals, ballast, and firewood. All this together had to correspond to the value as recorded in the cargo book. Later it occurred that the purchased slaves were not separately recorded but, with each sale of enslaved people, the value of the cargo for which the enslaved had been purchased was set against the ivory or gold for which the enslaved had been exchanged. In the ship's book, where the loss and profit account of the voyage was drawn up, there are rarely references to the slave trade. Instead, only the costs of the voyage and the proceeds of the returned goods are compared. The data on the slave trade therefore had to be obtained from the sub-administrations.

The MCC Return Voyages

On the MCC ships the captain always received a document with instructions from the directors. The articles in these instructions were related to the course of affairs on board. On the ships in the early period, articles three to six in particular were related to trade. These articles implied that first the captain had to go to the Rio Chester or the Rice Coast to stock up on firewood and water and, if possible, rice that could serve as a commodity but also as food. Subsequently, he should not fail to visit the Grain Coast, where grain and ivory could be obtained. The next step was to sail up the river Cherlioens, if possible. There, however, the trade had to be carried out on board and the captain was not allowed to go ashore to prevent 'a bad encounter, of which there have been examples before.' From the Grain Coast to Cape Apolonia the captain could mainly trade gold and slaves. On the Gold Coast it was possible to trade in all places as permitted by the WIC. Afterwards the captain could sail to the *'Bogt Cammeroenes'* (now Equatorial Guinea) where ivory and wax could be traded. There, it was also recommended to 'deposit your slaves still on board, whether to Portuguese, English or French nations.' Any cargo that was left over could also be sold to them at a reasonable profit. Finally, as

much redwood as possible had to be stocked here, 'because it can serve as ballast, and there can still be made money of it.'[28] The instructions described were standardised and hardly changed over the years. In later instructions, the trading directions were omitted and the remainder only concerned the ins and outs of the ship. The instructions were therefore printed instead of written, and the trading instructions were handwritten in another document.[29]

However, despite the instructions, most captains sailed their own course. The starting point of the voyage along the African coast was often Cape Monte on the Grain Coast. The first trading activity took place on the Upper Coast, where mostly goods such as rice and grain, and occasionally palm oil, were traded. Some goods were quite specific to an area but gold, elephant tusks, and enslaved persons were traded along the entire coast. The MCC did not have its own trading posts like the WIC; as a result, trading was done from the ship. To trade, the crew checked the coast for smoke and fired cannon shots to attract the attention of the African traders who came to the ship with their merchandise in canoes. But the ship also had a boat and a sloop making it possible for crew members to go ashore to trade. The transport by the canoes was paid for, often in goods from the cargo. The trade was usually done by the captain or chief mate and sometimes also by the other officers, which differed per ship. It frequently happened that an officer or the captain took the boat to a different location from where the ship was moored, so that it was possible to trade in two places at the same time.

As the ship went further southwards, it passed the Ivory Coast, Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast. On the Gold Coast were many forts and trading settlements, administered by the English, Dutch, Portuguese, and Danes. The WIC fortress Elmina was regularly visited. If no trade took place here, it was still useful as a kind of post office where letters from Middelburg might be waiting or could be sent with the next ship heading for the homeland. After the Slave Coast, the Bight of Benin was visited, after which sea was usually chosen again to sail to the Portuguese island of São Tomé. Slaves,

28 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 168.6, scan 20. Original citation: '… ten eijnde uwe geen quade ontmoetinge bekomt, gelijk meer voor deze daar Exempel van heeft gehadt.', '… en na de bogt Cammeroenes verzeijlt, om u verdere negotie van tanden en wasch te bekomen, zoo moet gij geen occagie laten passeeren om uwe slaven die uwe nog aan boord heeft af te setten, 't zij aan Portugeezen Engelse of Franse natien, .', '… zoo moet gij zoo veel Roodhout sien te bekomen als 't maar eenigsints mogelijk is. Deswijl uw sulks kan dienen tot ballast, en alhier nog gelt van te maken is.'

29 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1366.1, scans 55–9, 70–1.

gold and tobacco were traded here. Tobacco, however, was not taken home but used as a commodity. This tobacco was a specific sweet variety of moderate quality that was popular in Africa but not in Europe. The Portuguese government banned the trade of quality tobacco that was monopolised.[30] Then the coast of Gabon was visited where there was wax and redwood to be bought, the latter of which also served as ballast for the ship. Sometimes this last part of the route was also taken the other way around, and in that case São Tomé was the final mooring place where the remaining enslaved people could be sold.

Water, firewood and ballast were constantly purchased throughout the journey. Regarding food, the stock of victuals that had been brought from the Netherlands should have been sufficient according to the directors of the MCC. However, in practice captains regularly deviated from this instruction. For instance, Captain Jacob van Stellen of the ship *Prins Willem de Vijfde* twice bought a *coebeest* (cow), flour and refreshments for the ship's people.[31] On the *Mercurius*, Captain Hendrik Santleven bought for his crew six *verkens* (pigs) in Fida.[32] The sea was sailed from Gabon to return to Patria, but some ships made a second or even third round and returned to the Gold Coast. Another pattern was to first sail back and forth off the coast a few times, approximately from Cape Lahou to Fida, and then descend to Gabon. For example, the *Vrouw Johanna Cores* did this on her second trip.[33] None of the ships continued south to Angola.

The enslaved were usually sold in the second part of the coastal trade, often to French, English or other Dutch slave ships that were engaged in triangular voyage. It was often not clear whether trading was done ashore with a ship's captain or a merchant. Sales were also made to the Portuguese who came from Brazil. For the enslaved people, this meant a new ship voyage, when they had often already been on the return ship for many weeks. In general, the ship captains tried to trade the slaves for gold. However, after 1750, they traded more and more for elephant tusks and occasionally also against cargo goods.

The instructions and the ships' regulations stated that the crew members were not allowed to trade on their own account. However, the rules changed when, on the tenth voyage of the *African galley* in 1748, the captain was allowed to trade for half profit. For a cargo value of 416:10:1

30 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 194.

31 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 964, scans 17, 44, 55 and 57.

32 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 753, scan 55.

33 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1209.

Illustration 1. Castle Elmina

Source: NL-HaNA, 4.AANW Inventaris van de collectie Aanwinsten Kaarten en Tekeningen verworven sinds 1888, 1568 Aldus Vertoont hem t Casteel del Mina van de Berg St Jago aan de Goud Cust in Gunea.

pounds he could buy 11:7:2 marks worth of gold. After melting down this represented 668:6:1 pounds and the gain was 251:16:0 pounds. The captain got half: 125:18:0 pounds, booked in the ship book under costs on return.[34] On the next trip, with the *Prins Willem de Vijfde,* this trading permission was extended to the officers.[35] On the *Zanggodin* in 1764 there were opportunities for all crew members to trade for a certain amount depending on their rank.[36] I have not been able to find any indication in this investigation that the crew traded slaves on an individual basis. That is not to say it did not happen, but the crews' trade did not make it into the MCC's books. It was only visible if some of the gold being melted belonged to crew members.

The ships deployed by the MCC were not specialised in triangular or return shipping. Except the *Eendracht* and the *Leliëndaal*, all return ships were also used in triangular navigation. The same was true, to a lesser extent, for the captains, many of whom served on both routes.

34 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 203.3, scan 32.
35 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 958, scan 10.
36 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1366.1, scan 51.

Quantification of the Number of Enslaved People

The inventory in the MCC archives of the traded slaves provides an overview of the number of enslaved people who were bought, sold or died on the return voyages. A total of 588 transactions have been found for the purchase of 937 enslaved persons over the thirty-two ship voyages with sufficient data in the period from 1730 to 1768, an average of almost twenty-nine and a median of seventeen enslaved persons per ship. However, the variance across the ships is large, so it is not appropriate to consider this number as indicative over this period. In any case, this number of 937 is still an underestimate because of the lack of many ships' sub-administrations, which means that data from some voyages are not available or incomplete. The actual number must be higher and probably exceeds 1,000.

Table 6. Number of enslaved traded on return trips of the MCC from 1730 to 1768

Voyages	Enslaved purchased	Enslaved deceased	Enslaved sold	Percentage total	Mortality	Comment
1730 - Eendracht - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	90	7	63	9,6%	7,8%	
1730 - Leliëndaal - voyage to the coast of Africa	66	3	63	7,0%	4,5%	
1731 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 1th voyage: to the coast of Africa	83	2	81	8,9%	2,4%	
1734 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 2th voyage: to the coast of Africa	4	0	4	0,4%	0,0%	
1735 - Afrikaansche Galey - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	10	0	10	1,1%	0,0%	
1736 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1737 - Afrikaansche Galey - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	10	0	10	1,1%	0,0%	
1738 - Afrikaansche Galey - 5th voyage: to the coast of Africa	8	0	8	0,9%	0,0%	
1738 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1739 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 5th voyage: to the coast of Africa	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1742 - Guineesche Galey - 2th voyage: to the coast of Africa	9	0	9	1,0%	0,0%	
1743 - Afrikaansche Galey - 8th voyage: to the coast of Africa	16	0	0	1,7%	0,0%	

Voyages	Enslaved purchased	Enslaved deceased	Enslaved sold	Percentage total	Mortality	Comment
1744 - Guineesche Galey - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	6	0	6	0,6%	0,0%	
1745 - Afrikaansche Galey - 9th voyage: to the coast of Africa	8	0	8	0,9%	0,0%	
1745 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 8th voyage: to Guinea	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1746 - Groot Prooyen - 3th voyage: to Guinea	6	0	6	0,6%	0,0%	
1746 - Guineesche Galey - 4th voyage: to Guinea	0	0	0	0,0%	0,0%	
1746 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 9th voyage: to Guinea	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1748 - Afrikaansche Galey - 10th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	0	0	0	0,0%	0,0%	
1749 - Prins Willem de Vijfde - 1th voyage: to Guinea	37	4	29	3,9%	10,8%	
1750 - Afrikaansche Galey - 11th voyage: to the coast of Africa	18	0	18	1,9%	0,0%	
1750 - Philadelphia - 1th voyage: to Guinea	4	0	4	0,4%	0,0%	
1751 - Vrouw Johanna Cores - 1th voyage: to Guinea	-	-	-	0,0%	-	No data
1752 - Grenadier - 6th voyage: to Guinea	31	3	28	3,3%	9,7%	
1752 - Mercurius - 1th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	23	2	21	2,5%	8,7%	
1753 - Vrouw Johanna Cores - 2th voyage: to Guinea	2	0	2	0,2%	0,0%	
1755 - Mercurius - 3th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	14	0	14	1,5%	0,0%	
1758 - Mercurius - 4th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	11	2	9	1,2%	18,2%	
1759 - Vliegende Faam - 3th voyage: to Guinea	18	0	18	1,9%	0,0%	
1760 - Drie Gezusters - 3th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	18	0	11	1,9%	0,0%	
1761 - Vliegende Faam - 4th voyage: to Guinea	21	1	20	2,2%	4,8%	
1762 - Drie Gezusters - 4th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	24	23	1	2,6%	95,8%	
1762 - Vliegende Faam - 5th voyage: to Guinea	38	0	38	4,1%	0,0%	

Voyages	**Enslaved purchased**	**Enslaved deceased**	**Enslaved sold**	**Percentage total**	**Mortality**	**Comment**
1764 - Vliegende Faam - 6th voyage: to Guinea	47	0	47	5,0%	0,0%	
1764 - Zanggodin - 1th voyage: to Guinea	191	15	176	20,4%	7,9%	
1765 - Philadelphia - 9th voyage: to Guinea	8	0	4	0,9%	0,0%	
1766 - Zanggodin - 2th voyage: to Guinea	85	0	85	9,1%	0,0%	
1767 - Vliegende Faam - 7th voyage: to Guinea	31	0	29	3,3%	0,0%	
Total	**937**	**62**	**822**	**100,0%**	**6,6%**	
Without - Drie Gezusters - 4th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	913	39	821	97,4%	4,3%	

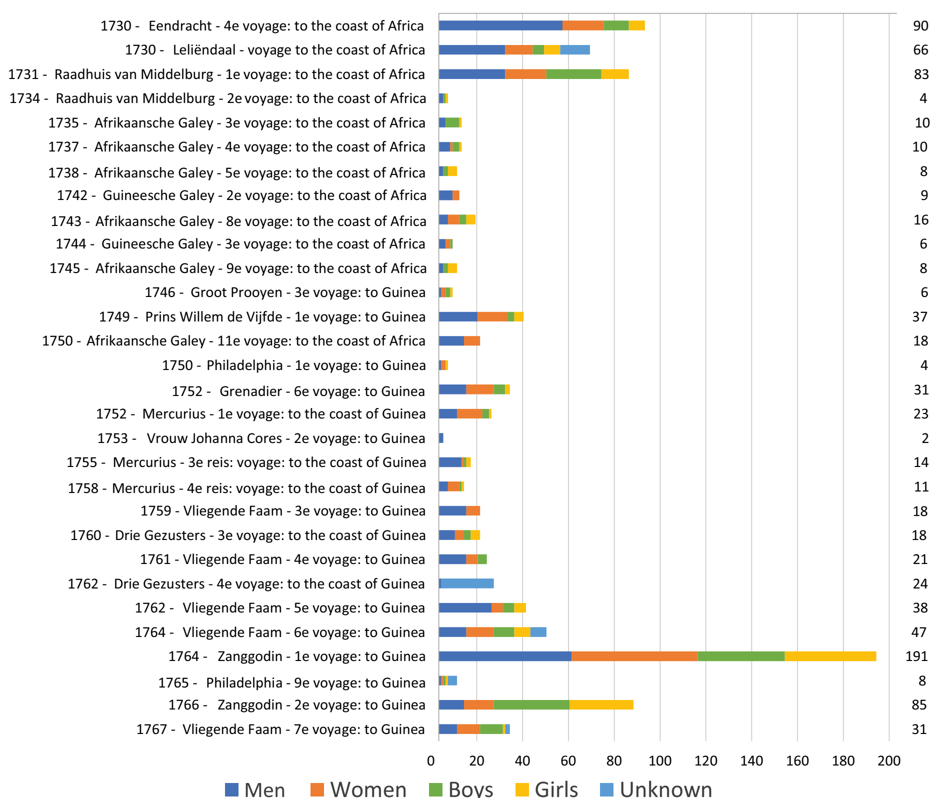
Source: NL-MdbZA, 20.

It would be expected in this table that the number of enslaved purchased minus the number of deceased enslaved persons would result in the number of enslaved sold. This is not the case with all voyages because the matching sales data could not be found for all purchased enslaved people . The voyages are in chronological order. A total of 937 enslaved persons were purchased, which is not a lot compared to the 113 triangular voyages the MCC completed in which each on average resulted in the purchase of 287 enslaved people.[37] The distribution over the whole period is visible in Figure 6.

The average number of 287 enslaved persons mainly derives from the first three and the last voyages. The first three voyages were actually failed triangular voyages. Apparently the MCC did not yet know how best to handle the trade. The instructions stated that the captains could sail to America if they had at least 300 enslaved persons on board.[38] Since the *Leliëndaal*, the *Eendracht* and *Het Raadhuis of Middelburg* were on the coast of Africa during the same period, it was expected that one ship, probably the *Leliëndaal*, would take all the enslaved from the other ships and sail to America while the other two would return to Zeeland with the trade goods. Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen notes that the ships missed each other, and the captains therefore decided to sell their slaves in Africa. The insurance policies for these ships were drafted to include a voyage to America. For the next departure of *Het Raadhuis van Middelburg*, a clause was added

37 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC,* 91, 99.
38 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 347.1, scan 34.

Figure 6. Number of enslaved by gender and age during the West African return voyages of the MCC from 1731 to 1768



Source: Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

to the policy that part of the insurance premium (two per cent) would be reimbursed if the ship did not go to America.[39] After that, the MCC actually made a triangular slave voyage with *Het Hof van Zeeland*, but it was not financially successful. It then took until 1740 before the MCC sent out another ship for the slave trade, when they reached an agreement with the Society of Suriname.[40]

There is little record of trade in slaves on the voyages from 1734 to 1750 (compare Figure 6), and it is probable that the commodity trade was profitable enough in this period.[41] That changed after about 1750, but the number

39 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1029.2, scan 29.

40 Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 10:92.

41 Reinders Folmer-Van Prooijen, 10:148.

of enslaved people traded on return voyages during this time suggests that slave trade was still a side issue. During that period, however, the triangular trade grew and as a result there was a lot of competition. Prices also rose and that may explain why it became attractive for the captains on the return voyages to trade in enslaved people. For instance, in 1758 the *Mercurius* sold some enslaved people to the *Philadelphia*. Ultimately, after 1767, the MCC would focus entirely on the slave trade in the triangular voyages.

It is striking that Captain Dirk Bonrhegh of the *Zanggodin* bought as many as 191 enslaved people in 1764. The instructions for the captain described a project to cooperate with captain Jan Menkenveld's ship *Haast U langzaam.* Bonrhegh had to buy slaves and then hand them over to Menkenveld at Cape Lahou in return for compensation.[42] However, just like in 1731, this plan went wrong, as was described in a separate report. Bonrhegh arrived in Cape Lahou with 136 enslaved people, but Menkenveld had already left. This was a problem for Bonrhegh who did not have enough food on board to feed the enslaved people for much longer. Instead, he sold them to the other ships in Cape Lahou.

Compared to the triangular voyages, the death rate among enslaved people on the return voyage was relatively low, at 6.6 per cent. The ship logs suggest that the death rate among the crew was higher, but that data is not yet fully analysed. Den Heijer gives an average death rate among the enslaved of 16.5 per cent for the WIC ships on the triangular navigation and 12.5 per cent for the MCC.[43] Paesie even gives a percentage of 17.5 per cent for the interlopers in the first half of the eighteenth century.[44] One explanation for the lower percentage in brokering trade is that they spent fewer days on board and the ships were not as overcrowded. But that does not say much about the chances the enslaved had of surviving after being transferred to a ship that entered the Middle Passage. The average length of stay of the enslaved on board the ship is difficult to determine. In general, it is not clear exactly which enslaved were sold and how long they were on the ship. Sometimes it could be deduced but there were too few cases to show a pattern. It is evident, however, that there were large differences, with the length of stay varying from a few days to more than a year.

A special case in point is the ship the *Drie Gezusters* on her fourth voyage. The ship broke loose from its anchors at night and ran aground in the surf. The crew left the ship and took refuge in the dinghy and the boat. All but one

42 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1366.1, scans 70–1.

43 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 365.

44 Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa*, 52.

of the twenty-four enslaved persons remained on board, as did two sick crew members. The captain spent a day with the boat behind the surf in the hope that canoes would come to help empty the ship. However, the ship broke in the waves and the debris and cargo washed ashore where the Africans took care of the elephant tusks and cargo pieces. The captain wrote in his report that he thought he saw some of the enslaved people on the beach, as well as the Dutch pig they had on board. That would mean there were survivors even though the two crew members had died.[45] Nevertheless, I have set the number of deceased enslaved at 23. In terms of scale, this disaster is not comparable to the *Leusden* or the *Zong*, but here too it turned out that the crew seemingly did not care much for the lives of the enslaved. Without this unfortunate ship, the mortality rate would be even lower, at 4.3 per cent.

From the dataset with transactions it is easy to make a distinction according to gender and age. This is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Distribution of numbers of enslaved by sex and age per West African return voyages of the MCC from 1731 to 1768

Voyages	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Unknown	Total
1730 - Eendracht - 4e voyage: to the coast of Africa	54	18	11	7		90
1730 - Leliëndaal - voyage to the coast of Africa	29	12	5	7	13	66
1731 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 1e voyage: to the coast of Africa	29	18	24	12		83
1734 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 2e voyage: to the coast of Africa	2	0	1	1		4
1735 - Afrikaansche Galey - 3e voyage: to the coast of Africa	3	0	6	1		10
1737 - Afrikaansche Galey - 4e voyage: to the coast of Africa	5	1	3	1		10
1738 - Afrikaansche Galey - 5e voyage: to the coast of Africa	2	0	2	4		8
1742 - Guineesche Galey - 2e voyage: to the coast of Africa	6	3	0	0		9
1743 - Afrikaansche Galey - 8e voyage: to the coast of Africa	4	5	3	4		16
1744 - Guineesche Galey - 3e voyage: to the coast of Africa	3	2	1	0		6
1745 - Afrikaansche Galey - 9e voyage: to the coast of Africa	2	0	2	4		8
1746 - Groot Prooyen - 3e voyage: to Guinea	1	2	2	1		6
1749 - Prins Willem de Vijfde - 1e voyage: to Guinea	17	13	3	4		37

45 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 328, scans 72–7.

Voyages	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Unknown	Total
1750 - Afrikaansche Galey - 11e voyage: to the coast of Africa	11	7	0	0		18
1750 - Philadelphia - 1e voyage: to Guinea	1	2	0	1		4
1752 - Grenadier - 6e voyage: to Guinea	12	12	5	2		31
1752 - Mercurius - 1e voyage: to the coast of Guinea	8	11	3	1		23
1753 - Vrouw Johanna Cores - 2e voyage: to Guinea	2	0	0	0		2
1755 - Mercurius - 3e reis: voyage: to the coast of Guinea	10	1	1	2		14
1758 - Mercurius - 4e reis: voyage: to the coast of Guinea	4	5	1	1		11
1759 - Vliegende Faam - 3e voyage: to Guinea	12	6	0	0		18
1760 - Drie Gezusters - 3e voyage: to the coast of Guinea	7	4	3	4		18
1761 - Vliegende Faam - 4e voyage: to Guinea	12	5	4	0		21
1762 - Drie Gezusters - 4e voyage: to the coast of Guinea	1	0	0	0	23	24
1762 - Vliegende Faam - 5e voyage: to Guinea	23	5	5	5		38
1764 - Vliegende Faam - 6e voyage: to Guinea	12	12	9	7	7	47
1764 - Zanggodin - 1e voyage: to Guinea	58	55	38	40		191
1765 - Philadelphia - 9e voyage: to Guinea	1	1	1	1	4	8
1766 - Zanggodin - 2e voyage: to Guinea	11	13	33	28		85
1767 - Vliegende Faam - 7e voyage: to Guinea	8	10	10	1	2	31
Total	**350**	**223**	**176**	**139**	**49**	**937**
Percentage	37%	24%	19%	15%	5%	100%

Source*:* NL-MdbZA, 20.

It is clear that, in general, more men and boys were trafficked than women and girls. This corresponds to the data from the triangular trade: of the total (less the unknown), 59 per cent were boys and men against 41 per cent women and girls, and 64.5 percent were adults versus 35.5 per cent young people.

There is little to be found in the logs about the treatment of the enslaved. The only interesting case concerned the *Eendracht* in 1730. Upon returning home an investigation was launched into the behaviour of the captain and chief mate for mistreating slaves and crew, continuous drunkenness, and the fact that the captain had given two enslaved from the *Armazoen* (the cargo of enslaved people) as a present to his brother who was stationed at Elmina in the service of the WIC.[46] Otherwise, little else is to be found apart from a remark here and there, as with the *Mercurius*: 'The slaves were brought

46 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 359.3, scans 47–56.

from front to back'.[47] Sometimes the expenses in the ship's administration demonstrate that food was bought for the enslaved people and that they were given tobacco and pipes. The only aspect relating to the experience of the enslaved that was recorded was the death of an enslaved person.

Financials of the Return Voyages

The value for which enslaved people were purchased was usually determined in marks (gold measure) or by the equivalent value of the traded goods (*cargazoen*) in guilders. A distinction was made in the transactions between men, women, boys and girls, counted per head (*coppen*). At times, the MCC captains used *piezas de Indias*, a counting term that originated from the Iberian slave trade. In this case, boys and girls were counted as one half or two thirds of a full *pieza*, in most cases an adult man or woman between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five.[48]

Goods such as elephant teeth and *crevel* (small teeth or pieces of teeth), grain (a kind of pepper, also called *malleget*), wax and redwood were usually valued in purchasing according to the value of the cargo goods, but sometimes also in marks. Gold was always denominated in marks which were a measure of value as well as weight. Back in Middelburg, the gold was melted down and poured into bars, with some of its weight lost in the process. The sales value of the goods was always registered in Flemish pounds and sometimes also in guilders. The price of the gold varied little and was usually around £55 for one mark, slightly more than the standard settlement price of £53.33 (for the settlements between the different currencies, see the files archived on DANS).[49]

By putting the value of the trade in slaves in Flemish pounds against the sale of all goods, it is possible to calculate what percentage of the revenues can be attributed to the slave trade. Sometimes, however, the enslaved people were exchanged for commodities, such as tobacco. In this case the sales value was calculated based on the value of the tobacco. On the second voyage of the ship *Raadhuis van Middelburg*, income was also generated by providing transport for a number of enslaved people from Fida to Axim. This amount was also included as income from the slave trade.[50] Another form

47 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 744, scan 36. Original citation: 'Bragten de slaven van vooren naar agter'.

48 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 158; Antunes and Negrón, "The Dutch Republic and the Spanish Slave Trade", 36.

49 Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

50 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1031, scan 45.

of income was trading goods for half profit, meaning that trading was done for third parties and the profits were shared. This happened, for example, on the fifth voyage of the ship *Raadhuis van Middelburg* with a batch of red wine.[51] This type of income, as well as the value of the returned freight goods, has not been included as sales revenue.

Often the trade books also mentioned the place where slaves were bought and sold. It is not always clear because each captain used his own spelling of place names. Tables 8 and 9 show the most frequently mentioned places. The most important location was, without a doubt, Cape Lahou for both purchase and sale. Despite the directions in the instructions, the purchase of enslaved people took place not only on the Upper Coast but also in Gabon. In that case, a second round was needed to resell them. More purchasing than sales locations can clearly be distinguished. Sales mainly occured in places where many ships were anchored.

Table 8. Number of enslaved purchased by location on the West African return voyages of the MCC from 1731 to 1768

Nr.	Location	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Unknown	Total	Percentage
1	Cape Lahou	71	44	24	21	0	160	17,1%
2	Rio Gabon	13	15	37	26	0	91	9,7%
3	Nazareth	33	22	10	18	0	83	8,9%
	From the boat	1	5	19	18	0	43	4,6%
4	St. Andries	8	6	8	6	0	28	3,0%
5	Groot Bazan	7	11	2	1	0	21	2,2%
	Klein Bazan	12	8	1	0	0	21	2,2%
	Basan	2	1	2	3	13	21	2,2%
6	Rio das Camaronas	14	2	1	1	0	18	1,9%
7	Setter Croe	4	8	1	5	0	18	1,9%
	Other	106	72	54	28	2	262	28,0%
	Unknown	79	29	17	12	34	171	18,2%
	Total	**350**	**223**	**176**	**139**	**49**	**937**	**100%**

Source*:* Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

It is notable that a disproportionate number of young people were sold in St. Andries. This can be traced back to the *Zanggodin* which had bought them along the Rio Gabon, as can also be seen in table 9 with purchases. It is not clear whether this was intentional or coincidental.

51 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1023, scan 60.

Table 9. Number of enslaved sold by location on the West African return voyages of the MCC from 1731 to 1768

Nr.	Location	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Unknown	Total	Percentage
1	Cape Lahou	87	64	43	35	1	230	26,7%
4	St. Andries	14	21	36	29	0	100	11,6%
8	Elmina	27	9	2	1	21	60	7,0%
9	St. Tomé	24	7	10	11	0	52	6,0%
	Sabrijn	20	8	2	4	0	34	4,0%
10	Axim	7	15	1	4	0	27	3,1%
	Other	53	32	25	24	19	153	17,8%
	Unknown	88	44	45	21	6	204	23,7%
	Total	**320**	**200**	**164**	**129**	**47**	**860**	**100%**

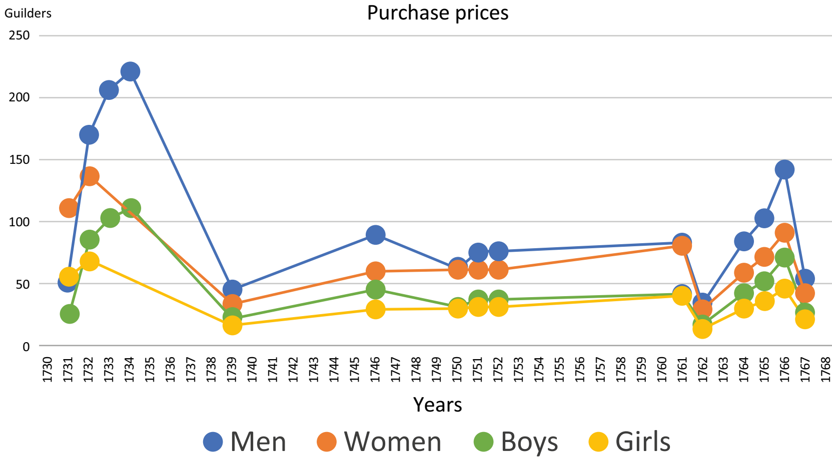
Source*:* Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

In some cases, the prices of purchases or sales are also known. The prices were quoted in different currencies, but I have converted them all to guilders (for the currency rates used see DANS).[52] Selling was often done with several enslaved people at the same time for one sum. By counting girls and boys as half a man or woman and a woman as three-fourth man, the total sum can be broken down. It is not entirely accurate because sometimes a boy or girl counted for two-thirds or one-fourth, which was not always indicated. The figures in this section are therefore indicative. Over the whole period from 1731 to 1768 the average purchase prices were fl.105,67 for a man, fl.71,24 for a woman, fl.52,84 for a boy and fl.35,62 for a girl. The average sales prices were fl.157,76 for a man, fl.118,74 for a woman, fl.78,88 for a boy and fl.59,37 for a girl. On average, therefore, a considerable net profit was made, although that figure has to be corrected with the costs of staying along the coast of Africa and taking care of the enslaved. But sales revenue was not always higher than purchase cost and prices fluctuated quite a bit over time, as the following figures show.

The reliability of the annual figures is not the same for every year due to the quantity of data in numbers, purchase and sales figures. These figures should, therefore, not be used as precise absolute values, but as an indication of development and fluctuations over time. It can be deduced from the graphs above that sometimes the average purchase price was higher than the selling price. This certainly applies in the years with the large numbers when the captains were forced to sell their *armazoen* at a loss due to circumstances. However, the relationship between the gold price in

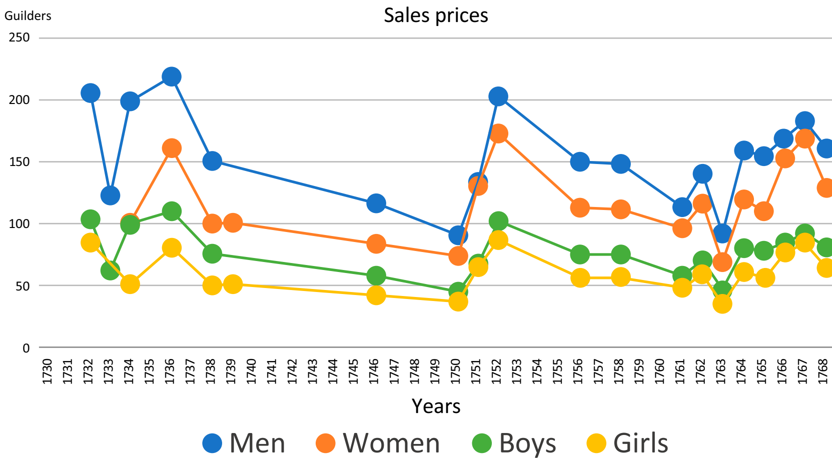
52 Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

Figure 7. Development of purchase prices in guilders for return voyages of the MCC over the period from 1731 to 1768



Source: Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

Figure 8. Development of sales prices in guilders for return voyages of the MCC over the period from 1731 to 1768



Source: Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

Africa compared to Middelburg was such that it ultimately yielded a profit. The gold (or ivory) returned brought in more than the freight had cost for the transactions in question.

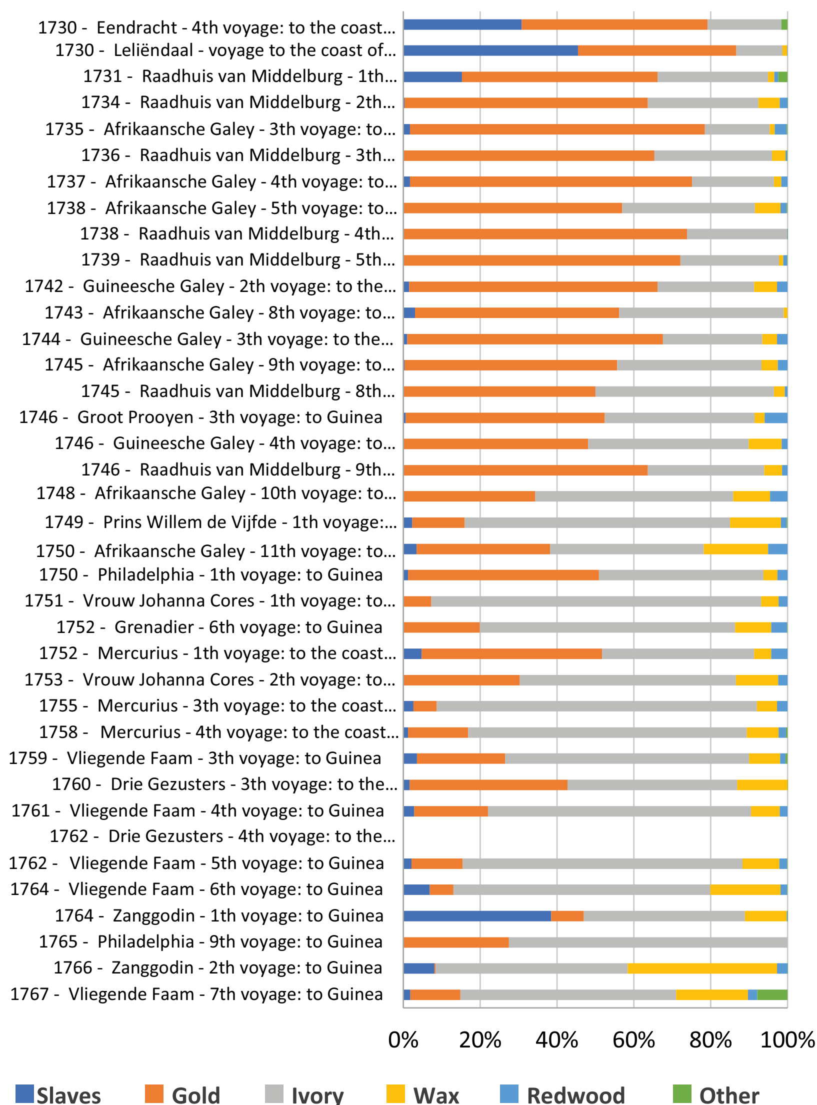
The sales figures of all products have been distilled from the ships' administration. In Table 10 below, these data are again presented chronologically

Table 10. Sales turnover of the slave trade and the goods sold on the return voyages of the MCC from 1731 to 1768 (Values in Flemish Pounds)

Voyages	Slaves	Total products	Slaves / Products
1730 - Eendracht - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£1.549,80	£3.475,76	44,6%
1730 - Leliëndaal - voyage to the coast of Africa	£5.493,34	£6.603,28	83,2%
1731 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 1th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£1.521,22	£8.440,50	18,0%
1734 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 2th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£46,56	£13.465,90	0,3%
1735 - Afrikaansche Galey - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£182,90	£10.502,14	1,7%
1736 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£-	£9.452,29	0,0%
1737 - Afrikaansche Galey - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£173,38	£9.791,22	1,8%
1738 - Afrikaansche Galey - 5th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£-	£10.602,07	0,0%
1738 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 4th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£-	£11.234,24	0,0%
1739 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 5th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£-	£10.308,24	0,0%
1742 - Guineesche Galey - 2th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£198,00	£12.944,72	1,5%
1743 - Afrikaansche Galey - 8th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£348,52	£11.065,88	3,1%
1744 - Guineesche Galey - 3th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£132,00	£12.646,95	1,0%
1745 - Afrikaansche Galey - 9th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£42,31	£15.281,15	0,3%
1745 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 8th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£12.355,06	0,0%
1746 - Groot Prooyen - 3th voyage: to Guinea	£72,83	£12.574,89	0,6%
1746 - Guineesche Galey - 4th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£10.559,28	0,0%
1746 - Raadhuis van Middelburg - 9th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£10.511,50	0,0%
1748 - Afrikaansche Galey - 10th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£-	£16.115,48	0,0%
1749 - Prins Willem de Vijfde - 1th voyage: to Guinea	£310,55	£13.234,72	2,3%
1750 - Afrikaansche Galey - 11th voyage: to the coast of Africa	£327,99	£9.177,80	3,6%
1750 - Philadelphia - 1th voyage: to Guinea	£85,78	£6.832,04	1,3%
1751 - Vrouw Johanna Cores - 1th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£11.449,45	0,0%
1752 - Grenadier - 6th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£9.877,04	0,0%
1752 - Mercurius - 1th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£454,90	£9.161,33	5,0%
1753 - Vrouw Johanna Cores - 2th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£8.372,70	0,0%
1755 - Mercurius - 3th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£244,44	£8.975,77	2,7%
1758 - Mercurius - 4th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£132,20	£10.457,53	1,3%
1759 - Vliegende Faam - 3th voyage: to Guinea	£439,08	£11.945,41	3,7%
1760 - Drie Gezusters - 3th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£199,63	£12.337,97	1,6%
1761 - Vliegende Faam - 4th voyage: to Guinea	£392,30	£13.383,78	2,9%
1762 - Drie Gezusters - 4th voyage: to the coast of Guinea	£-	£-	-
1762 - Vliegende Faam - 5th voyage: to Guinea	£289,62	£13.453,44	2,2%
1764 - Vliegende Faam - 6th voyage: to Guinea	£844,51	£11.449,65	7,4%
1764 - Zanggodin - 1th voyage: to Guinea	£7.745,05	£12.393,03	62,5%
1765 - Philadelphia - 9th voyage: to Guinea	£-	£7.902,61	0,0%
1766 - Zanggodin - 2th voyage: to Guinea	£850,17	£9.662,74	8,8%
1767 - Vliegende Faam - 7th voyage: to Guinea	£180,00	£9.668,06	1,9%
Total	**£22.257,11**	**£397.665,64**	**5,6%**

Source*:* Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

Figure 9. Chronological development of the share of the main products in total turnover of the West African return voyages of the MCC from 1731-1768



Source: Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

over the voyages. The sales turnover of the products is not equal to the reported total turnover because sometimes amounts such as selling items from the ship's equipment, freight for half profit and amounts yet to be received are not included. The turnover from the slave trade is, of course, not included in the total count because it has been converted into gold, for

example through the sale of the slaves. The share of the slave trade on the sales turnover is calculated per voyage. Over all voyages this share amounts to 5.6 per cent, but the actual number will be slightly higher because the products are completely registered while the slave trade is not.

The composition of the products changed over time. The previous section already discussed the fluctuations in the slave sales, but there were other shifts as well. In the early period, gold was the most important product. During that period, the enslaved people were also often sold to Portuguese traders who paid for them with gold from Brazil. But gold became scarcer over time and Figure 9 shows that the share of ivory increased. It is clearly visible that the main commodities were gold and ivory. The other products, including redwood, grain, rice, palm oil, *karet* (turtle) and gum, are marginal in financial terms. However, redwood was important in quantity, and it was used as ballast. Despite the fact that it did not yield much, it did make a high profit. Figure 9 shows the voyages in chronological order next to one another with the percentage distribution of the value of the sales of the main products and of the slaves.

Conclusion

In this chapter, thirty-eight return voyages of the MCC between 1730 and 1768 have been examined in detail, which is only a small percentage of all Dutch return voyages over the period 1600–1800. An estimate of the total number is approximately 1700 to 1800 return voyages. As this study only concerns a very small sample and, moreover, is not random, one cannot draw broader conclusions about all voyages from this period. These voyages are a small link in the transatlantic 'product chain' from an African village to an American plantation. This research gives some insight in this link which to date has been little investigated. The quantification made of this trade can supplement the data already present in the TSTD database.

The size of the slave trade on the MCC's return voyages has been estimated in this study. There must have been more than a thousand enslaved people trafficked on these return voyages. In most cases they were sold to ships headed for the Middle Passage, thus prolonging their time on board slave ships and reducing their chances of survival. The slave trade on the return voyages is also expressed in financial figures, amounting to 5.6 per cent of total sales. This amount illustrates that the slave trade was subordinate to the main trade in gold and ivory and, to a lesser extent, wax and redwood. This relationship was probably reversed with the slave ships, as they were

usually inclined to exchange gold and ivory for slaves. Cape Lahou was definitely the centre for this exchange.

In addition, the share of the slave trade is largely determined by a few ships that were either originally intended as slave ships bound for America or were supporting a slave ship. There was certainly no uniform distribution over the examined period from 1731 to 1768: the first and last periods stood out and in the middle period the share of the slave trade was approximately 1.0 to 2.0 per cent. Furthermore, the development over time shows that the emphasis shifted from trading gold to trading ivory.

The ships' administrations gave little insight into the treatment of the enslaved. The mortality rate on these return voyages of 6.6 per cent was lower than that of the slave ships on the Middle Passage and was heavily influenced by the *Drie Gezusters* disaster, which probably killed twenty-three enslaved people. Without this ship the death rate would have been 4.3 per cent.

This research has produced a dataset of all the transactions on enslaved people in the return voyages that I was able to find in the books of the MCC. From the ships' books, a financial database has been constructed with sales figures of enslaved persons and the trade in products. Both datasets, together with other information such as an overview on ship data, currency rates, and a report with additional tables and graphs, have been published on DANS in the hope that other researchers can use this data for further analysis or to make connections with other information. Possibly the set can be expanded with ships from other periods or from other companies.[53]

About the Author

After his retirement, Ben van Yperen graduated in 2023 as a historian from the University of Leiden, specialising in Economic History. Before that, he had worked in the business world with systems for financial management. In 1979, he graduated in Business Econometrics at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

53 Van Yperen, "Retourvaarten MCC".

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Part II

At Sea

4. The Middle Passages of the *Geertruyda & Christina* (1783-1785) and *Zeemercuur* (1787-1789): A Comparison

Camilla de Koning

Abstract: This article focuses on the experiences of the crew and enslaved people aboard two slave ships contracted by the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC) in the late eighteenth century on their respective seventh and first journey: the *Geertruyda en Christina* (GC7) and the *Zeemercuur* (ZM1). Middle Passages are understudied and underrepresented in historical research, while the experiences of those on board were a profound part of the workings of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. The GC7 and ZM1 had notably high mortality rates of thirty-six and sixty-four per cent, while the average of all MCC journeys was twenty per cent. This article aims to explore the question of "what happened aboard these ships?" by analyzing qualitative sources such as journals and financial documents of the MCC and other companies involved in the transatlantic slave trade and reading these sources "against the grain" to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of those on board.

Keywords: Middle Passage; slave trade; experiences; surgeons; ship journals

Introduction

On August 21, 1783, the ship *Geertruyda & Christina* departed from the coast of Zeeland to the open sea.[1] Contracted by the *Middelburgsche Commercie*

1 In this article, enslaved people are not described as slaves but as enslaved people or female/male/child/infant slave, in an effort to emphasise the humanity of those enslaved. The absence of names and descriptions unfortunately makes it impossible to do more than this bare minimum.

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
DOI: 10.5117/9789048560493_CH04

Compagnie (MCC), the ship would sail to the African coast to procure an *armazoen* (human cargo) of enslaved people to subsequently sell in the Dutch colonies across the Atlantic. Besides enslaved people, the crew was instructed to procure as much ivory as possible.[2] It would be the seventh and last journey of this ship and the sixth journey as a captain for Cornelis van Kakom. Only five years later, on the December 7, 1787, Van Kakom would depart on his last voyage as a slaving captain for the MCC, this time on the first voyage of the slave ship *Zeemercuur*.[3]

The success of a slave ship was determined by the number of enslaved people a captain and his crew could sell upon arrival in the colonies of the Dutch Republic. The higher the mortality rate aboard a ship, the less profit would be made. To emphasise this, a special reward fee was connected to the sales. The highest officers of the crew received an extra six to eighty *stuijvers* per sold man, woman, or enslaved child.[4] This bonus ensured that captain and crew remained focused on acquiring as many captives as possible and keeping their *armazoen* of enslaved people alive. In the cases of the *Geertruyda & Christina 7* (GC7) and *Zeemercuur 1* (ZM1), the officers did not succeed in this objective.

The GC7 and ZM1 would become two of the voyages with the worst outcomes regarding mortality in both the history of the MCC and captain Cornelis van Kakom's personal sailing history. The *Zeemercuur 1* is even mentioned in Johannes Postma's book on Dutch slavery among 'consignments with catastrophic mortality rates', with a mortality rate of sixty-four per cent and an 'unknown' primary cause.[5] The mortality rate of the GC7 lies at a lower, but still unusually high, rate of thirty-six per cent. This while the average of all MCC journeys was twenty per cent.[6] Although the reality and experience of crew and enslaved aboard are more complex than these numbers can reflect, the numbers do raise the deceptively simple question: what happened aboard these ships? And how can we as historians look beyond the numbers to create an understanding of the experience of those on board?[7]

The original texts and their translations are not altered, as the texts are a product of their time, and the absence of a humane element of description in them portrays the severely dehumanising and ruthless way of thinking that the slave trade was based on.

2 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1403.1, scan 32.

3 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 104; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nrs.1405 and 429.

4 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv. 1403.1, scan 32.

5 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade,* 254.

6 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery,* 134; Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 47–8.

7 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 137.

Research on the transatlantic slave trade has, in the past, focused on reconstructing the volume of the trade, or, as Van Welie called it, 'the numbers game.'[8] Since the research on the transatlantic slave trade took off after World War II, historians have worked to assess the quantitative side of this trade, on both national and global levels. This research has resulted in different historical works such as the book by Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (1990), that shed light on the magnitude of the transatlantic slave trade, although a lively discussion remains on the correctness of the calculations that have been made in the past.[9] Online environments such as *Slave Voyages* have digitised quantitative research from all over the world and made it easily accessible to historians and everyone else interested.[10] However, less attention has been paid to creating a more qualitative or in-depth picture of the ten thousands of voyages compiled in these overviews.

In 2011, Henk den Heijer used his inaugural lecture "Het slavenschip" to call attention to an additional gap in (Dutch) slave trade studies. He called on (Dutch) historians to shift their focus to analyzing the Dutch perspective of the slave trade, and put their findings against what we know from other nations to see if it might be different.[11] It is a call to action that should be heeded, especially by historians of the Dutch slave trade who have access to elaborate archival material on these voyages, which is unique. A handful of microhistories of slave ship voyages exist: Leo Balai wrote a history of the Dutch *Leusden,* which sailed from 1720 to 1738; Sean M. Kelly investigated the North American sloop *Hare,* and Robert Harms wrote about the French *The Diligent,* sailing respectively between 1754-1755 and 1731-1732.[12] Although they are three impressive works of scholarship, these publications do not answer the question as to what happened aboard these ships. Instead, to create a picture of the experiences on board, they share a heavy dependence on the scholarship of the British slave trade, mainly the great work of Emma Christopher and Marcus Rediker.[13]

This dependence is, on the one hand, caused by an understandable lack of source material. To provide insight into the workings of a slave ship, the authors therefore relied on British scholarship on the slave trade, even though their works cover the Dutch, French, and American slave trades.

8 Van Welie, "Slave Trading and Slavery", 52.

9 Van Welie, 54–6.

10 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)".

11 Heijer, "Het slavenschip", 7.

12 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*; Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*; Harms, *The Diligent*.

13 Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes*; Rediker, *The Slave Ship.*

On the other hand, this dependency can be explained by the perspective of the research, which was not aimed at the experiences of the enslaved people on board a slave ship. However, in relying on British sources, the distinctive characteristics of trading companies, nations, captains and crews are lost. To break through this dependency and to overcome the assumption that European nations and slave trading companies all approached the slave trade the same way, extensive research needs to be done to discern the separate identities of the Dutch, French, Danish, American, Portuguese, and British. Where did their practices overlap? Where did they not? What difference did it make if a captive boarded a Dutch slave ship?

Sources that detail the voyages of slave ships are mainly journals, financial documents, and letters to and from the companies that chartered these slaving voyages such as the MCC, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), West-Indische Compagnie (WIC) or comparable companies from other countries such as the British Royal African Company (RAC). The voices recorded in these sources do not focus on the experience of the crew or enslaved people aboard the slave ship. Mainly, the sources contain the administrative language of profit, time, and reporting, making it harder to answer the question: what happened aboard these ships? Additionally, everyone on the ship is treated as an individual in these records, but relationships in the form of kinship, friendship, or dislike were undoubtedly present, and therefore an influence on the experience on board of both crew and enslaved people. By reading 'against the grain' as historian Laura Ann Stoler has famously contended and by focusing on the qualitative instead of the quantitative it is possible to uncover a different perspective and provide new insights.[14]

The importance of posing the 'what happened aboard' question, despite the difficult source material, is explained by Sowande' Mustakeem in her book *Slavery at Sea*. She states that the Middle Passage is an understudied part of the history of slavery. Often glanced over as 'just the journey,' historians have not paid enough attention to the significance of the Middle Passage. With the journey taking months, the ship was its own universe, enclosed by the ocean, in which enslavement became a harsh reality.[15] A Middle Passage was subject to both controllable and uncontrollable influences that could make or break the journey. In this chapter, I will compare influencing factors of the Middle Passages of the GC7 and the ZM1,

14 Den Heijer, "Het slavenschip", 7.

15 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea,* 3.

including: the time spent along the coast, weather, food, sickness, lodgings, and the dealings of the captain.[16]

In addition, the role kinship played during these voyages is a central aspect of analysing these two voyages. The commodification of the enslaved people on board has resulted in almost no reference to kinship in MCC documents. The invisibility of kinship aboard the slave ships has motivated me to strive to make visible what can be found. Kinship can be seen as the red thread that involuntarily upheld the system of slavery. Jennifer Morgan states that 'the reality was that the entire economy of the colonies depended upon African women giving birth to slaves, not to children – not to daughters, not to sons, not to kin', which attests to the importance of kinship within the system of slavery and, therefore, the importance of researching this understudied factor.[17]

An important point raised by Ramona Negrón is that families were often separated multiple times: at capture, in sale to ships, aboard, and even when creating new kinship ties on the ship; and these ties were severed at sale to different plantations or owners.[18] The separate sale of mothers and children was supposed to be prohibited in Suriname from August 14, 1782 on, but this practice still occurred.[19] Did kinship play a factor in the documents on these two slave voyages? And if so, how?

Choosing to analyse the influence of the captain as a separate factor is partly a result of Den Heijer's inaugural lecture. Surprisingly, he described captain Van Kakom as 'the ideal captain for the directors of the MCC' but, qualifying this statement, argued that 'no excesses occurred under his leadership as Van Kakom did not tolerate the abuse of the enslaved aboard.'[20] Although this might be true concerning additional physical abuse of the enslaved people in the form of, for example, beatings, it must be noted that the absence of abuse in the sources does not mean it was not there. As Nicholas Radburn concluded in his work on British slave traders: 'violence was fundamental to slave traders' business methods throughout the Atlantic world, and that violence was underpinned by merchants' lowly social backgrounds and extreme ambition.'[21] Being the captain of a slave ship required a deeply ingrained acceptance of and dependence on cruelty and abuse. The mortality rates of the two voyages of the *Zeemercuur*

16 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 136.

17 Morgan, "Kinship", 203.

18 Negrón, "The Enslaved Children of the Dutch World", 38.

19 De Smidt and Van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten,* 1052.

20 Den Heijer, "Het slavenschip", 8.

21 Radburn, *Traders in Men*, 12.

and *Geertruyda & Christina* should certainly be defined as excessive, and therefore inherently abusive. How much of this abuse was influenced by Van Kakoms leadership and was this in line with what the MCC would have considered 'ideal behaviour'?

To reconstruct the Middle Passages of the GC7 and ZM1, all available source material of these MCC journeys was used, which can be found in the *Zeeuws Archief*. Although the inventories of the ships offer the same type of information, the exact content of the specific journals and documents differ. On the one hand, this means that comparing the two datasets was made more difficult. Information available for the ZM1 such as day-to-day surgeons' notes, were not available for the GC7. On the other hand, the gaps in the documentation for one ship can be 'filled in' with information available for the other ships. This is especially true when it comes to the treatment of different diseases. As the voyages were made in the same period, under the same captain, a consistency in considerations and actions can be assumed.

What happened on board of the respective first and seventh voyages of the *Geertruyda & Christina* and *Zeemercuur*? This chapter presents two microhistories delving into this question, revealing not only the abundance but also the suitability of Dutch source material available to answer it. By doing so, it brings us nearer to grasping the specific characteristics of Dutch slave voyages and, more significantly, sheds light on the experiences of enslaved individuals aboard Dutch ships.

The Time of *Negotie*

The Middle Passage only reflects a relatively small part of the whole journey that enslaved people made from their place of origin to their place of destination: either at a plantation or with an owner. To understand what happened during the Middle Passages of the GC7 and ZM1 it is important to describe what happened before the ships departed from the coast of West Africa. How did the crew engage in the slave trade and what role did kinship play in this? Mustakeem divides the journey of the enslaved people from their place of origin to place of destination into three key phases: warehousing, transport, and delivery.[22] The first phase, 'warehousing', represents the start of enslavement: through debt, war, kidnapping or other means, and thereafter being brought from their place of enslavement to a holding at

22 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 6.

the coast.[23] Groups of enslaved people could be detained in these holdings for months. Sometimes they were put to work, but in many cases, it meant being held in the dungeons and basements of fortresses.[24] The second phase, 'transport', reflects the process of being sold to a slave ship and being held until and throughout the Middle Passage. The third phase, 'delivery', denotes the arrival at the destination where the enslaved individuals would be sold.

It was during the phase of warehousing, upon the ship's arrival at the first port of destination, that the *negotie* (trade) would start. Captains would anchor their ship close to a known trading settlement and would signal the shore by, for example, firing their cannons three times. Canoes would then approach their ship with merchandise and enslaved people for sale, or the ship would send their sloop to the shore.

The period of *negotie* had one goal: to gather the biggest *armazoen* possible in the shortest time. However, different circumstances concerning the negotiations were able to severely delay the process. Both the GC7 and the ZM1 spent an unusually long period on the African coast, respectively sixteen and fourteen months. This is almost twice as long as most MCC ships.[25] The GC7 was at first plagued by slow negotiation in 1783, caused by the presence of English and Danish ships that were willing to pay more per enslaved person than Van Kakom was allowed to pay. Van Kakom also noted that he did not have enough of the desired commerce to purchase enslaved. Most in demand were guns, gunpowder, and French cloth, but 'captain Udemans has so much of this cloth that he can offer two for each slave and he therefore gets the most negotiation, I cannot do this as I only have 48'.[26] After this, the crew of the GC7 lost almost five months to the serious damage their ship suffered, which will be described later on in this chapter.

In 1788, the negotiation of the ZM1 was likewise hindered by the presence of other ships who were willing to pay more. Especially in the beginning of their trade, Van Kakom complained about the canoes bringing unfit enslaved people to their ship, which he refused to buy as they were too old or sickly. The 'brokers' on the shore worked hard to make sure every last body was sold, and captains and surgeons were warned not to fall for deceiving tricks.[27] As Smallwood states: 'Only by death, escape or redemption did captives – even those deemed not merchantable – evade the market's grasp'.[28]

23 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 104.

24 Smallwood, 37.

25 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 50.

26 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1404, scans 142–43.

27 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen voor de slaafhandelaren*, 4.

28 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 86.

Captains were desperate to fill up their ships, and even Van Kakom admits in his GC logs that he had to engage in one of these 'tricks'. The captain was coerced to buy a sickly elderly man when a canoe brought a man and a girl but would not sell the young girl without the man.[29] Negotiation was even more delayed by the ZM1 waiting for the ongoing battles of the Africans to end, after which they were promised 'great negotiation.'[30]

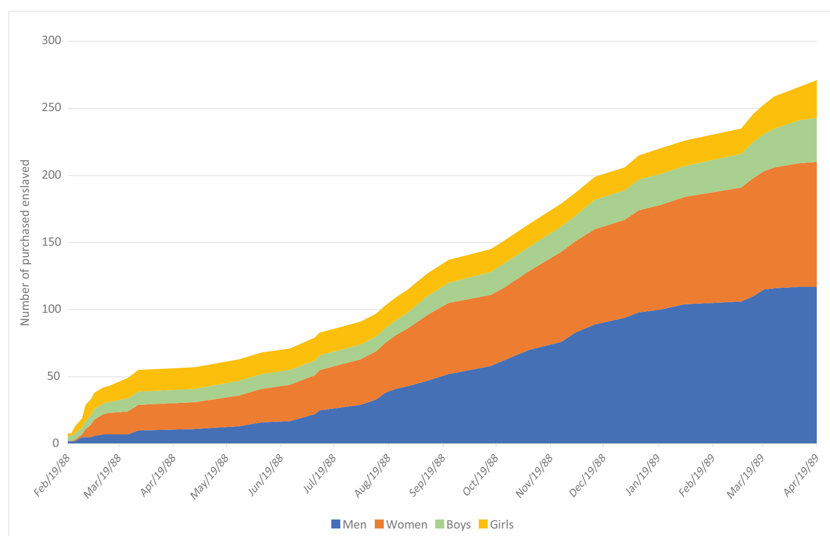
The buying of human cargo was a carefully dictated task. Before departure, the captain and his officers were made to sign both a general and particular instruction from the MCC directors. Not following these instructions could lead to financial repercussions. Ground rules were laid down which reflect the interactions the crew had with the enslaved and people of colour. The instructions given to the ship captain and officer were based on an essay by an MCC ship surgeon, David Henry Gallandat. It was published in 1769 and is one of the few sources that describe and/or proscribe life aboard a Dutch slave ship.[31]

To start, the crew was to make sure they 'were never overwhelmed' by anyone of colour, free men or enslaved people.[32] The captain should also not allow the abuse of the enslaved 'in any way', and if it would occur, a note in the journal had to be made, a statement taken, and the culprit should be judged by the ship's council. No such events were noted for the GC7 or ZM1.[33] Article three of the instructions stated that the enslaved were to be taken care of, 'properly looked after and treated' and their lodgings and food kettles be kept clean. In the books of the *Zeemercuur* a written note is added: 'the commanding officers are required to give everything the surgeon requires and asks for to treat the enslaved'. Also added on was article eight, which required the surgeon and his assistant surgeon to examine the enslaved every morning and check their eyes and mouth for injuries.[34]

The instructions for the captain and crew make it very clear what the prerogative of negation was: buying young, healthy, unmutilated people, and as many men as possible.[35] To do so, the ship's surgeon (*oppermeester*), his assistant, and the captain were in charge of the examination that preceded a purchase on the West African coast, and then repeated every day. Directors and crew alike were highly aware of how essential these examinations were.

29 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 429, scan 17.
30 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1405, scans 26, 29, 31–2 and 36.
31 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*.
32 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1403.1, scan 22.
33 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1403.1, scan 32.
34 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1403.1, scans 31–4.
35 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3–7.

Figure 10. Purchased enslaved for the *Zeemercuur* from February 19, 1788 to April 19, 1789



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1406.

But, as Mustakeem strikingly summarises: 'Despite efforts exerted to procure healthy bodies, no captain or seamen could fully anticipate the medical horrors capable of decimating their financial dreams through newly bought slaves'.[36] Ship surgeons were barely trained, and their only real asset might have been their experience.[37] Both Felix Wilhelm Johannes Weber on the ZM1 and Johannes Zwander on the GC7 were experienced, but not experienced enough to prevent the diseases that would spread through their assembled groups of enslaved people.[38] For the enslaved, these examinations meant a daily invasion of their already almost non-existent bodily integrity. The carefully kept negotiation book of the *Zeemercuur* grants us a day-by-day picture of purchased men, women, boys and girls (Figure 10).

Van Kakom's negotiation started picking up after approximately six months on the coast. In total he purchased 272 enslaved people, and he departed for Suriname with 238 people alive. The data for the GC7 is more fragmentary, which unfortunately makes it unsuitable to graph in the same way.

Both the GC7 and ZM1 experienced negotiation periods of almost fourteen months, meaning that the enslaved people who survived the time at

36 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 57.

37 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 244.

38 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 51.

the coast spent an average of eight to ten months being held on the ship before departing. While they were there, the ship was constantly adjusted and mended to accommodate the growing number of captives, as will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Preparing the Ship

Apart from procuring the *armazoen*, the crew also had to work to adjust the ship while the number of enslaved aboard increased, which was customarily done on the coast.[39] Van Kakom's log from the ZM1 provides more information on the construction of the lodgings and the time it took the carpenters to finish these holdings – a process that is hard to reconstruct for historians as the sources rarely discuss it in depth. The ships used for slaving voyages were not all built specifically for this purpose, but in the history of the MCC most of them were.[40] In both cases slave traders implemented ways to crowd more people into the existing ship dimensions.[41] Gallandat gives a general lay-out of the lodgings constructed to hold the enslaved, and the entries found in the captain's journal of the ZM1 generally follow this description, although no detailed spatial arrangement is provided. Unfortunately, the GC7 journals do not offer log entries, but as both ships were frigates the process was most likely comparable.

The first entry for the ZM1 is from February 11, 1788, which logged that the carpenter had 'started constructing the woman's house on the quarter-deck'.[42] Men and women were separated below decks as soon as they came on board.[43] MCC ships had two holdings: one for the men in the 'tween deck (*tussendek*) which was supplied with air through large hatches, and the second for the women and children in the quarter deck (*schans*) where fresh air was supplied through the rear hatch (*achterluik*) and small airholes that were practically useless. All hatches were covered with grids at night and were never to be covered with anything else as this would risk or result in the suffocation of the enslaved.

After dedicating a space for the women and children in the quarter deck, the carpenter went on in the following month to create partitions

39 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 73–4.

40 De Kok, *Walcherse Ketens,* 106–15; Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden,* 111–8.

41 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 70.

42 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1405, scan 19. Original citation: '[…] de timmerman begint aan 't zette van het vrouwe huijsie agter op.'

43 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 76.

for the men in the *half dek*.[44] From March through April, Van Kakom logs canoes arriving with materials necessary to build the bedding that would be placed in the already constructed holdings, a practice also described by Smallwood for seventeenth century English slavers.[45] The enslaved people would lie on these beddings naked, and packed tightly together. The men had to remain in shackles and the women and children were allowed to move 'freely' within their holding.[46] The space allotted to the captives on the constructed bedding was 'not enough to shift or turn with any kind of ease.'[47] After May 5, the construction appears to be finished, as no more entries appear that describe the progress of the carpenter creating the *slaavegaaten* in the captain's journal; only ship maintenance is regularly mentioned.

Usually deck barricades were set up to separate men from women and crew, but the only ZM1 log entry that might suggest this states that 'a partition has been placed on the quarter-deck.' It is unclear if this is on the upper or below deck. According to Postma the enslaved were, if the weather permitted, frequently taken to the upper deck for fresh air, exercise and to eat.[48] Regrettably, none of the documents of the ZM1 or GC7 specifically confirm that the enslaved were on the upper deck, although the references in sources such as Gallandat, which prescribe and emphasise the importance of fresh air and movement, make it likely that the enslaved were indeed allowed out of their prison below decks.[49]

Kinship: Mothers and Children

The only traceable or visible kinship bond in the available sources is that of mothers and their children. The journals from the GC7 and ZM1 do not feature any individual descriptions of enslaved persons beyond their sex. Kinship is therefore only mentioned when women give birth aboard or when they were taking children under their care with them. It is still impossible to know who these people exactly were, but it is possible to show that they were there, how many of these relationships there were, and how many were present up until the point of sale in Paramaribo.

44 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1405, scans 23–4.
45 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 70.
46 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 233.
47 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 59.
48 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 233.
49 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 8–10.

The information in the logs depends on who kept the records and what they found of importance to note, making it highly inconsistent data. Children, but especially babies, are notoriously invisible in slave ship records.[50] Babies and, to an extent, children, were perceived to be of no value; therefore, their presence is simply not acknowledged. No discouragement regarding buying pregnant women was found in the MCC instructions.[51] The reason for allowing women to take small children aboard becomes clear in a case explored in Jennifer L. Morgan's work. When an English captain responded to a complaint that there were too many small children in his human cargo, he 'argued that bringing them "cost not much and the ship had as good bring them as nothing"'.[52] The simultaneous acknowledgement and indifference towards kinship becomes clear when mothers and children were later separated at sale, but also through horrific examples: when a woman succeeded in resisting capture by Portuguese slavers in the 1440's it occurred to them that they could simply 'take her son from her and carry him to the boat; and love of the child compelled mother to follow after it'.[53]

Historian Benjamin Lawrence calls attention to the extreme vulnerability of enslaved children and their bonds of kinship. Their need to maintain existing (fictive) kinship structures or form new relationships was more pressing than that of adult enslaved people.[54] It is also important to note that age assessments were often estimated by slave traders according to the height or development of a person. These estimations therefore resulted in adults being regarded as children, but also children being regarded as adults, making the sources even more unreliable.

The negotiation book of the *Zeemercuur* is one of the rare cases in which the captain registered purchases of women with child(ren). The first time this occurs is at Gren Sester on March 3, 1788, when three women with children were brought aboard. Van Kakom did not note the gender, or the number of children purchased, but the children were not counted towards the total number of purchased enslaved people. The children also did not seem to affect the total price, confirming the theory that they were 'brought along'. The three women and a boy were bought for a total of 377 guilders, making the average price per person around ninety-four guilders. After this, the negotiation book explicitly mentions the number of children brought with

50 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 232–33.

51 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 42.

52 Morgan, "Kinship", 198.

53 Morgan, 197.

54 Lawrence, "'Your Poor Boy'", 676–77.

a woman: eight women with each one child.[55] Therefore, at least twelve 'unregistered' children of an unknown age must be added to the 272 people that were forced aboard ZM1.

The negation book is not the only unusually detailed registration the voyage of the *Zeemercuur* offers when it comes to kinship. The journal of ship's surgeon Weber and his assistant Willem Johannes Bastiaanse is detailed and includes a day-by-day registration of the sick and the ailments they received, which not every (MCC) surgeon's journal offers. Moreover, Weber kept an additional death count, one for enslaved people of a 'selling age' and one for babies or children which he all described as *kindt*, meaning 'child'. This is a rare piece of information that provides insight into infants and children on the MCC ship.

The first thing that can be understood from this detail is that Van Kakom as a captain and Weber as chief surgeon did not oppose buying (visibly and maybe highly) pregnant women. The first birth occurred on February 27, 1788, only ten days after the arrival of the ship on the African coast. The crew had only traded four days before this date, with the only woman bought on February 23. On February 27 another woman was bought, meaning that the labouring woman had only been aboard for a maximum of four days. Her baby girl died the following day and is noted by 'the child has died, n=1'. The woman herself is noted to have recovered six days later.[56]

Another birth took place on April 5, and the woman in question delivered a baby boy that lived until April 23. The woman is noted to have recovered after seven days. May 24 logged a woman with a miscarriage in which the death of the child was not counted. On May 29 a woman gave birth to triplets, three girls, who Van Kakom described as three 'well-made' children. This is the only time he commented on a birth in his journal, probably because triplets were an exception. One of the babies died immediately, the second passed away on June 2, and the third baby lived only until June 14.[57] Another miscarriage occurred on November 14, and the last birth before Middle Passage occurred on March 25, 1789, in which a woman gave birth to a daughter.[58]

Before the crossing, a total of ten small children had died, with an additional two miscarriages which Zwander did not add to the total. Out of these ten deaths, six were babies delivered on board, meaning that the other four deaths were children brought along with (other) women

55 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1406, scans 35–55.

56 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1405, scans 19–22; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scan 9.

57 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scans 11–3.

58 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scans 21–4.

when they were bought by the ship. These numbers confirm the presence of young children on the ship but also show how small their survival chances were.

No daily log is available from the ship surgeon Zwander attending the GC7, and the only birth logged by Van Kakom is one on April 21, 1785.[59] However, the frequent births aboard the ZM1 suggest that this could have hardly been the only birth that occurred on board the GC7 in eighteen months.

A Rotting Ship: the *Geertruyda & Christina*

Circumstances that severely impacted the experience on board the GC7 started to appear in Van Kakom's letters to the directors from March 9, 1784, onward. The GC7 was already on its seventh journey in almost twenty years and had started to show major damage. On February 27, a leak was found in the ship, and the compartment in which it was located had flooded with three feet of water. According to the carpenter, the surrounding parts of the ship had begun to rot. While working on the ship, both carpenter and captain were unsure if the ship would be 'lucky enough to reach the West-Indies in this state.'[60]

To mend the ship, Van Kakom decided to first sail to Fort Elmina to gather materials and then to Rio de Gabon to be able to partly lift the ship out of water. Van Kakom continued buying enslaved people while the ship was clearly out of commission. With no indication as to how long it would take to mend the ship, and in light of his earlier admittance that the journey could have a bad ending, it is striking that he continued to load the ship with captives. Their stay at Gabon lasted approximately four to five months after which they sailed back to their last port, Elmina, where Van Kakom continued to comment on the bad condition of the ship.[61] By making these decisions, Van Kakom's ruthless ambition and disregard for the lives of others becomes apparent. He forced both captives and crew to endure increasingly horrifying conditions, all in the hope that he could eventually maximise his own profit.

In his letters to the MCC directors, Van Kakom wrote that he had decided to embark on the crossing for multiple reasons. Generally, captains would start the crossing either when they had reached the desired number of

59 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 429, scan 63.
60 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 406, scans 146-7.
61 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 406, scans 158–9.

enslaved to purchase or when the enslaved on board started dying at a higher-than-normal rate.[62] In the case of the GC7 the latter applied: fourteen enslaved people had died in about six weeks, along with multiple crew members, compelling Van Kakom to make the decision to start the crossing after all. In his letter, he also remarked that it was time to cross as the liquor stock has been impacted by high temperatures and the leakage.[63]

Voyages

After 507 days on the African coast, the *Geertruyda & Christina* was ready to make the crossing. At that point, the ship was loaded with 103 men, eighty-two women, forty-four boys, eleven girls.[64] Cornelis had purchased a total of 276 enslaved people, but already thirty-four had died.[65] The ship was in a terrible state that had severely delayed their journey for almost six months. The crew was reduced from thirty-nine to thirty-three because two sailors had deserted and only one was retrieved, and five crew members had already died.[66]

In April 1789, the *Zeemercuur* was only slightly better off, mostly because the ship was not in the same damaged state as the GC7. After forty-three deaths, there were 101 men, eighty-one women, thirty-two boys, twenty-two girls and at least eight infants aboard the ZM1. The ship was ready to sail to its destination after spending 435 days at various ports along the African coast.[67] After three deaths, thirty-three crew members remained.[68]

Uncontrollable Factors: Weather and Sickness

Time was of the essence when it came to Middle Passage. No longer able to restock, properly mend the ship, or replace the deceased enslaved, everyone on board had to make do with what was available. Considering the isolated and vulnerable state of the ship on the Atlantic, it does not come as a surprise that scholars have found that the length of Middle Passage

62 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 252.
63 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 406, scans 165–6.
64 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 431, scan 63.
65 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 430, scan 64.
66 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 406, scans 141–3 and 157–60.
67 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1406, scan 31.
68 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1404, scans 5–7.

is directly connected to the death rate of crew and captives.[69] The Middle Passage of the GC7 would take sixty-one days, while the ZM1 would need seventy-nine days to reach Paramaribo.

When it comes to the first uncontrollable factor, the weather, the GC7 was relatively lucky. Noting down the weather is one of the constants in the captain's journal for this journey, making this a relatively uncomplicated factor to assess. Apart from the occasional storm or absence of wind, the GC7 was not plagued by excessive weather conditions, resulting in a relatively short crossing. Considering the state of the ship before departure, the weather must have been a blessing, as more damage to the ship could have ended in a catastrophe.

The daily entries in the captain's journal for the ZM1 turn out to not convey the extent to which weather impacted their Middle Passage. The entries Van Kakom made portray a similar journey to the GC7, with average weather. Yet his first letter to the MCC after arriving in Paramaribo paints a completely different picture: 'Yes, My Lords, if my journey had taken eight days more, me and most of my equipage, especially all those aboard would have died by the many rains and heat, as most of them had already been weakened by scurvy'.[70] This note seems to indicate that severe weather conditions negatively impacted, and most likely delayed, their journey, possibly explaining why the ZM1 took seventeen days longer than the GC7 to complete the Middle Passage.[71]

The weather impacted the experience of the enslaved passengers in multiple ways. Good weather meant that they were allowed on the upper deck for fresh air and exercise and, in some cases, it allowed them to wash themselves on the upper deck.[72] Poor weather conditions could mean that the enslaved were kept in their holdings for extended periods, sometimes with their air supply such as hatches and airholes covered or compromised by the foul weather.[73] Just as important is the fact that most captives had never been on board a ship, and being detained in small spaces during a storm took a toll on their health that must not be underestimated. Lastly, extreme weather or temperatures could comprise the conditions of the water and food on board, leading to shortages and decay.

69 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 253.

70 Original citation: 'Ja Mijn Heeren, wanneer mijn reijse acht dagen in zee langer hadde geduurt ik nog het grootste gedeelte van mijn Equipage voortnaamenlijk officieren alle aan boord hadden moeten sterven door dien en veele reegens en hitte, als ook meetten deels door de schuurbuijk aangetast waren.'

71 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 48.

72 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 63.

73 Mustakeem, 73.

The second and biggest uncontrollable factor crew and captives were confronted with was sickness.[74] Those involved in the slave trade were aware of this. Although their medical knowledge was limited, captains and surgeons were warned of the dangers of bringing disease to 'a cramped space such as a slave ship.'[75] The only way in which the captain and surgeons could try to control the uncontrollable was to do daily examinations and try to spot the signs of disease. Still, research has shown that the medicine used by eighteenth century ship surgeons may have done more harm than good.[76] The ongoing conditions which the enslaved were forced to endure from their time of enslavement up until sale made illness nearly impossible to avoid.[77] The precautions of the surgeons and the medical tools and medicine they had procured may have given the surgeons a sense of preparedness, but in reality, their preparations would fall short.[78]

The surgeon's journals for both the GC7 and the ZM1 have been preserved, which is not the case for most MCC ships. The journal of the GC7, written by Zwander or his assistant Hermanus Putto, does not contain a daily report of the sick and the medicine and treatment they received. Zwander chose to provide information on his treatments per disease. The first page of his journals features a list of the twenty-three diseases or conditions he encountered. The most remarkable element of Zwander's journal is that the description of each disease starts with an explanation of a possible cause, through which the inadequacy of his knowledge becomes very clear. As an eighteenth-century ship surgeon, he related most diseases to too much or too little blood, an imbalance in mucus or an 'unknown malice'. Zwander also refers to his experiences of sailing to the East Indies where he learned not to treat diarrhoea with opioids.[79]

Zwander noted how many enslaved people died of which causes, which is also unique. If this truly was the cause of death is unsure, but the effort provides insight into the possible causes of death of enslaved people (Table 11). The total of these log entries adds up to 120 deaths, meaning that eleven deaths are unaccounted for.

Scurvy killed sixty-nine men, twenty-three women, five boys, and five girls on board the GC7, with an additional six crew members dying from

74 Mustakeem, 56.

75 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3–4. Original citation: 'Het gevaarlijk is een beginsel van besmetting in zulk eene naauwe plaats als een slavenschip.

76 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 244.

77 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 136.

78 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 57–58.

79 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scan 20; Nationaal Archief, "VOC Opvarenden database"; Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 51.

Table 11. Overview of causes of death aboard the *Geertruyda & Christina 7*

Disease or condition	Original	Deaths
Scurvy	*Scheurbuik*	102
Dropsy	*Watersucht*	6
Sleeping sickness	*Slaapziekte*	4
Infected bowel	*Darmontsteking*	4
Pneumonia	*Longontsteking*	2
Intestinal pain	*Colijk/darmwee*	2
Unknown cause		11
Total registered deaths		**131**

Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435.

an unknown cause. Zwander dedicated four pages of justification on his treatment of the scurvy on board and omitted a description of the symptoms as these are 'well known and unnecessary to repeat here.'[80] He started with what he thought caused scurvy: the spoiling of their water resources. His treatment consisted of relieving the sick of their chains and allowing them as much movement as possible. In his opinion, 'nothing will worsen scurvy as much as fear, sadness and other melancholic fits, as this provokes the soul and puts the body into the greatest danger.'[81] Next, he states that nothing will heal scurvy as fast as overall satisfaction and a cheerful and joyful mood. To his greatest disappointment, the enslaved were impossible to move to such a state, as they remained 'grumpy, uncomfortable and very sad.'[82] This example grants a rare description of the enslaved. The lack of empathy displayed by Zwander shows the stark contrast between what was expected of enslaved people and their reality.

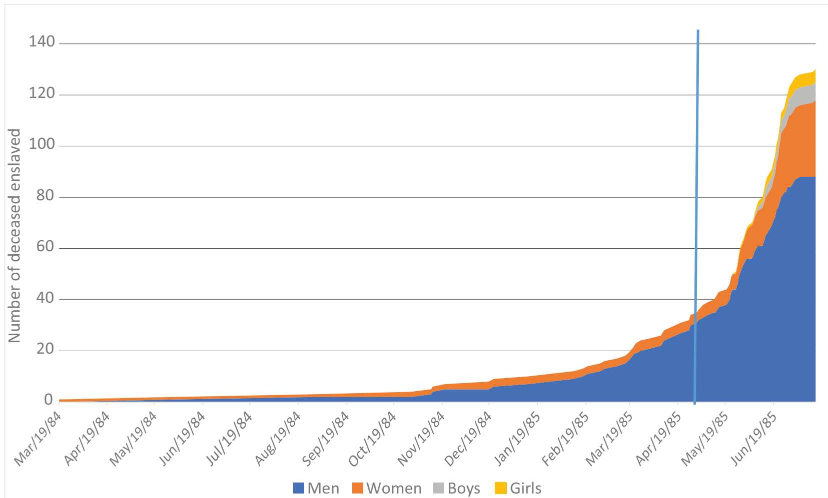
Further treatments by Zwander featured him buying as much purslane (*postelein*) and limes as possible and mixing this in with the food of the enslaved when the GC7 was still at the coast of West Africa, even though this was expensive and it was not possible to gather enough. Zwander stated that he therefore switched to chemical medicine (as opposed to natural remedies) as soon as they started their Middle Passage. After the ship arrived in Suriname, Zwander continued his natural remedy of scurvy through food by once again procuring as much purslane, lemons, limes and bitter

80 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scan 28. Original citation: 'De toevallen dezer siekte sijn mede genoeg bekent dus onoodig hier te melden.'

81 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scan 29.

82 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scan 30.

Figure 11. Deceased enslaved on board the *Geertruyda en Christina* from March 19, 1784 to June 16, 1785



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 431, scan 63.

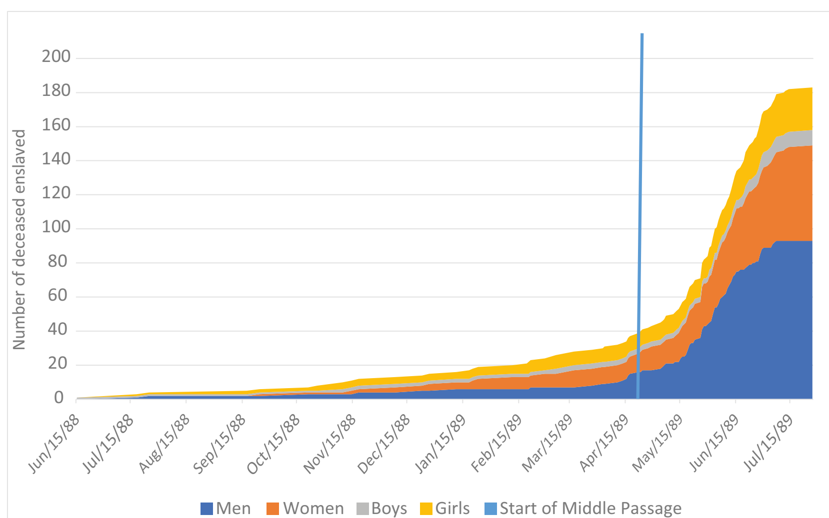
oranges, 'of which the result goes above and beyond all chemical medicines,' providing results within five to six days.[83]

Although scurvy was not the most common cause of death on slave ships in general, which was dysentery (*rode loop*), it still accounts for fifteen per cent of the deaths on WIC ships.[84] Figure 11 shows the development of deaths on the GC7. The exponential growth can be linked to the development of scurvy and worsening conditions as soon as Middle Passage started on April 29, 1785. What is also reflected is that men were more likely to die than women, just as Figure 12 shows for the *Zeemercuur*.[85]

As previously discussed, the surgeon's journal of the ZM1, kept by Weber, provides different information through its daily log and meticulous description of which kind of medicine was used and in which amounts. The daily log shows that Weber had two preferred treatments: *purgaasie* and *vomatief*, meaning either laxating or causing the patient to vomit. These methods were commonly believed to rid the body of the unknown malice or infection but proved ineffective as they most likely dehydrated and further weakened the already weak crew and enslaved patients.

83 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scans 030-032.
84 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 244.
85 Postma, 257.

Figure 12. Deceased enslaved on board of the *Zeemercuur* from June 15, 1788 to July 27, 1789



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1406, scan 61.

The first mention of scurvy is made on the November 25, 1788. Only a little over a month later, on January 1, 1789, Weber logs that the scurvy has intensified on board and the decision was made to permanently separate the sick from the healthy, as Weber thought scurvy to be contagious.[86] He further disallowed the free movement of sick enslaved people above deck, resulting in them being constantly kept in close confinement.[87]

Weber's journal does not allow us to deduce how many deaths were the result of which disease. At the end of his journal, he wrote two pages on his encounter with rampant scurvy in which he states that 157 deaths could be connected to scurvy, resulting in seventeen unknown causes of death.

Weber states that nothing he did to treat scurvy brought on the slightest improvement, despite having procured as many refreshments as possible in the form of limes, oranges and all other fruits available at Fort Elmina. Just as with Zwander, Weber bought 'greens that grow on the seaside', the earlier discussed purslane. Apart from detaining the captives, Weber instructed the crew to put red-hot cannonballs into the water barrels to take away 'the rawness of the water', hoping to cure the decay.

Figure 12 shows the gradient in which the deaths of the enslaved people on board occurred. Their Middle Passage started on April 19, 1789, which

86 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scan 24.
87 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scan 30.

means that most of the deaths occurred during the crossing and increased exponentially. Not represented in this graph or the overview of deceased enslaved are an additional twenty infants or children that died of unknown causes on board the ZM1 according to the separate tally kept by ship surgeon Weber.

Policy, Food and Lodgings

The instructions by the MCC directors commanded that the enslaved had to be 'well maintained.'[88] Gallandat gave seven more specific directions 'that every slave trader should follow out of generosity or philanthropy and for their self-interest.'[89] To what extent did the GC7 and ZM1 live up to the instructions concerning food and lodgings?

The first and second points Gallandat raised are that the enslaved should have enough fresh and healthy air and that their lodgings should be kept clean. As has been explained before, the damp conditions and putrid air could severely impact the health of the enslaved and the hygiene of their lodgings logically played a big part in this.[90] Captains were instructed to clean the *slaavegaaten* daily by moving the enslaved to the upper deck if the weather allowed. Incense and different herbs should be burnt against the smell and to purify the air. Additionally, after scrubbing the rooms, lime juice should be sprinkled in the lodgings as this was believed to ward off disease.[91] Gallandat added that to perform the cleaning one should instruct those affected by scurvy as the movement should help their recovery.[92]

The GC7 captain's journal does not mention cleaning the ship once during the Middle Passage, but this absence does not mean that it was not done. What is mentioned every day is the continuous ship maintenance under which cleaning might have fallen. In stark contrast to this is the ZM1 log in which Van Kakom wrote that the *slaavegaaten* had been cleaned every day, which meant that the directions of Gallandat were followed. The rooms were scrubbed, incense was burned, and lime juice and vinegar were spread around the room. It also means that the enslaved were likely to be allowed on deck every single day, giving them more access to fresh air. Although

88 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1403.1, scans 26–34.

89 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 7–9. Original citation: 'Menschlievendheid en eigen belang moet ieder slaafhandelaar daartoe aanzetten.'

90 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 59.

91 Van den Hende, "Cornelis van Kakom", 51; Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 61.

92 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 8–9.

Gallandat instructed the captains to allow the enslaved to wash themselves on deck, no mention of this is apparent in the journal from either GC7 or ZM.

The third point Gallandat raised was that of fresh food and other 'oral needs.'[93] On the coast in Africa, the crew should purchase yams, potatoes, pisang, and especially limes to add to the horse beans and grits the enslaved were fed. The food the enslaved received was a 'consistent intake of nutritionally empty calories,' which needed to be cheap, as profit remained the main goal of these journeys, and have a long 'shelf-life' under extreme conditions.[94] The unvaried and unhealthy diet was the main cause of the scurvy on board as the captives were deprived of crucial nutrients for months.

As has become clear from the surgeon's journals, both the GC7 and ZM1 tried to add food to the diet of the enslaved that would battle scurvy. Apart from what was mentioned in the surgeon's journal, Van Kakom logs giving the enslaved group of people fruit: apples and pisang. During his Middle Passage on the ZM1, no additional foods are mentioned in the captain's log.

The fourth and last point concerning food and lodgings that Gallandat mentioned is that of water. Water was often brought from Europe; additionally, there was a mixture of rainwater and water that was bought along the West African coast, which was supplemented with various kinds of liquor. Due to temperature, parasites, and other vermin, the water often went bad, and infected both the crew and enslaved people with a variety of worms and diseases that are apparent in both surgeon's journals. However, according to Gallandat, the water was able to be 'cured' again, either by treating the water or waiting. The ZM1 example of the surgeon ordering hot cannonballs to be dropped in the water shows that creative methods were used to do this. Vinegar was also mixed with the water and, when possible, the surgeons would instruct the water for the sick to be boiled, something that was too much work to do for all aboard the ships.[95] Despite best efforts, drinking water was one of the biggest threats to the health of those aboard.

On Arrival and Sale

When arriving in Suriname, it was customary that the captain would take the sloop to Paramaribo and report to the commanding officer at that time. Information would be exchanged, and the ship would be visited by a *visiteur*

93 Original citation: 'welgeconditioneerde mondbehoeften.'

94 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 44.

95 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen,* 8–9.

within a day or two. This *visiteur* would check the enslaved people on board, search for signs of (infectious) diseases and decide if the ship would be allowed into the harbour to start the process of selling captives to the colonists.

The original destination of the GC7 was not Paramaribo but St. Eustatius, but in one of his letters to his commanders Van Kakom carefully explains why he would go against the orders of the MCC directors and sell the enslaved people in Paramaribo instead. The reasons were clear: already 116 of the enslaved had died and the ship was in such a bad state that he believed sailing further could be dangerous to everyone on board.

As soon as possible refreshments for the enslaved were brought aboard. Sloops with fruit, samphire, and purslane were provided. These fruits and vegetables contain a very high level of vitamin C, making them suitable to treat the scurvy outbreak on board.

Three days after the visitation on the GC7, on April 4, 1785, the diminished group of enslaved, containing forty-six men, fifty-eight women, thirty-seven boys and six girls, was allowed to go ashore for the first time. They would be allowed to promenade (*kuijer*) for their health almost daily in the thirty days it would take Van Kakom to sell all of the 145 remaining enslaved people.

The arrival of the *Zeemercuur* in July 1789 followed along the same lines, except that the captain himself was so sick that the officer had to come to him instead of him taking the sloop into the city of Paramaribo. A *visiteur* granted his approval to allow the ship to come into Paramaribo and permitted fruit to be brought aboard. On July 11, surgeon Weber went to stroll ashore 'with a party of slaves and the diseased whites,' noting that all the enslaved were back on board in the evening.[96] However, the severity of the sickness of the enslaved made Van Kakom decide that they were too ill to sell right away. In his letter to the MCC directors dated July 17, he explained that 'to best serve the interest of your Honors it was necessary to rent a warehouse in Paramaribo where the enslaved could remain ashore day and night with refreshments to heal and recover of their sickness so they can be sold for a reasonable price.'[97] Weber and Putto would remain with them at all times. Van Kakom also notes that he has been in very bad health himself the whole trip and has only arrived in Paramaribo by the grace of God. His crew, where the scurvy also 'hit,' had also not yet recovered.[98] The only note made in the following twenty-five days is that one more woman died and that the complete *armazoen* was sold by August 6.

96 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1405, scans 77–9.
97 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1404, scan 16.
98 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1404, scan 16.

The administration of the ZM1 offers another interesting aspect: the *vendu* list. This document registered which enslaved people were sold to whom and for what price. On this list, the word 'child' appears three times. Twice the word is written beneath a number of enslaved women, suggesting that the child belonged to or came with one of the women who were part of this group. It seems that Van Kakom also sold one child separately. Sold to Mevrouw Ruysenaar for sixty guilders is '*1 kind*', written down in the column for girls, suggesting that the child was a girl. The separate sale of women and children was not permitted. The mother may have died during the Middle Passage, but someone did take care of the child up until this time. It shows the disregard for kinship bonds created during the Middle Passage. It also raises the question as to why someone would buy an infant or small child alone.

The vendu records of the GC7 do not offer the same information, but the records do show that Van Kakom sold some of the enslaved as 'sick' for a lower price than usual.

Captain Van Kakom

The last thing to consider regarding these voyages is the leadership of captain Cornelis van Kakom. Van Kakom did what the MCC expected of him, and took this to an extreme, persevering no matter what. In doing so, he repeatedly put his own interests before that of the MCC, his crew, and, most catastrophically, the interests of the enslaved people held captive on board. During his voyage on the GC7, Van Kakom risked the ship itself, openly doubting if the ship could make the crossing at all before setting out to sea regardless.

His experience must have impacted his decision-making in ways that are not perceptible in the administration of his voyages. However, the high rate of mortality aboard the GC7 must have somehow prepared him for the increasing numer of deaths of the enslaved on the ZM1, resulting in his more thorough record-keeping regarding the status of the enslaved and their lodgings. His last two journeys lie in stark contrast with his earlier journeys as captain or as officer regarding mortality rate, bad weather, and state of the ships.

Van Kakom was respectively forty-four and forty-seven years old when he embarked on his journeys, and this relatively old age for a captain is reflected in his declining well-being. On both the GC7 and ZM1 journeys he was ill and increasingly so, leading him to be unable to perform his

tasks as captain when they finally reached Paramaribo. What effect his absence had on crew and enslaved aboard is unfortunately impossible to deduce from the source material. From the payrolls of both ships, it does become apparent that Van Kakom and his officers paid attention to how the crew performed, and they were rewarded or punished accordingly through increased or decreased wages.

The journeys of the GC7 and ZM1 ended on different notes. The terrible condition of the GC7 led to different captains and carpenters assessing the ship and concluding that repairing the ship would cost 40,000 guilders. During the assessment, the crew declared on August 17 that they would refuse to sail back on this ship, even if it was mended.[99] The twenty years of service of the *Geertruyda & Christina* came to an end when it was sold for parts for 4000 guilders in Paramaribo. After selling its full *armazoen*, the ZM1 sailed to St. Eustatius to trade the variety of goods they had acquired on the West African coast and Suriname, and after they sailed back to the Dutch Republic.[100]

Conclusion

Aboard both the ZM1 and GC7, illness and weather, both uncontrollable factors, dictated the experience of the crew and enslaved people during their voyage. By analyzing two Middle Passages including their stays on the West African coast, the weather, sickness, food, lodgings, the policy of the MCC, and the decision-making by the captain, it became evident that the Middle Passages of slave ships were a highly unpredictable endeavour. Moreover, scurvy was responsible for the majority of the deaths aboard these specific ships. This was something outside of the control of the crew. The diligent instructions given and many preparations that were taken to give the crew a sense of control were not able to prevent the bad outcomes of both ships. Important to note here is that the death of enslaved people was an accepted risk, and its occurrence was foundational to the slavery system. The death of an enslaved person was only viewed within the scope of loss of profit, not loss of humanity. Based on this fact, the measures that slavers were willing to take were limited and therefore ineffective.

The experience of captain Cornelis van Kakom and the ship surgeons did not ameliorate the situation on board. Van Kakom was an experienced slave

99 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 435, scans 73–4.
100 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1410, scan 27.

ship captain, and his acceptance of the cruelty and abuse that was inherent to slave voyages did not make him more vigilant for human suffering. Instead, his only priority was his own financial gain. The task faced by the captain and surgeon, recognising the early signs of scurvy and its subsequent development, was not within their capabilities, nor was healing those already affected by the disease. Additionally, once scurvy was detected, their objective was not to heal the captives out of care for their well-being; their only concern was whether the sick could survive until they reached the selling block in the colonies.

Although the crew worked, to the aforementioned extent, to keep the enslaved alive, the experience of the enslaved people was one of exhaustion, malnutrition, mistreatment, and neglect, in addition to mental hardship. No evidence is left of excesses such as physical abuse, but the entries of Zwander on the deteriorating mental state of the enslaved show the misery of those held captive on the ship.

Close reading of the administrative sources has provided insight into kinship on the ZM1, revealing the presence of mothers and their children. At least twenty-four children were present on the ship from the time *negotie* started until the final sale of at least four children who were still alive. The strength of doing more in-depth or qualitative research on Middle Passages lies in accumulating more accounts of experiences on board and connecting these to early enslavement. Comparing qualitative information on slave voyages could provide more information on the factors that influenced the crossing and/or on the well-being and experiences of the enslaved on board. Incorporating the experiences of crew and enslaved people during Middle Passages into our developing knowledge of the transatlantic slave trade offers a new and valuable perspective on the history of slavery.

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5. The Significance of Shipboard Insurrections During the Slave Ship Captaincies of Jan Menkenveld and His Former Officers: David Mulders, Daniel Pruijmelaar and Willem de Molder, 1754-1767

Luc Meijboom

Abstract: This article investigates the surprising number of shipboard insurrections during the transatlantic slaving voyages of captain Jan Menkenveld and his former officers: David Mulders, Daniel Pruijmelaar and Willem de Molder. Compared to the other registered insurrections on Dutch slave ships in the TSTD, these MCC captains appear to have experienced the most insurrections on their triangular voyages. By carefully interplaying the muster rolls, ships' journals and correspondence of their voyages on which insurrections occurred, this article traces the surrounding conditions and answers to what extent the captaincies kindled shipboard insurrections. This article suggests the interconnectedness between MCC slave ship captains and shipboard insurrections and encourages the discussion about the quantity of slave ship resistance to be reignited.

Keywords: insurrection, resistance, slavery, Middle Passage, slave ship

The transatlantic slave trade is the most extensive form of forced migration in human history, altering the lives of millions of Africans during the ages of sail and growing intercontinental trade. The Atlantic crossing or 'Middle Passage' is the part of the trade in which African men, women

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and children were shipped from the African shores to the colonised regions of the Americas. The Middle Passage, as opposed to the period of coastal trade, is affiliated with the largest loss of life, as the ship relied on favourable winds and a sufficient food and water supply.[1] As the captives were turned into nothing more than commodities, stuffed into cramped spaces within the ships, shackled, and undoubtedly terrified, some Africans found the strength within themselves, or in each other, to resist. The enslaved found possibilities where almost none were to be found, in attempts to rise up against their captors so they might return home.

Throughout the 1990s, the combined datasets of various nations containing slave voyages led to the creation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD). With the help of this database, scholars made several presumptions about the significance of shipboard insurrections. However, historians disagree when quantifying the number of insurrections aboard slave ships and their impact. For example, historian David Richardson, co-founder of the TSTD, made an educated guess that slave insurrections occurred on approximately 10% of all slave voyages.[2] Calculated with the newly available data, this would amount to approximately 3600 voyages that experienced insurrection.

Historian Eric Robert Taylor considered numerous motives and circumstances leading to African resistance aboard slave vessels during the transatlantic trade. He unveiled almost five hundred cases of shipboard rebellion during the eighteenth century. However, Taylor expects the actual number to be significantly higher. He assumed a shipboard rebellion occurred every month during the eighteenth century, totalling 1200 insurrections.[3]

Whereas the works of Richardson and Taylor primarily focus on vessels sailing under the British flag, historian Johannes Postma concerned himself with the Dutch Atlantic slave trade. Amongst other data, Postma analysed fifty-eight triangular voyages of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) and discovered that eleven dealt with slave uprisings, approximately one in every five voyages. When calculated over the Dutch slave trade, there must have been as many as 300 revolts on Dutch ships, whereas the TSTD only registers fifty-five.[4]

1 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 248–9.
2 Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts", 72.
3 Taylor, *If We Must Die*, 3.
4 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 165–7.

The Dutch were significant participants in the transatlantic slave trade, responsible for transporting around 600,000 Africans to the Americas.[5] Even though the number of recorded British slavers in the TSTD (11,241 entries) is far greater than that of Dutch slave vessels (1253), the overall percentage of insurrections aboard Dutch slavers seems to exceed the British, with 4.23 per cent of Dutch slavers experiencing insurrections, against 1.49 per cent of British slavers. However, this relatively high percentage of insurrections aboard Dutch slavers has yet to be studied. The slave ship itself remains an understudied theme within Dutch historiography, although the past two decades have led to several publications.

Leo Balai wrote an extensive account of the slave ship *Leusden* and the history of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), focusing on numerous components of life onboard, including African resistance. The devastating journey of the *Leusden* ended with the loss of almost seven hundred African lives off the Suriname coast. Ruud Paesie focused on the slave ship *Neptunes*, which exploded due to the consequences of a slave insurrection and is seen as one of the most catastrophic rebellions on a Dutch slave ship.[6] A recent article by Gerhard J. de Kok unravelled the voyage and rebellion on the *Middelburgs Welvaren* in 1750, in which 200 Africans lost their lives.[7] The most recent addition to historiography and the TSTD is the 2022 book *De grootste slavenhandelaren van Amsterdam. Over Jochem Matthijs en Coenraad Smitt* by Ramona Negrón and Jessica den Oudsten. This book uncovered the history of *'t Gezegend Suikerriet*, an Amsterdam slave vessel that made numerous triangular voyages.[8]

As this historiography shows, most research centres around the history of a single vessel or voyage rather than the interconnected web in which they participated. Besides, African resistance during the Middle Passage remains a neglected theme. In part, this could be attributed to the insubstantial accounts of shipboard insurrections, as is demonstrated by the TSTD, suggesting that revolt was not so common after all.[9]

In the definition of Taylor, insurrection occurred when at least two captives combined their efforts and took active and aggressive steps to change the balance of power on a slave ship to reclaim their freedom. This definition

5 Den Heijer, *Nederlands slavernijverleden,* 60.

6 Paesie, *Slavenopstand op de Neptunus.*

7 De Kok, "Gruwelijke gebeurtenissen op het slavenschip *Middelburgs Welvaren*", 92.

8 Negrón and Den Oudsten, *De grootste slavenhandelaren van Amsterdam*.

9 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 80–3.

excludes suicide and escape, which were not aimed at overthrowing the system but pursued individual salvation.[10] However, this article includes suicide and escape as a means of insurrection when three or more instances occurred on a single voyage. This margin is chosen as it marks a boundary after which jumping overboard is no longer an incidental occurrence by a single individual. Furthermore, its occurrence can give lots of information about the situation onboard.

Table 12. African acts of resistance on Dutch slave vessels, 1600–1800

Acts of Resistance	Occurences	Total
Slave insurrection	48	
Vessel attacked from shore	0	
Vessel's boats attacked from shore	2	
Cut-off	0	
Three or more slaves jumping overboard, missing or escaped	1	
Insurrection planned, but thwarted	4	
Other	0	
Total occurrences of resistance		55
Total registered slave voyages		1251

Source: TSTD.

The TSTD allows for specific searches on African resistance in numerous categories, as seen in Table 12. When particularly searching the TSTD for occurrences on the slave ship itself using the terms 'Slave insurrection', 'Insurrection planned but thwarted' and 'Three or more slaves jumping overboard, missing or escaped', fifty-three of the total of 1,251 entries of ships sailing under the Dutch flag match the criteria, representing about four per cent.[11] These are by no means large numbers. In the context of a frequently updated and ever-growing database, we must conclude that the number of insurrections on Dutch slave ships is insignificant, although more accounts might surface in the future. However, when the previously mentioned criteria are used, a pattern becomes visible, in which various ships of the MCC seem to have dealt with slave resistance on numerous voyages, as seen in Table 13.

10 Taylor, *If We Must Die,* 12.
11 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)."

Table 13. Slave ship captains of the *Philadelphia*, *Middelburgs Welvaren*, *Vrouw Johanna Cores*, *Haast U Langzaam* and *Eenigheid* who recorded African resistance

Voyage ID	Name of Ship	Year of Departure - Year of Arrival	Captain
10868	Middelburgs Welvaren	1749 - 1751	Gerritsen, Jacob
10869	Middelburgs Welvaren	1752 - 1754	Kerkhoven, Jan van
10937	Philadelphia	1754 - 1755	Menkenveld, Jan
10938	Philadelphia	1756 - 1757	Menkenveld, Jan
10872	Middelburgs Welvaren	1758 - 1760	Mulders, David
10940	Philadelphia	1760 - 1761	Menkenveld, Jan
11116	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1760 - 1761	Tuijneman, Jan
10873	Middelburgs Welvaren	1761 - 1762	Mulders, David
11117	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1762 - 1763	Molder, Willem de
11118	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1763 - 1765	Molder, Willem de
10942	Philadelphia	1763 - 1765	Verdonk, Phillipus
10543	Eenigheid	1763 - 1765	Pruijmelaar, Daniel
10659	Haast U Langzaam	1764 - 1766	Menkenveld, Jan
10544	Eenigheid	1766 - 1767	Molder, Willem de
10660	Haast U Langzaam	1766 - 1768	Chatelain, Adriaan
10663	Haast U Langzaam	1772 - 1774	Sprang, Jan van

Source: TSTD.

The slave ships *Haast U Langzaam* and *Vrouw Johanna Cortes* each account for three recorded cases of insurrection, whereas the *Middelburgs Welvaren* and the *Philadelphia* each account for four. Remarkably, these vessels share a common thread, to be found in the crew members. Jan Menkenveld sailed as captain for the MCC on seven transatlantic voyages. During this time, he sailed with David Mulders, Daniel Pruijmelaar and Willem de Molder, who served as high-ranking officers on the *Philadelphia* before becoming captains themselves. Interestingly, these captains experienced numerous slave insurrections on their triangular voyages as well. Comparing the average percentage of slave insurrections on Dutch slave ships with these frequently stricken ships raises questions. What ties these captains together? Moreover, how can these captains have experienced so much African resistance while others seemed to experience none?

Winston McGowan identified several circumstances that often marked the foundation for insurrections onboard slave ships. Insurrections primarily occurred due to poor conditions aboard the vessels, like overcrowding, close confinement, poor ventilation and sanitation, intense heat, hunger, thirst, and exposure to disease and death. However, even more so, ill-treatment motivated

captives to resist their enslavement.[12] When accompanied by the right opportunistic circumstances, these conditions led to insurrections onboard slave ships throughout the slave trade. As it turns out, these circumstances were present during the voyages of these particular MCC captains.

This chapter explores the voyages of Jan Menkenveld, David Mulders, Daniel Pruijmelaar and Willem de Molder, during which insurrections were reported between 1754 and 1767, in hopes of determining the extent to which their captaincy kindled insurrections. It does so by following the same methodological footsteps of several American historians who have profoundly contributed to fathoming the secrets of the slave ship by studying the complex social and cultural dynamics inherent to the slave trade. Stephanie E. Smallwood and Marcus Rediker were among the first scholars to create a new discipline within the theme of the transatlantic slave trade, which historian Sowande' M. Mustakeem referred to as *Middle Passage Studies*.

Smallwood's study analysed the 'more hidden, internal transcripts' of the slave ship, consisting of correspondence, voyage journals and other texts produced by the slave traders. By carefully analysing and interplaying all these remaining stories, she means to 'excavate something of the slaves' experience of the traffic in human beings and of life aboard the slave ship'.[13] Rediker took a similar approach by assuming a vantage point from the decks of the slave ships and using the eyewitness accounts of their principal actors: captains, crews, the enslaved, African merchants and rulers, and abolitionists.[14] More recently, Mustakeem, like Rediker, focused on sailors, captives, and surgeons. However, she acknowledged the dangers in her approach, as the bondage suffered by the enslaved could only be accessed by the characteristics as recorded by the slave traders.[15] Therefore, she stresses that a careful analysis is due, where reading between the lines and interplaying archival material involving the slave ship is vital.

This chapter hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the origins of African resistance on MCC slave vessels by following a similar approach: focusing on social interaction and interplaying the extensive handwritten material that these captains and their crew left behind, including ship logs, muster rolls and correspondence to the company. Thankfully, the archive of the MCC remains well-preserved, making it an excellent corpus for studying the Dutch transatlantic slave trade. Although numerous occasions

12 McGowan, "The Origins of Slave Rebellions in the Middle Passage", 81–2.

13 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery,* 5.

14 Rediker, *The Slave Ship,* 11.

15 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*¸ 11–4.

of individual and collective insurrection occurred during these voyages, a selection has been made for this study.

The Connection Between Jan Menkenveld and His Officers

When one examines the muster rolls of the *Philadelphia*, the captain's name sounds as Dutch as any other. However, Jan Menkenveld was born in the German harbour city Glückstadt on the Elbe, growing up close to the Wadden Sea and the North Sea.[16] Before becoming affiliated with the *Philadelphia,* 'Jan Mink' made his first appearance as second mate on the muster roll of the MCC frigate *Africase Galeij,* sailing out on April 21, 1747. Between 1733 and 1752, the vessel made eleven voyages in total. It had been used for the Mediterranean trade, African trade and the transatlantic slave trade. However, when Menkenveld mustered as the second mate, the *Africase Galeij* was hired by the Admiralty in service of the Dutch Republic, presumably due to the Austrian War of Succession (1740-1748). Instead of cargo, the ship was filled with soldiers. On the muster roll, the names 'Mink' and 'Menkveld' are used by the captain of the *Africase Galeij*. Menkenveld can be identified as 'Jan Mink' due to the signature he would use for the rest of his life: 'Jan Menkenveld'.[17] It is most likely that Menkenveld had climbed up the ladder of ship hierarchy on other merchant or slave vessels before he joined the MCC. On completing the voyage, he joined the *Africase Galeij* for a second voyage to the coast of Guinea in 1748, now serving as first mate.[18]

In 1750, Menkenveld mustered on the newly built frigate *Philadelphia*. The vessel was built in Middelburg for 4657 guilders to engage in trade along West Africa.[19] Menkenveld familiarised himself with this frigate from the position of first mate under the rule of captain Cornelis Maarschalk. The ship was instructed to sail to the coast of Guinea, where it would trade in gold, ivory, redwood, and enslaved people. African captives were to be sold to either English, Portuguese or French traders near the coast of 'Fida' in the Bight of Benin.[20] On this voyage of two years, Menkenveld became more experienced, learning how to negotiate, navigate, and command in the unfortunate case the captain passed away. During this voyage, he sailed

16 Van Rooij, "Jan Menkenveld".
17 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 199, scan 4.
18 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 202, scan 4.
19 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 887, scans 3–5.
20 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 888.1, scan 25.

with several crew members who would eventually sail under his command: David Mulders as second mate, Daniel Pruijmelaar as a regular sailor, and Willem de Molder as ships' boy.[21]

After the *Philadelphia* arrived at its home port in Rammekens before Flushing on July 12, 1752, Menkenveld witnessed the dishonourable discharge of captain Maarschalk, who delivered insufficient reasons as to why his voyage had taken so long and incurred heavy financial losses. Furthermore, the cargo load of his private trade was two and a half times the amount permitted by the MCC. When harboured in Flushing, Maarschalk smuggled an 8 kg gold profit to shore. As a result of his private trade, the company took three-quarters of his profit and discarded him from the MCC.[22] With the departure of Maarschalk, an opportunity arose for the first mate. The open vacancy, together with Menkenveld's rank and experience, resulted in his commission as captain of the *Philadelphia* in November 1752.[23]

Historian Henk den Heijer counted that of the forty-six captains that partook in the 113 transatlantic voyages of the MCC, more than half made two or more voyages.[24] Judging by the TSTD and the MCC muster rolls, Menkenveld sailed for the MCC on ten occasions, of which seven were triangular voyages under his captaincy. Daniel Pruijmelaar accompanied Captain Menkenveld on five voyages, during which he worked himself up to the top of the hierarchy. He made one voyage as a regular sailor, two as third mate, and two as first mate before making two voyages as captain. Willem de Molder experienced a similar climb in the hierarchy. He joined Menkenveld on five voyages, once as a ships' boy, once as light sailor, once as third mate and twice as second mate, before commanding three ships as captain. David Mulders sailed with Menkenveld on two voyages as chief merchant before commanding six slave voyages as the captain himself. Collectively, these four captains conducted eighteen transatlantic voyages, ten of which are registered as voyages on which insurrection occurred.

Death Over Slavery

On October 2, 1758, captain David Mulders set out on the fourth voyage of the *Middelburgs Welvaren*. After almost three months of sailing, the

21 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 894, scans 7, 13, 19.

22 Reinders Folmer-van Prooijen, *Van Goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 121.

23 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC,* 64.

24 Den Heijer, *Het Slavenschip,* 7.

vessel arrived on the coast of Malembo, in Angola, on January 28, 1759.[25] In Angola, it was common for the crew to settle on the coast, building or hiring a lodge where the enslaved were kept before embarkation.[26] After Mulders got permission from the African merchants to engage in trade, the first four captives were bought on February 1. By February 27, the number of captives had grown to 186.[27] Simultaneously, the ships' crew had shrunk to thirty-one as five sailors lay sick onboard the vessel on February 25.[28] Reduced crew strength was an essential factor in shipboard insurrections, and in the case of the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* several captives had discovered this too.

On February 27, whilst the captain came aboard escorting ten Africans, a woman jumped overboard yet was soon fetched out of the water by the ships' crew. The following day, the woman was thrown in shackles as her intention to jump overboard had only grown fiercer. Her bold attempt had presumably encouraged other captives, as four more African women were put in chains for having similar thoughts. Several days later, it was noted in the ships' log that the captain was forced to hire four free Africans to occupy the boats as seven men, including the ships' surgeon, lay sick aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren*.[29] On March 10, it was noted that several captives rebelled in an attempt to depart the ship. However, due to aid from another vessel, this insurrection was quickly put down.[30]

On April 9, Captain Mulders departed from Malembo with 425 African captives on board. Halfway through the Middle Passage, another woman jumped overboard on April 29. The margin of the ships' log noted that a baby had passed away that day. Could this woman have been the mother? Attempts were made to launch the sloop into the water, yet before the crew was well organised, the woman had already vanished beneath the dark blue waves.[31]

During both voyages of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* on which insurrections were reported, the first mate was Jacob Husson, who had sailed with Mulders once before under Jan Menkenveld.[32] In 1763, Husson became captain of the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* during which he notoriously was locked up drunk

25 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scans 4, 24.
26 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC,* 97.
27 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scan 27.
28 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scan 26.
29 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scan 27.
30 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scan 28.
31 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 793, scan 34.
32 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 797, scan 4.

in his cabin by his crew after viciously flogging the African women on his ship.[33] It is not unthinkable that the women on this voyage experienced similar treatment from Husson, spreading fear and terror amongst the enslaved.

The sixth voyage of the *Philadelphia* departed on February 22, 1760, under the captaincy of Jan Menkenveld and followed its regular route to its first destination, Cape Mesurado, in present-day Liberia. After that, they anchored at several capes on the Gold and Slave Coasts before eventually making their way to Elmina. The trade with African merchants often occurred when canoes responded to the blank canon fire of a ship, summoning African merchants with their supply of human cargo directly to the vessel. Additionally, the captains would send the first or second mate with some crew members out on the sloop to trade along the shore. The first two bondswomen were brought on board on May 8.[34]

By the time the ship arrived at Cape Lahou on August 4, three crew members had passed away, leaving a crew of thirty-six. Among the dead was the ships' smith, who formerly attended to the shackles. The second carpenter was granted a raise as he would now have to attend to the captives' shackles in addition to his regular duties.[35] On August 16, the vessel arrived in Grand-Bassam, on the Ivory Coast. The sea was rising high, making trips to shore troublesome. Eventually, the second mate and several sailors left for shore as the fresh water was running dry. That same day, during the first watch in the evening on August 19, several Africans managed to jump overboard whilst 253 Africans inhabited the ship.[36]

In the slave trade, it was not unusual to have netting alongside the ship to prevent captives from performing such acts of desperation.[37] However, the MCC vessels do not seem to have taken these preventive measures. Menkenveld recalled hearing the screams of the captives that jumped overboard yet made no attempt to 'rescue' his drowning commodities since there was no opportunity to get the sloop out on time. The following day it was discovered that the people who jumped overboard were a man and two women.[38] The autobiography of Olaudah Equiano, an African survivor of the Middle Passage, depicts the willingness of bondspeople to

33 Den Heijer, *Het slavenschip*, scan 11.
34 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 922, scan 19.
35 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 922, scan 29.
36 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 922, scan 31.
37 Rediker, *The Slave Ship,* 288.
38 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 922, scan 31.

jump overboard towards their deaths, and the envy he felt of those who now inhabited the deep.[39]

As part of the crew was off to the shore, the Africans managed to jump while a restless sea supported their cause. Remarkably, the boatswain was stripped of his rank and function four days later, for he had been drunk on multiple occasions and had presumably neglected his duties. The notion of the departed smith is notable as well. Perhaps the second carpenter was unskilled in managing the shackles. Since men were mainly kept in chains, the bondsman likely managed to free himself before he jumped.[40] On October 12, the *Philadelphia* departed from Elmina with 301 living African captives. The Middle Passage took three months, arriving in Suriname on January 13, 1761. Before the following month had passed, the 288 surviving Africans were sold at the slave auctions in Paramaribo.[41]

When the *Philadelphia* returned on July 8, 1761, Menkenveld prepared to embark on another voyage. He sailed out on the snow ship *Eenigheid* on October 1 of that same year. It took about two months to reach Cape Mesurado, where the first captive was bought on December 9. When the *Eenigheid* eventually reached Elmina on April 12, 1762, 304 Africans inhabited the vessel.[42]

On April 22, two men jumped overboard and drowned as the boats rowed off and onshore for new fresh water and firewood supplies. A day later, another man followed, yet it was explicitly noted that he fell.[43] Two months prior, it was also mentioned that a bondsman had fallen overboard during the night.[44] Surprisingly, no efforts to retrieve these men were reported in the ship log. It is more believable that they intended to jump, or were thrown, as it would seem unlikely that someone would suddenly happen to fall overboard.

The circumstances surrounding these incidents and individual insurrections often remain unclear because, to a great extent, the Atlantic provided an isolated and publicly unseen space, enabling all sorts of terror leading to the murder or suicide of the enslaved.[45] However, this voyage left historians with another source: the surgeon's journal, which contains details that further uncover the inhumane conditions aboard the slave ship that might have motivated the bondsmen to jump overboard. For example, on April 6, the surgeon described the wounds of the first African to pass away:

39 Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano,* 80–2.
40 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC,* 97.
41 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 922, scans 49–50.
42 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383, scan 36.
43 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383, scan 37.
44 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383, scan 30.
45 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea,* 188.

> Found no speech or consciousness with him, [I] understood he had been kicked. [I] Also found that he felt pain when I touched his neck, for he then started screaming[46]

Several weeks later, the surgeon makes a statement about a woman whose health had deteriorated, leading to her death:

> a woman slave had passed. She got beaten a week or four ago, so that blood started streaming out of her ear[47]

Unfortunately, there is no way of telling how this man and woman had gotten these injuries, for there is no mention of it in the ship's logs. It is known, however, that the sailors aboard slave ships had immense power over the African captives, able to swing the whip with every demonstration of disobedience, trying to prevent thoughts of insurrection.[48] Although crew members more than likely assaulted these captives, it is not ruled out that these injuries came from other enslaved people. Captives were forced into near-impossible positions, exposing them to their neighbouring captives' urine, vomit, blood, and faecal matter.[49] These horrid conditions often were causes of violence amongst the enslaved below decks.[50] On May 8, 1762, the *Eenigheid* departed from Elmina towards the colonies Berbice and Essequebo. The ship arrived in Berbice two months later, on July 4, 1762.[51] Of the original 326 Africans traded in Africa, 296 survived the Middle Passage and were sold in the New World.[52]

Rebellion Amongst the Enslaved

On September 7, 1756, the *Philadelphia* departed from Flushing towards the coast of Guinea. On October 26, whilst the ship was still en route to

46 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390, scan 12: 'bevond geen spraak, of verstand bij hem, verstond dat hij geschopt was, bevond ook wanneer ik aan de hals voelde, dat hij daar pijn hadde, dewijl hij dan begon te kermen'.

47 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390, scan 14: ' Den 13 dito, een vrou slaaf overleden, deselve was een week of vier voor haar overlijden geslagen, soo dat het bloed haar sterk was uit t oor gelopen'.

48 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden,* 68–9.

49 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea,* 160.

50 Rediker, *The Slave Ship,* 270–1.

51 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383, scans 39, 49.

52 Zeeuws Archief, "Aan boord van de Eenigheid".

Guinea, there was an incident with the boatswain. A sailor came on deck moaning and wailing as he had been viciously attacked by the boatswain, Albert Coeckuit. The sailor was covered with large bruises and felt severe pain in his side.[53] Even though the captain was charged with keeping order and discipline on his ship, no punishment was recorded in the ship log. However, on November 11, the captain and officers held a council regarding Coeckuit. In addition to showing rude behaviour, he was deemed incapable of fulfilling his duties. The role of a boatswain was important, for he was the bridge between captain and crew. The council's verdict meant a demotion for Coeckuit to the rank of boatswain's mate.[54]

On November 15, along Rio Serbara on the Grain Coast, the *Philadelphia* purchased its first two captives, a man and a woman.[55] Meanwhile, Coeckuit created more disturbances onboard the vessel. He was accused of thievery when it was discovered that he had stolen alcohol from a deserted sailor and tried to hide this fact by filling the bottle with salt water. He was also accused of stealing apples and additional alcoholic beverages from the ships' supplies and having extorted sailors for their meals with threats and beatings. Additionally, he stole linen, a pipe, and bread. Finally, Menkenveld decided to act and cuffed him.[56]

As the number of captives onboard had started increasing, the officers decided it was best to send Coeckuit to shore, on November 20. Two days later, he was picked up by an English ship on which he mustered as a regular sailor.[57] Sending away a sailor was unfortunate, especially one whose rank was of some import. Moreover, it further thinned an already small crew against a growing number of captives and disturbed the division of power aboard the vessel. However, the officers were content with his departure, as they had feared he might have caused disturbances as significant as mutiny.[58] With a troublemaker like Coeckuit onboard, crew members might have gotten distracted, leading to carelessness during crucial tasks like closing doors and keeping careful watch.[59]

When the *Philadelphia* arrived at Elmina on March 7, 1757, the last preparations were made to engage in the Middle Passage. However, as the ship lay anchored near the fortress, a group of bondsmen began organising

53 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scans 11–2.
54 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scan 14.
55 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scan 15.
56 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scan 15.
57 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scan 16.
58 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 915.3, scan 37.
59 Taylor, *If We Must Die,* 53–4.

a rebellion on March 12. Daniel Pruijmelaar, the first mate during this voyage, was informed, presumably by a *bomba*, an African overseer typical on Dutch slaving vessels (see chapter 7), that the bondsmen wanted to rebel. Investigating the matter, he discovered a group of eighteen bondsmen preparing an insurrection.[60] Although the ship's log does not go into detail, it appears the insurrection was quickly put down. The bondsmen were put in double shackles and awaited further punishment from the captain. Menkenveld had been on shore to arrange matters for the Middle Passage. When he came onboard, the rebelling captives were chastised on their buttocks with the *boermesingel*, 'though not deadly wounded,' he informed the directors of the MCC.[61] Afterwards, they were chained on the steerage. The ship log portrays Menkenveld's thoughts on the cause of the insurrection. He noted that part of his crew was working onshore and in the ship's hold whilst others were sick, meaning there were not enough sailors to guard the captives.[62] He resolved with the officers to hire guards, or *tapoejers*, from Elmina. The next day, eight guards joined the ship's ranks to make further insurrections impossible.[63] Three more weeks of trade would follow before the *tapoejers* were sent back to shore.

On April 4, the *Philadelphia* set sail towards the Americas, departing with 300 Africans on board. Eight did not survive their enslavement along the African coasts. No further insurrections were recorded in the ship's log during the Middle Passage. Perhaps morale was low after the insurrectionists were chastised and constrained, or perhaps the *bombas* made conspiring near impossible. Finally, on June 19, 1757, the vessel reached Suriname. A total of 286 Africans survived the Middle Passage and were sold, deprived of all humanity, on the selling blocks of Suriname and Berbice.[64]

When Willem de Molder sailed into the English Channel in December 1763, misfortune struck the *Vrouw Johanna Cortes*. Seven crew members had fallen ill within two weeks, and the ship leaked so heavily that the captain and officers resolved to return to the Republic. The ship barely managed to reach the 'Dorthsche Kill' with the guidance of a fisherman, where it was repaired and replenished. Whilst there, several sailors had deserted, forcing the captain to hire new sailors in Dordrecht. Finally, three and a half months later than planned, the ship departed for the African coasts.[65]

60 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 890, scan 98
61 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scans 32, 70.
62 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scans 32, 70.
63 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scans 32, 70.
64 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 910, scans 43, 55.
65 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1243, scans 4–26.

The following months proved to be just as unfortunate. By the end of June, the *Vrouw Johanna Cortes* arrived in Cape Lahou with 25 African captives on board. In the meantime, a sailor had succumbed to sickness. On June 24, the second mate, Isaac de Grie, arrived from St. Andries in present-day Ghana, where he had been sent to trade. The sailors on this trip complained that the second mate had harshly mistreated them onboard the sloop. De Grie had been a ships' boy with Willem de Molder on the third voyage of the *Philadelphia*.[66] One of the sailors bore the marks of about seventeen wounds on his body. The captain stated he could not discover the meaning of this mistreatment, seemingly leaving the matter unattended.[67] This injustice almost certainly fuelled mistrust amongst the crew. Furthermore, it shows the violence De Grie was capable of, which could also have been directed at the African captives onboard.

On August 20, after nearly three months of trading, the ship had been filled with 96 captives. The boat was sent to trade on shore two days earlier, while the other boat brought cargo to Captain Bourleegh of the *Sang Godin*. Then, around half past three in the afternoon, the bondsmen in the vessel started rebelling. In an instant, African captives attacked the cook, boatswain, and second cooper from below, after which the remaining bondsmen threw themselves upon the wooden barricade, specially built for every voyage so that the crew could seek refuge with their muskets and pistols during an uprising.[68] The captives were held back by crew members swinging at them with firewood. The rebels, however, would not let some pieces of wood silence their resistance, whereafter the crew found themselves forced to use their pistols.[69]

Confronted with gunfire, the Africans retreated to the 'cage' on the lower centre of the deck. Whilst attacking, the bondsmen used a blowpipe, the deck scraper, a baking pan, firewood, and several knives confiscated from the crew members.[70] These improvised weapons helped the captives defend themselves, making it impossible for the crew to come near. However, gunfire drove them back as they scattered between decks and freed themselves from their shackles. Upon perceiving that, the crew resolved to use the muskets and pistols, as the situation had taken another dangerous turn. Confronted with muskets and additional sailors sent by the *Abraham* and

66 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 907, scan 19.

67 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1239, scans 45, 51.

68 Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 70.

69 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1200.2, scan 167.

70 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1200.2, scan 167.

D'Europa, the remaining captives surrendered around half past four. The skirmish had taken over an hour, resulting in two dead bondsmen and fifteen severely wounded.[71]

When the dust had settled, the surgeons of the *Sanggodin, Abraham* and *D'Europa* arrived to attend to the wounded bondsmen, ensuring minimal loss of profit in the Americas. Willem de Molder traded eight 'soldier weapons' from Captain Meijer of the *Abraham* for some of his. He deemed this trade necessary as his weaponry had proven insufficient to defend the ship.[72] On August 23, the bondsmen were shackled onto the same chain after they revealed their desire to murder their captors remained. The following day, Captain Bourleegh brought five handcuffs to the *Vrouw Johanna Cortes*, most certainly as extra security for the bondsmen. In the following weeks, five rebels passed away from their wounds.[73]

Remarkably, upon arrival in Suriname, the third mate Hermanus Vogel refused to stay on the ship any longer. He claimed to be unable to work with the second mate Isaac de Grie, as he had been assaulted by him during the voyage and had continuously quarrelled with him.[74] This statement further argues for Isaac De Grie's violent nature, as he had already attacked a sailor months before this incident. Perhaps he was one of the main instigators initiating insurrection aboard the *Vrouw Johanna Cortes*. Unlike the crew members, the pleas of the bondspeople would not have been taken seriously enough to be noted in the ship's log.

The *Haast U Langzaam* and the End for Jan Menkenveld

After spending almost two decades sailing the Atlantic, Jan Menkenveld's career ended with his captaincy of the *Haast U Langzaam*. He had been a prosperous captain for the MCC, making profits on six of the seven triangular voyages.[75] Interestingly, his last voyage was also the first without his trusted officers. During this voyage, Cornelis van Kerkhoven was his first mate, a man who had never before sailed under his captaincy.[76] Only the first surgeon Petrus Couperus and the sailor Adriaan de Visser were veterans of the voyages of Menkenveld.

71 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1200.2, scan 167.
72 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1239, scan 60.
73 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1239, scans 60–1, 75.
74 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr.1201, scan 80.
75 Zeeuws Archief, "Aan boord van de Eenigheid".
76 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 516, scan 5.

During this voyage, Menkenveld had several collisions with the first mate. Their behaviour encouraged several sailors to report Menkenveld and Van Kerkhoven to the directors of the MCC. First surgeon Couperus included the following in his letter to the MCC:

> With my kind request, I ask you honourable gentlemen to look carefully upon the occurrences on this voyage, of which I have the honour to share with you honourable gentlemen, for they did not dare put this in the journals.[77]

The statement of Couperus is revealing, as it suggests that keepers of the log would not dare to write down all that transpired on and around the ship. During this voyage, Menkenveld became physical, harming the first mate. In return, Van Kerkhoven threatened to kill Menkenveld, stating he was not a young man like Pruijmelaar, whom he could easily influence.[78] Interestingly enough, though Van Kerkhoven had never sailed with either Menkenveld or Pruijmelaar, he was well aware of their connection. Couperus stated that Menkenveld was drunk several times and frequently abandoned the vessel to stay on land for lengthy periods. In turn, Van Kerkhoven repeatedly got drunk, during which times he violated the captives with the *boermesingel*.[79]

The accusations towards the first mate are revealing. They claim that Van Kerkhoven threatened to murder Couperus, set up the crew against the captain, left the ship unsupervised with over two hundred captives onboard, kept women for himself on board, and threatened to blow up a French vessel anchored near the *Haast U Langzaam*.[80] Van Kerkhoven had even asked captain Menkenveld to give every sailor an African woman, which according to him, was very common amongst captains of other vessels.[81] After investigation of these allegations, Van Kerkhoven was dismissed from his service. The same fate would befall Menkenveld, as sailor Adriaan de Visser accused him of exceeding the legal amount of private trade, smuggling, and acting against the company's interest, focusing on

77 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, p. 214: 'Dierhalven is mijn vriendelijke bede, dat UE. Welgest. Met een naukeurig oog eens geliefde gate te slaan, de voorvallen soo van t een als t ander, op de reijs voorgevallen, bij mij aangetekent dat met t mijne t geen ik de eer sal hebben UWelEd. Gest int vervolg te melden, alschoon men sulks in geen journaalen heeft durven plaatsen'.

78 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scan 215.

79 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scan 217.

80 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scans 210–3.

81 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scan 210.

his personal wealth and preceding to trade in gold rather than captives.[82] These accusations led to an investigation, during which several sailors were questioned. Unfortunately for Menkenveld, this investigation led to his demise.

The surgeon Couperus gave an interesting remark at the end of his letter to the company, in which he accuses not only the officers but, in a way, also the company itself:

> This piece is drawn up to show how desperate situations aboard your ships sometimes become. No reports are made because such captains tell us that they will be the ones that are trusted, the sailors do not even dare to speak, for the captains have made it so that they will not even be heard.[83]

The statement of Couperus suggests that the fearful and violent circumstances aboard the *Haast U Langzaam* were no exception and that the regular sailors were only standing at the mercy of their captains and officers. Couperus was no stranger to Menkenveld's command, as he had sailed with him on the *Philadelphia* and the *Eenigheid.* The circumstances onboard the *Haast U Langzaam* could have been similar throughout the many voyages of Jan Menkenveld, David Mulders, Daniel Pruijmelaar and Willem de Molder, although out of fear, they remained unrecorded.

Additionally, Couperus' statement suggests that the abuse of African captives was far more common than the ships' logs portrayed. Although the MCC gave clear instructions to their captains in which drunkenness and violence were condemned, months and years of sailing created societies where the captains and crew would be governed by their own laws and rules of order.[84] Although no full-scale rebellion occurred during this voyage, five African men managed to jump overboard.[85]

Menkenveld had sailed without his trusted officers for the first time, costing him his career. It is hard to believe this was also his first time smuggling. Only on this occasion, he had no loyal officers to help him cover it up. Van Kerkhoven even hinted that crew members knew:

82 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scans 192–4.

83 NL-MdbZA, 20. inv.nr. 509.1, scan 218: 'Dit kleine staaltie is allenig om aan UwelEd: gest: aan te tonen hoe disperaat t somtijds op UE. Schepen toe gaat, daar men geen berigt van bekoomt, de waare oorsaak is dese, dat jullie Capt. Altoos seggen, wij werden gelooft, en gij lieden durft niet spreken want wij hebben t reedts soo verre gebragt dat gij niet verhoort wert'.

84 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea,* 24.

85 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 511, scans 27, 46, 60, 63.

> Father dear, I will keep my hand above [your head], while the others want to betray you, whereafter the captain told him to go to his cage, 'that all things would work out.'[86]

In the end, Jan Menkenveld followed in the footsteps of his mentor, Cornelis Maarschalk, and was discarded from the company, never to sail again. His position as veteran captain would soon be taken over by Cornelis van Kakom, who served as third mate on the *Haast U Langzaam* and would eventually be captain on seven triangular voyages for the MCC.[87] It raises the question of how the interconnectedness of crew members and their experience influenced the circumstances on other vessels. The statements of Couperus and De Visser demonsrate that the slave voyages of the MCC were far more eventful than often described, suggesting that far more is to be discovered about the circumstances related to African resistance aboard slave vessels.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to uncover the apparent underlying circumstances that kindled insurrections on the triangular voyages of Jan Menkenveld, Willem de Molder, David Mulders, and Daniel Pruijmelaar between 1754 and 1767. Throughout these voyages, it becomes apparent that similar circumstances created opportunities for insurrection. The captives used those weaker moments during which the crew was absent, sick or unwatchful. Additionally, some officers have been identified who were known to show violent behaviour, mustering on multiple voyages of these captains. Evidence supports the idea that captains and officers aided one another, keeping each other's excesses secret, as with Willem de Molder ignoring the violent behaviour of Isaac de Grie. A man like Jan Menkenveld, who educated boys to become high-ranking officers on the slave vessels of the MCC, might have been reasonably assured of their loyalty. Mistakes on board or violent outbursts would remain unreported in the ships' logs, and in return, the illegal private trade from the captain would remain unmentioned to the company, as would have almost been the case on the

86 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.1, scan 212. Original citation: 'vaderlief, u sal ik d'handt bove en de andere soeke u te verraden, maar de capteijn sprak niets tegen hem als dat hij maar na sijn cooij soudt gaan, dat alle dinge sig wel soude schikken'.

87 Den Heijer, "Het slavenschip", 8.

Haast U Langzaam. The opportunity created by crew negligence, disunity, sickness and incompetence, fuelled by violent behaviour from crew members, is what kindled insurrections on the voyages of Jan Menkenveld, Willem de Molder, David Mulders, and Daniel Pruijmelaar between 1754 and 1767.

Furthermore, the statement of the surgeon Couperus changes how scholars should look at the MCC archives. The discussion about the quantity of slave ship resistance asks to be reignited, as the accusation of Couperus confirms that the circumstances aboard the slave ship, as described in the available sources, are deficient. It suggests that the lack of evidence of the violent circumstances aboard the MCC slave ships and the African resistance they might have sparked are purposely infrequent. The inadequacy in ship logs and letters is due to captains and officers concealing the violent outbursts and mistreatment of the African captives, using their authority to discourage or even frighten sailors into taking matters to the MCC. This concealment suggests that the actual events on slave vessels could differ enormously from what was reported. Therefore, the true number of insurrections aboard slave ships is and always will be unbeknownst to history, although it is plausible that many more occurred than the vessels documented in the TSTD cared to report. In the future, scholars should start broadening their scope when identifying insurrections. By emphasising more on individual insurrections, African resistance aboard slave ships can be seen as a more common phenomenon, rather than a unique occurrence on the voyage of a slave ship.

About the Author

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6. Rice, Barley and Beans: Extensity and Severity of Malnutrition in the Dutch Slave Trade*

Lucas Oosterwijk

Abstract: Malnutrition on board of slave ships importantly contributed to the mortality and the lasting impact of the Middle Passage on the enslaved. Scholars have investigated how different slave trading companies and empires fed the imprisoned population on board. This study offers both new data and a new methodology to approach this theme by using the extensive records found in Dutch archives. Despite the availability of detailed records, such a study has not been undertaken for the Dutch case before now. By combining quantitative data from the fifth voyage of the MCC's *Middelburgs Welvaren* with medical knowledge, the extensity and severity of malnutrition on board can be reconstructed. The data details the daily food intake for the over 450 enslaved people that were bought and brought aboard. We found that the slavers bought food both at the port of departure and on the West African coast and distributed it aboard the ship. As this insufficiently fed the enslaved people, the latter part of this article discusses the consequences of the malnutrition the enslaved aboard suffered from. The results of this article show that the model of combining medical data and shipping data can be used to study the question of nutrition in other cases as well.

Keywords: malnutrition, food intake, Middle Passage, disease

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Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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There is a general consensus among historians that enslaved people entered a ship in a malnourished state. Weakened by the long trip to the coast, those enslaved had to survive their stay ashore where food was not widely available. Stephanie Smallwood, Joseph Miller, and Kenneth Kiple all discuss how English and Portuguese governors at the coast provided enslaved people the bare minimum to survive. The enslaved people could not oversee their nourishment and had to rely on the empty calories they received.[1] Smallwood, Miller, and Kiple suggest that the nourishment at the coast was better than during the journey to the coast. Still, Smallwood provides a picture of the grim reality of the low availability of food at the forts where enslaved people were held.[2]

After capture, a journey to the coast, examination and branding, enslaved people were shipped to the Americas to work in the plantation system. During the numerous weeks of the Middle Passage, the enslaved experienced their new daily routines, part of which was being served some food to sustain themselves. In this chapter, I answer the question: How did food intake affect the enslaved people aboard the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) ship *Middelburgs Welvaren*? To answer that question, I have to determine the amount of food and calories provided to the enslaved. By doing so, I position myself between two debates. The first one is focused on the treatment of the enslaved during the Middle Passage, of which food is an essential part. The second is whether the demand for food might have boosted West African agriculture, as I need to look at the food provisioning for the *Middelburgs Welvaren* to construct how much food was available for those enslaved on board to consume during the voyage.[3]

When the enslaved people entered the ship that would take them overseas, the situation hardly improved. Kiple, Miller, and Sowande Mustakeem describe the problematic food situation aboard. While captains might have wanted to preserve the basic health of the enslaved, Mustakeem shows how they were either ignorant or lost control.[4] As Kiple notes, the core diet of rice and yams caused a deficiency in almost all nutrients. What is more, Mustakeem and Kiple show that the food had a great chance of going bad: Yams could rot, rice could become rancid, bread could become mouldy,

1 Empty calories provide little to no useful nutritional value.

2 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 37, 43–4, 47–8; Kiple, *The Caribbean Slave*, 59; Miller, *Way of Death,* 393-395.

3 Ronnback, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Social Stratification on the Gold Coast"; Dalrymple-Smith and Frankema, "Slave Ship Provisioning in the Long 18th Century".

4 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 64–9; Kiple, *Caribbean Slave*, 60–2; Miller, *Way of Death*, 413, 415.

and parasites could breed in the provisions. Moreover, the preparation of the food did not positively impact the food, as it was boiled or sometimes only heated before being served. The enslaved people that entered the ship would see their weakened state prolonged. In such a state, they were more vulnerable to the major killers aboard: gastrointestinal diseases like the white and bloody fluxes that impaired possibilities of recovering enough energy to fight the illness, as well as contagious diseases like smallpox.

The debate on the economic impact of slave ship provisioning on the West African economy has mostly focussed on the British case. David Eltis and Karl Ronnback argue that food was exclusively bought on the West African coast, having a positive impact on the local economy.[5] Eltis argues most food for the enslaved was bought there, and only some vessels would also bring horse beans from Europe. From there, in West Africa, they could choose different products that were the specialisation per region: millet and maize at the Gold Coast or inexpensive yams at the Bight of Benin. Ronnback assumes all the food for the enslaved people was bought on the West African coast, while the crew's food was European. However, he argues this did not positively impact the West African agricultural economy, except for a few farmers along the coast.[6] Contrastingly, for the Dutch case, scholars agree most of the food was stocked within European harbours. Angus Dalrymple-Smit and Ewout Frankema suggest that the Dutch MCC bought around half of their food stocks in Europe and the other half on the West African coast. The provisions for the sailors would be bought in Europe, while food for the enslaved would partly be bought in West Africa.[7] Others that researched Dutch ship provisioning suggest that food was almost exclusively bought at the port of departure. Barley and beans, as the main types of food, were bought in bulk via public contractors. It meant that the local agricultural sector could benefit from providing food.[8] Gerhard de Kok most extensively discussed this process for the province of Zeeland, where MCC ships bought most food. MCC slavers would rarely buy West African food as they could experience delays or food shortages among other

5 Eltis, "The Slave Trade and Commercial Agriculture in an African Context", 41–4; Ronnback, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Social Stratification on the Gold Coast".

6 Ronnback, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Social Stratification on the Gold Coast", 163–7.

7 Dalrymple-Smith and Frankema, "Slave Ship Provisioning in the Long 18th Century", 192.

8 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 150, 234; For profits, see Brandon and Bosma, "De betekenis van de Atlantische slavernij voor de Nederlandse economie in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw", 33–4. For an example of ship provisioning see Balai, "Het slavenschip Leusden", 131–2.

things. In terms of spoilage, horse beans could be preserved for a long time, even if they were not high quality.[9]

While provisioning for the Dutch ships has been discussed, the treatment of enslaved people related to food is discussed less. Johannes Postma notes that enslaved people would get food twice or thrice a day. He also mentions how the enslaved people were forced to use their energy by dancing and exercising, via drums and the threat of a whip.[10]

In this article, I offer new insights into how the enslaved aboard an MCC ship were treated when it comes to serving food. For that, I will use the case study of the fifth voyage of MCC's *Middelburgs Welvaren*, which departed Vlissingen in Zeeland on January 9, 1761, for Malembo in Angola to buy enslaved people. After finishing their trade, they sailed to Curaçao in fifty-four days.[11] During the voyage, both the captain and first mate kept a journal in which they documented how many enslaved Africans they bought and how many passed away. The buying was also noted within the trade book (*negotieboek*), in which they specified whether they bought males or females, adults or children. The information on the purchased food is in the trade book as well as the outfitting book (*equipage boek*).[12] Combining that information, I can calculate the daily food intake of enslaved people aboard and discuss the consequences of that daily allowance.

Collecting Food from Vlissingen to Sierra Leone

To determine whether enslaved people aboard *Middelburgs Welvaren* were given enough food, the first step is to look at how much food they used during the voyage. To reconstruct how much they used, I combine information on food that was bought before departure, then on the West African Coast, and the remaining food that was sold at the destination of Curaçao. The port of departure was Vlissingen, where the ship was loaded with trade goods and provision, including foodstuffs. Who would consume the foodstuffs is not always specified, although sometimes specific goods were designated to either crew or slave.[13] The *Middelburg Welvaren* set sail on January 8, 1761.

9 De Kok, *Walcherse ketens*, 122–5.

10 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 233–4.

11 Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD)."

12 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800–7.

13 In the trade books, the captain registered the cost of the bags of barley and horse beans. NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 807, scans 2 and 3; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803, scan 5.

Reconstructing what drinks the captain would offer the enslaved people is complicated. The crew loaded more than enough brandy and anise aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* as shown in the trade book, and the equipment book indicates how different beers and both white and red wine were brought along. However, the brandy and anise drinks were all used to trade in Angola, rather than for consumption on board.[14] The beer and wine, on the other hand, were among the provisions reserved for the crew of the ship. Joseph Miller has noted that Portuguese slavers usually avoided providing enslaved people with red wine, as they could think it was the blood of previously enslaved people aboard.[15] Water was brought and stocked daily during the period of trading in enslaved people. Consequentially, the first mate has noted in detail the number of barrels of water that were used per day while they were sailing the Middle Passage. In the end, water would not add sufficient calories. The crew could also have used the water for other purposes, such as cleaning.[16]

After departing from Vlissingen, the crew of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* only stocked more food for the enslaved at "Cape Zurade" on the West African coast. This is the current-day town of Shenge, where they stopped initially for water and wood.[17] In Shenge, the crew of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* also gained the opportunity to buy 1500 pounds of rice, nine pots (*potten*) of palm oil and nine pots of yams. After that, they would not buy more food for the enslaved people they were expecting aboard.[18]

The next time we encounter transactions around food is after the ship had sailed from Cape Zurade via Malembo in Angola to the destination of Curaçao. Below, I will discuss the period of embarkment for the groups of enslaved Africans onto the ship. First, I need to skip ahead to Curaçao, where the remaining food that had been reserved for the enslaved was sold off.[19] The captain sold seventy *schepel* of barley and eight-nine *schepel* of horse beans to people in Curaçao, presumably to feed slaves who (temporarily) lived on the island. This sale shows that not all the food that was stocked

14 As noted in the trade book, see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803.

15 Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade", 414.

16 For brandy and anise see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803, scans 5–52; For crew's drinks see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 807, scan 4; For water provisioning and use see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 801, scans 25–53.

17 The coordinates were 7 degrees, 48 minutes north latitude, as noted in the ship logs. See NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scan 10.

18 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803, scan 49. For current-day quantities, see Table 1.

19 To construct the total amount of food used, I needed to subtract the amount that remained and was sold first.

in Vlissingen and reserved for the enslaved in the outfitting book had been used during the voyage. The sold food must have been deemed unworthy for the crew to eat, demonstrating a difference in positions aboard, with the crew being higher esteemed than the enslaved. Of the food stocked in Vlissingen, the crew received the more luxurious items such as fish, meat, and cheese. The sale of the remainder of the food reserved for the enslaved thus did not impact them.[20]

To construct information about how many calories were in the food aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren* to be distributed among the enslaved people, I first have to convert the different units of measurement that were used by the captain to mass measured in grams. I have been able to do that in two steps for most types of units. The first step was a conversion to litres with the help of Meertens' "Old Dutch sizes and measurements."[21]

Table 14. Old units converted to the metric system

Unit	Place of use	Unit	Converted to the metric system
Bag	Middelburg (Walcheren, Zeeland)	1 zak	73 litres
Pounds	Goes (Zuid-Beveland, Zeeland)	1 pond	437 grams
	Middelburg (Walcheren, Zeeland)	1 pond	468 grams
	Reimerswaal (Zuid-Beveland, Zeeland)	1 pond	469 grams
Average of Pounds		1 pond	458 grams
Oil	Alkmaar (Noord-Holland): oil unit: zaadolie	1 pot	3 litres
Schepel	Province of Zeeland: graanmaat	1 schepel	39 Liter

Source: Meertens Instituut, "Maten en Gewichten".

Except for pounds, all other units of measurement could only be expressed in units of volume, not mass. Aided with the information on the specific mass of products, I could transfer the units of volume into mass. Information on the specific mass of the different foods was collected from the database

20 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803, scan 54; See for food for the crew NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 807, scans 4 and 5.

21 Meertens Instituut, "Maten en Gewichten". I have tried to stay true to the units used in Zeeland. However, I had to use alternatives for the unit pots (potten). For bags (zakken), pounds (ponden) and bushels (schepels) the book Maten en Gewichten did offer conversion raters for places in Zeeland.

of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). From there, I could transfer the data on stocked volumes of food to masses of food.[22]

Table 15. Conversion from volume to mass (rounded to grams or litres)

Food	Amount	Unit	Volume (l)	Specific mass (g/l)	FDC ID	Mass (g)	Total used food (g)
Barley	25920	Pound				11870496	9601329
Horse beans	280	Bags	20300	708	173798	14379167	12174833
Dried horse beans	280	Bags	20300	708	173798	14379167	14379167
African rice	1500	Pound				686950	686950
Oil, palm	9	Pots	25	900	171015	22275	22275
Yam	9	Pots	25	625	170071	15469	15469
Barley*	70	Bushels	2723	833	170284	2269167	
Horse beans*	80	Bushels	3112	708	173797	2204333	

*The food and their amount sold on Curaçao
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, "FoodData Central".

Having obtained information on the mass of food that was brought along on the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* I still needed information on how much energy in kilocalories or kilojoules the food could provide. The USDA database on food provides that detail for all foods, except rice.[23] African rice is not included in the database under that specific name, but I have been able to select a close alternative. In the literature about African rice travelling to the Americas, it is described as black or red rice and noted to have been introduced to places throughout the Americas: from Brazil to South Carolina and from Suriname to Virginia. Considering the colour and the continued cultivation of African rice, I chose to select brown rice to source what energy it could have provided.[24]

22 With the data from the USDA, I could transfer the total volume in litres into kilograms in mass for all foods for which I only had the volume information. From there I could subtract the amounts that were sold in Curaçao. For each of the specific foods, the USDA provided an identifier, noted in table 2 under FDC ID. For data see U.S. Department of Agriculture, "FoodData Central".

23 The database provided information for the energy either in kilojoules or kilocalories. The data itself, with calculated conversions, can be found in table 3. For the raw data see U.S. Department of Agriculture, "FoodData Central".

24 For introduction in South Carolina, see Carney, *Black Rice the African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*; For Brazil, see Carney, "'With Grains in Her Hair'", 1–27; For Suriname, see Carney, "Rice and Memory in the Age of Enslavement", 325–48; Van Andel, "African Rice", 1–10; Van Andel et al., "Tracing Ancestor Rice of Suriname Maroons Back to Its African Origin".

Table 16. Energy in food (rounded)

Food	FDC ID	kJ per gram	kcal per gram
Barley, pearled, raw	170284	15	4
Broad beans (fava beans), raw	173798	5	1
Oil, palm	171015	37	9
Yam, raw	170071	5	1
Rice, brown, medium-grain, raw	169706	15	4

Source: Carney, *Black Rice the African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*; Carney, "'With Grains in Her Hair'", 1–27; Carney, "Rice and Memory in the Age of Enslavement", 325–48; Van Andel, "African Rice", 1–10; Van Andel et al., "Tracing Ancestor Rice of Suriname Maroons Back to Its African Origin".

The supplying of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* fits within the framework of Dalrymple and Frankema, in that most of the stocks were bought in the ports of departure and only some supplies were added in Africa. It is those foods, particularly rice and yam which would come to America via the Middle Passage, that the *Middelburgs Welvaren* also carried to feed the enslaved. The horse beans fall into the pattern of stocking nutritionally deficient foods that Kiple and Mustakeem raised earlier. Kiple also leaves us with a warning that rice and yams could rot and become rancid, thereby worsening the situation as the voyage continued.[25]

Upon arrival in Curaçao, the remaining food that had been reserved for the enslaved was sold. The captain of MCC's *Middelburgs Welvaren* had only used 36,858 kilograms of the 41,331 kilograms of food that he had stocked to be served to the enslaved. The horse beans and barley that remained were European foods that possibly were less preferred than other items. That suggestion is consistent with Mustakeem's discussion on food perception by enslaved people aboard ships. While Mustakeem points to the language barrier that prevented enslaved people from presenting their preferences for food, she also mentions how sailors sometimes noticed certain preferences. The distaste for the strange horse beans was one of those preferences. Interestingly, she also introduced the English theory among slavers that Angolan people would eat anything. The remaining quantities show they might have eaten it, but it was not the preferred food.

The Enslaved Aboard

After they had left Cape Zurade for the last intake of food, the *Middelburgs Welvaren* headed for Malembo, Angola. There, they would begin trading

25 Kiple, *Caribbean Slave*, 60; Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 67.

in enslaved Africans, with small groups of them embarking daily from April 14 until August 26. However, during that period, a hundred people had already died. All that information is spread out over the trade book and the journals of the captain and the first mate. That documentation presents the opportunity to reconstruct how many enslaved people were aboard for each day of the voyage. The trade book noted how many enslaved people the captain bought at a certain date and specified whether the enslaved people were adult males, adult females, boys or girls.[26] These details bring in the first part of the equation, as those enslaved bought and brought to the ship would need to be fed on the ship. Not all the enslaved survived the trading period and Middle Passage, with some dying from spreading disease. Here, the administration of the first mate is more detailed than that of the captain. The captain only noted that enslaved people died, but did not specify the gender or age of those who had passed.[27] The first mate did record those data, making it possible to determine how many boys, girls, women and men were aboard for each day of the voyage.[28] For the last days of the voyage, having arrived in Curaçao, the trade book shows the number of people that were sold daily.

With these sources, I have been able to construct a dataset containing information as to how many enslaved people were aboard each day of the voyage. First, I added the number of people that embarked on the ship for each day. From those cumulative numbers, I subtracted the cumulative number of enslaved people that had died during the voyage. All these numbers were available separately for boys, girls, women and men, so I was able to take those demographics into account. However, a few problems remained for which I could not find an immediate solution. First, none of the documents specifies when an enslaved person would be considered an adult, and when one would be a child. A striking example is provided by Ramona Negrón, regarding how another MCC captain reported on the escape of a few big boys whom he had purchased as men.[29] The captain of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* might have mixed up some adults and children as well. Furthermore, the captains noted on two occasions that a "child" had died, though it is unclear how long they were aboard the ship, and whether they received any food at all.[30] In addition, separate information on how many boys, girls, women and men were sold upon arrival in Curaçao is not

26 The numbers themselves can be found within the margin of NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 803, scans 10–40.

27 For death of the enslaved in the captain's log, see NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scans 24–44.

28 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 801, scans 30–53.

29 Negrón, "The Enslaved Children of the Dutch World".

30 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scans 27 and 33.

available.[31] However, since I know how many males, females, boys and girls were bought, and how many died during the voyage, it is possible to construct how many males, females, boys and girls were sold on average. Using a formula, I calculated how many of the boys, girls, women or men were sold and would thus have left the ship.[32] Just as with the data on buying and deaths, I made sure to work with cumulative numbers. With all those problems in mind, the graph below shows a visualisation of the dataset I constructed, with the number of enslaved people aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren*.

Table 17. Enslaved people sold (estimates)

Enslaved people sold (Cum)	Boys Sold (Cum)	Girls Sold (Cum)	Men Sold (Cum)	Women Sold (Cum)
1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2
0	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2
116	40.9	15.3	33.4	26.9
133	87.3	32.7	71.4	57.5
1	87.7	32.9	71.7	57.8
1	88	33	72	58
0	88	33	72	58

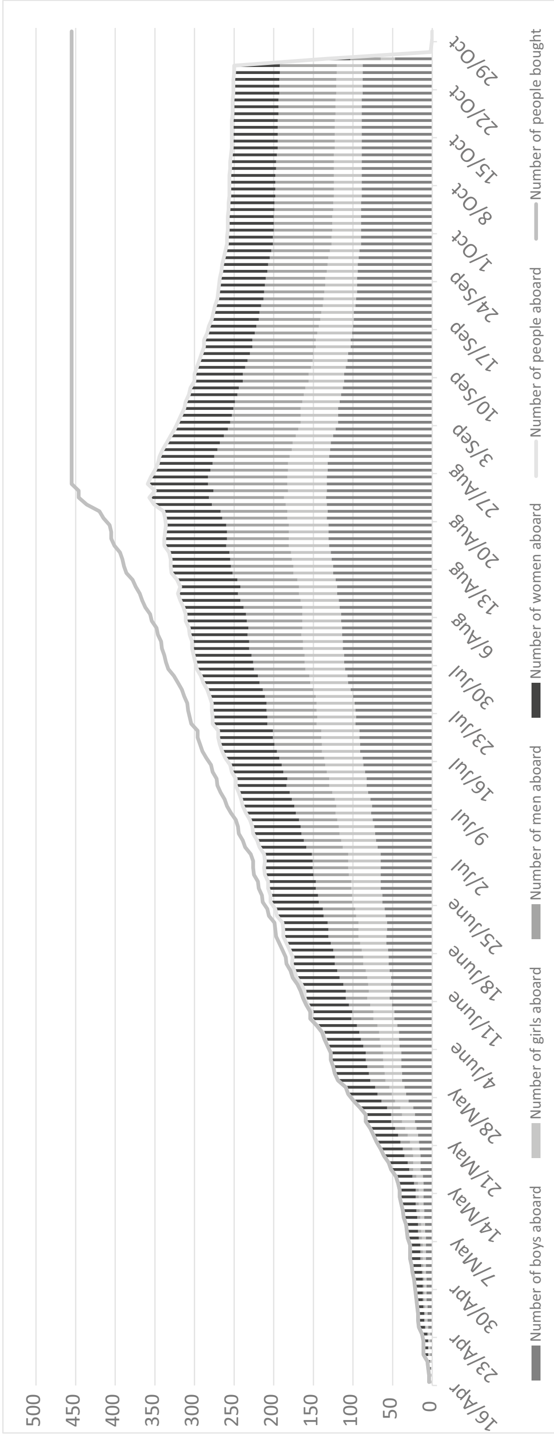
Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scans 44-5.

The final problem is that neither the captain nor the first mate made any remarks about the distribution of food aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren*. So, to find the average amount of rations that would have been provided to an enslaved boy, girl, or adult I needed to make a few assumptions. First, I assumed children would be given less food than adults, because they would be sold for less money, and generally require less food than adults. As the slave trade was a merchant-capitalist venture, I assumed the cost of the operation might have been related to the expected benefits. Providing food for the enslaved people was a cost for the operation of the *Middelburgs Welvaren*. As the expected returns for children were smaller, I assumed the portions were smaller too. Therefore, I related the selling price of children to the size of their portions. Though slightly earlier than the time of the

31 Sales are in the captain's log only and are only documented as total number of people sold. See NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scans 44–5.

32 Sales * (Number of the group bought–Number of the group died) / total number of people sold. I have not been able to trace back at what day how many of the enslaved were sold. The numbers have slight variations from how it proceeded at Curaçao in October 1761.

Figure 13. Enslaved people aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren*



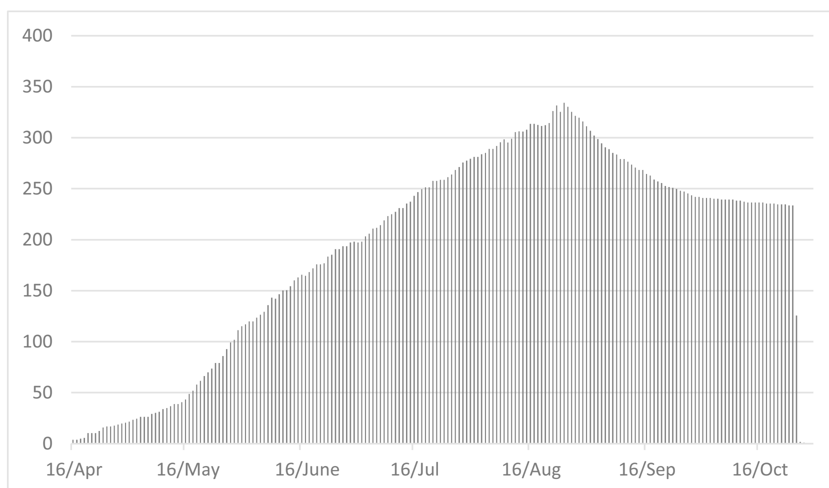
Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800-807.

voyage of the *Middelburgs Welvaren*, Han Jordaan presents the average selling prices of enslaved at Curaçao during the first three decades of the eighteenth century. The selling price between adults and children differed, where adults would be sold, on average, between 150 and 160 guilders, while boys were sold, on average, for 133 guilders and girls for 140 guilders.[33] On that basis, I constructed the following formula which I applied to the data in my dataset:

> *(133/((153+159)/2))*Boys total cumulative + (140/((153+159)/2))*Girls total cumulative + Males total cumulative + Women total cumulative.*

With the help of the formula, I calculated how many rations (in grams) would, on average, be served to the enslaved people for each day of the voyage.

Figure 14. Number of food rations for the enslaved



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800-807.

Adding these results together, the total amount of rations used was 37,785 for all enslaved people that stayed aboard the ship. I combined that information with the data on food and its nutritional value.[34]. On average, an adult enslaved person received around 1,737 kilocalories (kcal) per day. Boys and

33 Jordaan, "The Curacao Slave Market", 241.

34 The total mass of food used during the voyage was split over the 37785 rations. After that I added the nutrient information to determine how much kcal and enslaved person would obtain per day.

girls respectively obtained 1481 kcal and 1559 kcal, assuming their rations were smaller than those of adults.[35]

Table 18. Rations in grams and kcal (rounded to grams)

	Total food used (g)	Food per enslaved with 37785 rations (g)	kcal per gram	kcal per ration with 37785 rations
Barley	9601329	254	4	893
Horse beans	26554000	703	1	773
Rice	686950	18	4	66
Yams	15469	0.4	1	0.5
Palm oil	22275	0.6	9	5
For adults		976		1737
For boys		832		1481
For girls		876		1558

Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800.

While the calculations are by no means perfect, they give an indication as to how much food an enslaved person might receive aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* and how many kcal they might obtain during a day. Next, I will look at the implications for the enslaved to receive this amount of food.

The Effects of Malnutrition

How did the number of people aboard compare with what the captain decided to offer in terms of food intake? Did the enslaved people acquire the energy they needed to sustain themselves? They needed their food intake to balance the expenditure of energy during the day. Several methods exist that can calculate what a person needs during the day. The data from Nestle and Nesheim, derived from the standard method, presents us with results for the average needs in kilocalories for men and women of different ages and activity types.[36]

Based on this data, we can consider the enslaved men, women and children aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren* and the table below. To determine whether and to what extent there were shortcomings in kcal in the food provide, I started with the table of Nestle and Nesheim.

35 The calculations for what boys and girls received per day are based on a similar formula as presented above.

36 For more information on calories see Nestle and Nesheim, *Why Calories Count*, 13, 17, 19, 31–3; for calculation of food intake needs, see 46–7; for the results, see 80–3.

Illustration 2. Average basal and total energy expenditures for males and females by ages, Nestle and Nesheim

Age in years	Basal metabolic rate (BMR)	Total energy expenditure (TEE)
Males		
3–8	1,040	1,440
9–13	1,320	2,080
14–18	1,730	3,120
19–30	1,770	3,080
31–50	1,680	3,020
51–70	1,530	2,470
71+	1,480	2,240
Females		
3–8	1,010	1,490
9–13	1,190	1,910
14–18	1,360	2,300
19–30	1,360	2,440
31–50	1,320	2,410
51–70	1,230	2,070
71+	1,190	1,570

Source: Nestle and Nesheim, *Why Calories Count*, 80.

I opted to group the age cohorts of 3–8 and 9–13 for the children and the age groups 14–18 and 19–30 for adults to have an average amount for both the basal metabolic rate and the total energy expenditure.[37] To determine whether one or both have a shortage, I subtracted the obtained kcal per enslaved person per day as presented before from the calculated values of the basal metabolic rate (BMR) and total energy expenditure (TEE):

Table 19. Energy shortage

Group	BMR	TEE	Obtained kcal	Shortage BMR	Shortage TEE
Men (14-30)	1750	3100	1736	13	1363
Women (14-30)	1360	2370	1736	-377	633
Girl (3-13)	1100	1700	1480	-301	279
Boy (3-13)	1180	1760	1558	-459	141

Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800.

As there is a significant difference in the results for the shortages with BMR and with TEE, it is important to understand those ramifications. Except

37 Basal metabolic rate (BMR) is the energy needed for basic functions. Total energy expenditure (TEE) also includes the needed energy to do daily activities. The grouping together is done by adding the values of two age groups and taking the average for both BMR and TEE.

for the men, all other enslaved people on board would have been able to obtain enough energy to keep up their vital body processes. However, all the enslaved did lack the energy to sustain doing daily activities. From secondary literature, we know slave captains liked to have the enslaved dance aboard their ships regularly. Furthermore, as Postma explains, the moments for exercise usually coincided with the cleaning of the lower decks. At those moments, the majority of the enslaved were forced to dance on the upper decks, while a few might be forced to help clean the decks below. Six times during the voyage, the captain mentions the cleaning of the half decks in his journal, but those might not have been the only occasions.[38] In the end, the enslaved probably used more energy than the BMR represents. Therefore, basing malnutrition on the TEE method makes more sense.

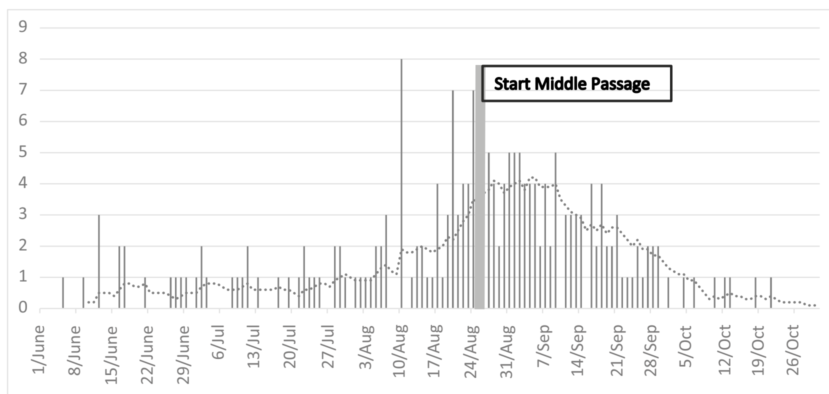
Therefore, the enslaved people aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren* were malnourished to some extent. Their food intake could not support the activities they most likely had to conduct during the day. There are different ways of looking at what this means. First, there are the personal experiences of the enslaved, which we can only estimate by comparisons with more contemporary analyses of the effects of malnutrition. Second, there is a medical story, as deduced from entries in the captain's journal, which can be complemented by modern medical science.

The only way to get a small glimpse of what the individual enslaved person experienced, is to look at a semi-contemporary analysis of what happens to the human body when faced with malnutrition. During World War II, scientist Ancel Key studied what happened to thirty-two men who did not obtain enough food (1600 kcal). He began to discover how the human body reacts to insufficient food intake. First, the glycogen that is stored throughout the body is broken down into useful glucose to keep the body running on emergency fuel. When those reserves are depleted, and a lot of water is used, the body reverts to using body fat to sustain only vital organ functions. Other functions, like digestion and absorption of food, are pushed aside. Only after the body fat has also depleted does the body eventually fall into a coma, and recovery becomes very hard.[39] While there is no indication that the enslaved reached the last stage, they may have had to call upon their reserves of glycogen and body fat. The stories of the test subjects of Ancel Key can bring us the closest to what that might have felt like. They started by experiencing more short temper, dizziness, reduced coordination and increased intolerance for cold temperatures. Symptoms which likely would have surfaced for the enslaved as well. With the depletion of muscle and

38 Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 71; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815*, 232–3; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800, scans 34–7, 39, 43–4.

39 Nestle and Nesheim, *Why Calories Count*, 114–20.

Figure 15. Number of sick enslaved per day



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 800-807.

body fat, Key's test subjects, and likely also the enslaved, lost their strength. Less applicable to the enslaved was the hair loss, as the enslaved were likely already shaven. The food obsession Key's test subjects talk about might have arisen in a different way for the enslaved. Overall, Key's study shows that (semi)malnutrition brings the body to a weakened and disorientated state. Which is likely how the enslaved must have felt.[40] It is possible this might have been one of the strategies to diminish the risk of resistance.

What follows from that weakened state of the body is a greater risk of being affected more acutely by infections. As nutrition is part of the shield of the immune system to fight infections, if the body gains too little energy or suffers inadequate intake of certain macronutrients, for example, protein, the shield becomes weaker. Especially when protein-deprived, the body has difficulty producing those substances that make up the immune response which produces antibodies against infections that enter the body. With fewer antibodies, especially in the form that will reside for the long term, one becomes less able to fight infection, and thus more ill.[41] In practice, the effects are diverse and include skipping heartbeats, low blood pressure, low body temperature, difficulty in breathing, sleepiness, and delirium. Together, they demand more energy from the body, which the body cannot deliver. In that way, a vicious cycle is formed: where the malnutrition worsens the immune response of the body, and the infection in turn asks for more energy and worsens the malnutrition.[42]

40 Kalm and Semba, "They Starved So That Others Be Better Fed", 1348–50.

41 Salva et al., "The Role of Immunobiotics and Postbiotics in the Recovery of Immune Cell Populations From Respiratory Mucosa of Malnourished Hosts", 1–6.

42 Felblinger, "Malnutrition", 71, 73.

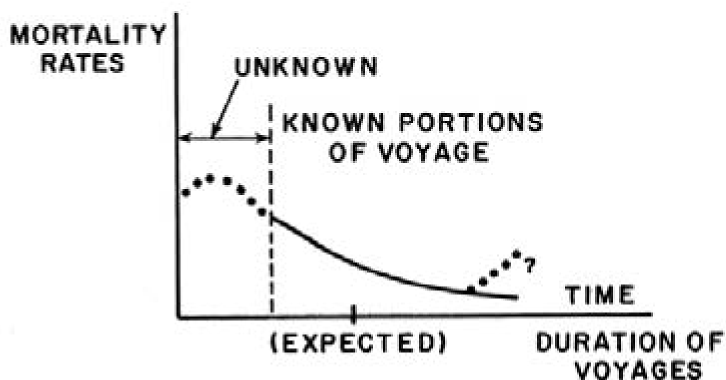
For the enslaved of the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* it meant specifically that they might have had a more difficult time combatting dysentery that had entered the ship during the coasting period. While the captain's log and that of the first mate are not consistent with each other, they do show that a substantial part of the enslaved population aboard suffered from dysentery. The captain also mentions the enslaved coughing a lot, meaning that possibly several infectious diseases were aboard. As a treatment, the captain and first mate decided to distribute extra yams to the enslaved who suffered from illness. The treatment was without much result initially.[43] However, this does show that the average distribution which I calculated might have shown too positive a picture, as some of the enslaved might have taken in less food than calculated. Furthermore, the lack of diversity in the food suggests that combating these infections might have been difficult due to the corresponding lack of diversity in macronutrients.

Eventually, the ill enslaved people could succumb to their diseases. Here, it becomes interesting to tie that assumption to Joseph Miller's theory that food intake was better aboard ships, and thus the death rate for enslaved people would drop once they had boarded a ship. Only if a voyage lasted longer than the usual time, and food either ran out or was spoiled, would the death rate increase again. Miller visualises these ideas initially via three similar figures. In them, he presents how he thinks the mortality rates dropped after the start of the Middle Passage. He differs in how he presents his model at the start of the voyage, with dropping rates immediately, or with the curve he shows in Illustration 3.

For all three figures, he bases his theory on data from English and Portuguese/Brazilian slave traders, but he also acknowledges data from French and Dutch slave traders. With the data, he wants to imply that the treatment aboard the crowded ships did make for the possibility to die less readily when time passed and that some could even recover strength. On the other hand, enslaved people would die at large during the "seasoning period" when the captains were buying enslaved people. He combines that information into a bigger model that shows death rates from arrival at the coast to somewhat after arrival in the Americas. He presents that model as a U-shape, where the death rate increased during the period of "seasoning" but would fall fast after the start of the Middle Passage. In doing so, his main objective is to re-evaluate the statements of the eighteenth-century abolitionists who proclaimed that many enslaved people died due to harsh

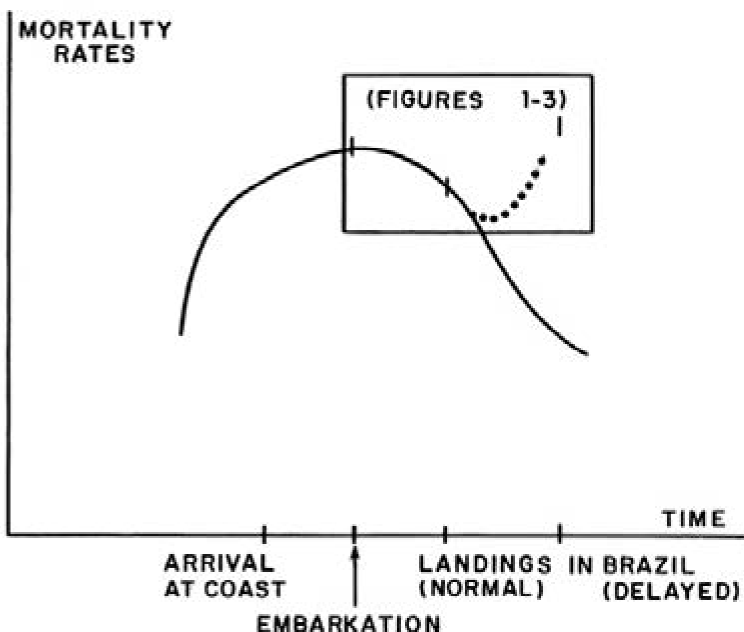
43 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv. 800, scans 22, 25–6, 29, 31, 33–7; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 801, scans 32–7, 39–40, 42–3.

Illustration 3. Alternative schematic representation of changing slave mortality rates at sea



Source: Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade", 407. Reprinted with permission from the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History.*

Illustration 4 Schematic enlargement of Middle Passage segment of mortality curve

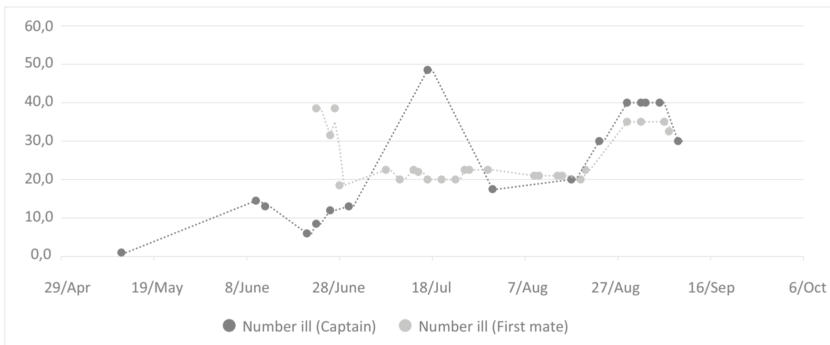


Source: Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade", 416. Reprinted with permission from the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History.*

treatment of the crew of slave ships. Miller thinks those enslaved people did not die from mistreatment aboard the ships, but rather due to the hardships they had to endure between capture and embarkation.[44]

What is interesting is that this model does not apply to the voyage of the *Middelburgs Welvaren*. As Figure 16 shows, there are fewer deaths during the "seasoning" period of the voyage, while the number gradually increases in the time immediately before the start of the Middle Passage. The death rate was the highest in the first quarter of Middle Passage; only after that did it gradually decrease. This trend might have to do with the slow adaptation in terms of serving the food I discussed above. For the sick enslaved people, the captain had a little more food available. This must have meant that the distribution of food might have been worse than I counted on in my calculations. By that point in the journey, a lot of the enslaved people might have been weakened too much for recovery. This is not to say that the captain did this on purpose, but that Miller did not count on the ignorance and incompetent planning of the crew of slave ships when it came to food intake and its relationship with resistance to diseases.

Figure 16 Death among enslaved



Source: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv. nrs. 800-807

Conclusion

The *Middelburgs Welvaren* had food stocked when it arrived at Malembo to buy enslaved people. They had purchased barley and horse beans when they left from Vlissingen and had stopped again to buy rice and yams in

44 Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade", 396–8, 401–2, 407, 409, 411, 416, 420.

Sierra Leone. However, as stocked as the ship was, the enslaved people that would be brought on board the ship would still suffer from malnutrition. They were at risk for infections while the bloody flux took the lives of many enslaved during the journey.

As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter positioned itself in more than one debate. When it comes to the debate on ship provisioning, the *Middelburgs Welvaren* largely adhered to what most scholars have described when it comes to buying food. The ship was was stocked with most of its provisions in Vlissingen in Zeeland, with barley and horse beans as the most important foods. However, the captain bought rice and yams on the West African coast even though he had not yet experienced food shortages or delays when it came to his voyage. Furthermore, the West African food was consumed during the voyage, as it was not among the food that was sold upon arrival at Curaçao. It did not provide half of the calories that would be presented to the enslaved people, compared with how Dalrymple-Smit and Frankema suggested the MCC worked. However, the rice and yams bought in West Africa were more important than suggested by others like Postma. While Mustakeem has noted that English slavers would be less concerned with what food they presented people from Angola, the captain of the *Middelburgs Welvaren* might have considered that food from the African continent would keep the enslaved in a better state.

After I constructed how much food was available and how many enslaved people were aboard for each day of the voyage, I could investigate the treatment of the enslaved related to food. How much food did they obtain during the day? Would it cause energy shortages? First, I used secondary literature to get more insight into how the body changes and adjusts when it does not get enough energy compared to what it uses in a day. The enslaved people would fall into a weakened, confused state, but more importantly, their immune system would be damaged. making them more susceptible to illnesses aboard. When it came to illness on the *Middelburgs Welvaren,* I determined that the number of ill people was steadily above twenty during the bulk of the voyage. Their weakened state made fighting dysentery that was aboard the ship harder than it might have been if they had been well-fed. Eventually, dysentery could lead to enslaved people dying on the voyage. The data on deaths I compared to the work of Joseph Miller, who suggested that enslaved people could regain strength aboard slave ships after their treatment since their capture. He produced models that showed a decline in the death rate during the voyage. However, the graph I constructed for the number of enslaved people that died per day illustrated that they continued dying in the greatest number after Middle Passage had started. Miller had

suggested that the number of deaths would drop soon after a ship had started Middle Passage. The food that was offered on the *Middelburgs Welvaren* thus was not enough for the enslaved to recover from the weakened state they might already have been experiencing when they entered the ship.

However, the contribution of this article goes beyond those two debates. I took the first steps to construct a model for determining how much food and calories were provided to the enslaved people during Middle Passage. This model could apply to more ships where there is sufficient data on the amount of food brought along for the voyage and how many enslaved people were aboard per day. Further research could thus focus on other voyages, either through the MCC or other companies, to search for a broader pattern of treatment of the enslaved people aboard slave ships when it comes to food intake.

About the Author

Lucas Oosterwijk is a Leiden University alumnus. His research focuses on a broad range of topics concerning the Early Modern Dutch colonial history.

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Part III

Conflict Management and Discourse

7. Guarding Security, Managing Risks: West African Bombas on Dutch Slave Ships

Matthias Lukkes

Abstract: Bombas were West African slave overseers working on Dutch slave ships. Through studying the life and labours of bombas, this chapter unravels European and African security management in the worlds of the transatlantic slave trade. As the first part of this chapter shows, bombas were instrumental to the safety of the crew and the assurance of a profitable voyage for captains and trading companies. The second part shifts its attention to the lives and social connections of the West African individuals who worked as bombas, unravelling strategies developed by West African communities to protect members of kin who worked in Atlantic maritime environments against the risks of kidnapping and enslavement.

Keywords: bombas, West Africa, Atlantic slave trade, African sailors, Gold Coast, security

Throughout the Atlantic world, people of African descent worked on European slave ships during the age of the transatlantic slave trade. Although it has been well established that these African individuals constituted a significant minority among European crews, their presence blurs the popular image of a slave ship as being divided strictly along lines of black and white.[1] Under what circumstances did Africans join European crews, what was it like for them to work among the crew, and what type of labour

1 Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 52.

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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did they conduct? To answer these questions, the topic has been tackled from multiple methodological angles, most notably from the perspectives of maritime slavery, African and Black maritime labour, or African guardianship.[2]

When discussing life on board a slave ship, Dutch scholars have mentioned African labour only in passing. There is a consensus, however, that the most important African workers on Dutch slave ships were the so-called *bombas*, a term used by Dutch colonial actors to denominate Africans or people of African descent who worked as slave overseers on American plantations, in European fortifications, and on slave ships.[3] On ships, bombas worked for European captains as a social antenna: on the one hand, to oversee and communicate with enslaved people; on the other, by functioning as an interpreter between the captain and African slave traders on the coast of West Africa.[4]

Dutch historiography has been unable to grasp the complexities of this form of African labour, due to the irregular appearance of bombas in archival sources, among other factors. Few to no passages appear in official company documents that reveal a corporate strategy of employing bombas in the Dutch slave trade, as Leo Balai has pointed out.[5] This gap has made it difficult to understand how frequently bombas were employed on Dutch slave ships, what their labour consisted of, and under what form of labour relations they worked.

An important consequence of the inability to comprehend the life and labours of bombas on Dutch slave ships is a partial understanding of how European slave traders ensured security onboard of slave ships. Threats of revolt were constant: David Richardson has made a tentative estimate that around ten per cent of all European slave voyages experienced a slave revolt.[6] The first part of this chapter explains how the use of bombas worked, and how their presence was one of the key security measures a European captain took to prevent death on all decks of the slave ship.

The second, shorter, part of this chapter shifts its attention to the insecurity the Atlantic maritime environment posed to West African men who

2 Morgan, "Maritime Slavery"; Candido, "Different Slave Journeys"; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Dawson, "Enslaved Ship Pilots"; Smallwood, "African Guardians".

3 Lukkes, "On Bombas", 4–7.

4 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 109–17; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 402; Den Heijer, *Nederlands slavernijverleden*, 86–7; Van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in Slavernij*, 154–7; Dragtenstein, *Van Elmina naar Paramaribo*, 139.

5 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 111.

6 Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts", 72–3.

worked in Atlantic maritime environments. As the European slave trade progressed, European racial views solidified, while the demand for enslaved labour increased. The fact that bombas were not enslaved and sold, in an age that became increasingly characterised by the stealing of Africans that had previously been considered as 'unsellable', begs the question: why were they not? What security measures did bombas install to prevent their sale in the Americas?

In answering these questions, this chapter engages in a critical dialogue with existing historical interpretations of African maritime labour in the Atlantic world. Within this historiography, there has been a tendency to take West African sailors together with forms of maritime slavery in the Americas.[7] Such a historical representation is relevant when looking at early modern European perceptions of Black sailors. It overlooks the fact, however, that labour of West African sailors was thoroughly embedded into West African coastal communities. This had consequences for the way their labour was organised. By investigating African strategies deployed by bombas and their members of kin to ensure a safe return to West Africa, this chapter stresses the importance of kinship relations to Africans working in the Atlantic maritime trade.

The research on which this chapter builds, relies heavily on the opportunities provided by digitisation and archival search engines. In particular, it relies on the search engine developed by Gerhard de Kok and the National Archive, which has eased the endeavour to reconstruct the lives and labours of bombas significantly. The use of this search engine has been complemented by research in digitised archives of the private slave trading company *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) and the archive 'Dutch Possessions on the Guinea Coast', which contains a variety of documents on Dutch establishments in West Africa from roughly 1700–1873.[8]

Managing Security on a Slave Ship

Bombas was a term used by a variety of Dutch colonial agents to refer to Africans or people of African descent who worked as slave overseers in Dutch forts on the West African Coast, on slave ships, and on plantations in Dutch colonies in the Americas. In this variety of colonial environments

7 Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*.

8 De Kok, "Doorzoek HTR-transcripties van Nederlandse Archieven"; NL-MdbZA, 20; NL-HaNA, 1.05.14.

in the Atlantic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, bombas could be guards, enforcers, care givers, informants, and even representatives of enslaved Africans. The work of bombas bound them to the lives of the many enslaved people that were transported and put to work in the Dutch transatlantic slave system. This link transcended their role as overseers. In most colonial settings, bombas were themselves enslaved, selected from among enslaved labourers to both lead and oversee others. As a consequence, bombas stood in close contact with European colonial agents in power, whether governors in forts or captains on ships. Their connection to both oppressed and oppressor, sometimes embodied by the same individual, has made them an elusive historical actor in the history of early modern slavery.[9]

For bombas working on slave ships, slave oversight consisted of several tasks, including providing the captain with information about the unfolding events below and on the deck, overseeing hygienic measures carried out by the captives, functioning as a contact person for the enslaved, and enabling communication between the captives and the captain.[10] Each of these tasks were part of the captain's endeavour to retain the ideal status quo of shipboard life: a cargo of captive Africans who were healthy enough to survive the passage but sufficiently suppressed to prevent them from inciting an insurrection.

The Dutch practice of employing Africans to oversee enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage is in line with a broader European commercial tradition. As Stephanie Smallwood has argued, next to military (guns) and carceral methods (chains, barricades), employing a slave overseer was a method that allowed European captains to exert social control over the captives to secure the profits of investors and the crew's safety.[11] The way in which slave traders organised this labour differed. Smallwood found that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, captains of the Royal African Company (RAC) sometimes hired twenty to forty, in one case even sixty, people from the Gold Coast to oversee the remaining enslaved Africans.

9 Lukkes, "On Bombas", 4; For bombas in Dutch plantation colonies, see Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 276–83; Kars, *Blood on the River*. The use of the word 'bomba' was not an exclusively Dutch affair. In documents of the Royal African Company, they are referred to as 'bomboys', while on Danish ships they were called 'bombas'. See Reese, "Facilitating the Slave Trade", 366; Svalesen, *The Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 85–6, 102, 133, 149.

10 On providing the captain with information on events surrounding captives unfolding on the deck: NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 960.2, fs. 106–7 (scans 111–2), August 11, 1763; On overseeing of hygienic measures: NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv.nr. 215, f. 473 (scan 476), August 7, 1686; On functioning as a contact person for the enslaved: Gallandat, *Noodige Onderrichtingen*, 35–6.

11 Smallwood, "African Guardians", 700.

These groups of slave overseers were then sold at the end of the voyage, Smallwood argued.[12] Likewise, Lef Valeivsen has argued that Danish slave ships had a similar practice of purchasing Africans on the coast as slave overseers and selling them in the Americas.[13]

There is one case found in Dutch slave trading records that a bomba was counted among a group enslaved Africans purchased in Ouidah in 1712, which suggests that the bomba was purchased by the captain to be sold at the end of the journey. In this case, however, the captain explicitly requested that the bomba be allowed to be taken back to the Dutch Republic.[14] Trading documents of the MCC and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) show that this falls in line with a general practice of employing bombas for the entire slave voyage.

Bombas generally joined a crew in West Africa or in the Dutch Republic. From there, they worked on the ship until it reached its home port in the Dutch Republic. In general, they did not stay long in Dutch ports, for the WIC was adamant to send the bombas back to West Africa at the earliest convenience. When two bombas were staying in Amsterdam, a Dutch surgeon urged the Company to send them back as soon as possible, or it would go to the 'great costs' of the Company, referring to the food and lodging the WIC provided their African employees during their stay in the Republic.[15] In some cases, bombas themselves requested to return to their homes. In November 1716, three bombas who had arrived in the Republic on a different slave ship visited the WIC Chamber in Amsterdam, requesting passage back to Elmina, a request that was honoured.[16]

Because bombas were employed for an entire voyage, their work was not limited to slave oversight. Having sold the captive cargo in the Americas, bombas were incorporated into the crew to conduct regular sailor tasks. This was the case for Kwasi de Noorman, who was considered a 'sailor' in the *musterroll* of the *Prins Willem de Vijfde* for the part of his journey from Zeeland to Elmina in 1753. De Noorman had been part of the ship's crew on the previous voyage as a bomba.[17]

In general, however, bomba labour was flexible in character, and could be adapted to the specific needs of the captain. This is well illustrated by

12 Smallwood, "African Guardians", 695–7.

13 Svalesen, *The Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 85–6, 102, 133, 149.

14 This case has been discussed by Postma and Balai: Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 243; Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 110.

15 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 389, unmarked (scan 141), May 13, 1734.

16 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 371, f. 256 (scan 272), November 3, 1716.

17 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 971, f. 15 (scan 20); Ibid, inv.nr. 976, f. 16 (scan 18).

the case of the WIC ship *Appolonia*. According to the ledger of the ship, a bomba, whose name is left unmentioned, was hired along the coast of Rio Real in 1686.[18] Paid in copper staves, blood coral, African cloth, and one gun to join the crew during the coastal trade, the bomba was to function as an interpreter to keep the recently bought Africans in order, or for 'anything else' that the bomba could be of use to the crew.[19] The description of the captain shows flexibility in regards to how to deploy the bomba, overseeing both the enslaved while helping the crew in any way the bomba could. Significant in this respect was the bomba's ability to speak Portuguese and English, which allowed him to serve as a linguist between European, African and Eurafrican traders along the West African coast. To that end, the bomba working on the *Appolonia* also fits the description of Africans who worked on European ships as linguists.[20]

The flexible labour terms indicate that these men were not necessarily linguists *or* slaveoverseers *or* sailors. Bombas could carry out any of these tasks or carry them out all at the same time. Theirs could be in line with African labour carried out on European slavers all along the West African Coast and on the Atlantic. Differing social and geographical backgrounds aside, the bomba on the *Appolonia* shared a lot of similarities with the multifaceted labour *grumetes* from the Senegambian region, who worked for Europeans and Afro-Portuguese as linguists, pilots, and sailors, also on slave ships.[21] It is important to stress, therefore, that rather than constituting a unique type of African labour, as Leo Balai has argued, Dutch slave traders simply did not use different denominations for African maritime workers who came from different regions or conducted different tasks.[22]

How was bomba labour organised? Existing scholarship has left a rather complex and often contradicting picture of the labour relations West Africans were engaged in as bombas. Den Heijer has written that bombas on board slave ships were free men who earned a wage. In contrast, Alex van Stipriaan defined a bomba as 'a foreman who was enslaved', which he probably deduced from his research on Suriname, where African slave overseers indeed were enslaved themselves. Leo Balai, who has paid most

18 Rio Real was the Portuguese name for the regions where the New Calabar and the Bonny Rivers debouched into the Atlantic Ocean in the Bight of Biafra: Jones, "European and African Tradition on the Rio Real", p. 392.

19 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv.nr. 216, f. 143 (scans 152–3).

20 Fayer, "African Interpreters", 286–7; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 145–7.

21 Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 50–3; Smallwood, "African Guardians", 701; Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast*, 77.

22 Balai, *Het Slavenschip Leusden*, 106.

attention to bombas in his work, was more nuanced, arguing that some bombas on slave ships were enslaved, but most were free wage earners.[23]

In truth, the term 'bomba' did not define the social background of an African person who was given the title, for it depended on the local context in West Africa in which the labour of bombas was embedded. This varied, making it difficult to pinpoint exactly what status or privileges bomba labour brought to West Africans or what degrees of freedom, or lack thereof, it entailed. Comparing different cases found in WIC and MCC archives shows that bomba labour could be embedded in different forms of labour arrangements.

In line with the studies of Balai and Den Heijer, many of the bombas found during this research earned a wage and could enjoy, at least in legal terms, the same rights as European crew members. Some of the bombas who were registered in the *muster rolls* of the MCC signed the same contracts as the rest of the crew, which means that these men were subject to the same rights and obligations as European crew members during the voyage. Primo Januarij put down a marking behind his name in the contracts of two consecutive voyages of the *Haast U Langzaam*, just like Kwasi de Noorman, a man who came from Elmina and worked in 1753 as a bomba on the slave ship *Prins Willem de Vijfde*.[24]

An account of an Elminan man referred to as Quambina demonstrates how some bombas may have perceived their own labour, and how it was tied to the desire to make a personal profit like the rest of the crew. According to a passage in the journal of Flushing surgeon David Henry Gallandat, the crew of the *Nehelennia* was joined by Quambina in 1754. Although it is not clear whether Quambina worked as a bomba, the passage illustrates what could drive mariners from Elmina to work on European slave ships. As the crew of the ship stood on the deck one night in February 1754, they witnessed a new moon, prompting Quambina to make the following prayer upon the moonlight:

> My Great Fetishj, give, so that I may be healthy and quick in this new moon, as I was under the old moon: do not be angered, as you were yesterday and last night, but make us Captain, Officers and Sailors healthy; Do this o Great Fetishj, upon my will, and bring us in the bight. 't is true, you

23 Den Heijer, *Nederlands slavernijverleden*, 86; Van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in Slavernij*, 394, note 62; Balai, *Het Slavenschip Leusden*, 110.

24 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.3, f. 129 (scan 134); NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 509.4, f. 12 (scan 17); NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 959.3, f. 34 (scan 39).

> have reason to be angered, for the whites do not honour nor worship you, yet do not be angered with me, but give me gold, cloth and a good life.[25]

Wages of West Africans working for Europeans in maritime trade were generally turned out in local currencies such as gold or cloth.[26] Apart from leading a good life, the wage that would be given at the end of the journey was in the back of Quambina's mind, as the last sentence of his prayer illustrates.

It is not self-evident that West Africans working under Europeans would be allowed to keep their wage. Many Africans worked for local African merchants with whom European slave traders conducted business. These men often controlled large forces of maritime workers that were employed by Europeans in West Africa. Powerful merchants like John Kabes, who lived and traded near the English settlement in Komenda near the end of the seventeenth century, owned a whole fleet of canoe men that could be rented out to the RAC.[27] Such third-party constructions were not always clear to European merchants, which could result in misunderstandings not only about who was ultimately given the wage, but also about the free or enslaved status of a person.[28] Simply put: Not all West African maritime workers who appear in European sources as 'free' enjoyed similar degrees of 'freedom' as Europeans understood and applied the concept at the time in the Americas. By placing West African workers on a spectrum of free-unfree, Europeans failed to understand the varied set of labour relations in which West Africans who worked for Europeans could be engaged.

Unfortunately, because it was of little relevance to merchants in the Dutch Republic, slave ship captains stayed silent on the way bomba labour was organised. When the bomba Primo Januarij disembarked the *Haast U Langzaam* in Malemba during his third voyage, captain Jan van Sprang simply wrote in his journal: 'shipped the boy called Primo Januarij off to Malemba and paid him his earned salary.' Januarij was paid in local

25 Water, "Historie van het Zeeuwsch Genootschap", xx–xxi. Original citation: 'Myn Groote Fetisch, geef, dat ik in deeze nieuwe Maan, gelyk ik in de oude Maan geweest ben, gezond en vlug mag wezen: wees niet meer boos, gelyk gy gisteren en van de nacht geweest zyt, maar maak ons Captein, Officieren en Matroozen gezond; Doe het o Groote Fetisch, om mynen't wil, en breng ons in de bogt. 't Is waar, gy hebt reden om boos te zyn, terwyl de blanken u niet eeren en aanbidden, doch wees daarom op my niet vergramd, maar gefe my Goud, Paantjes en een Goed leeven.'.

26 Feinberg, "Africans and Europeans", 16.

27 Gutkind, "Trade and Labor", 28, 33; Nan, "Rimadoors", 46.

28 For a case that illustrates contemporary European ignorance on the labour relations West African employees were engaged in, see Reese, "Facilitating the Slave Trade", 368.

currencies like cloth, glass, and blue beads, but whether he would be the one to spend it is unclear.[29]

One case reveals that in some instances, however, bombas were hired out by local traders. In 1733, Hendrik Hertogh, the principal trader on the Slave Coast for the WIC at the time, sent a letter to the director general in Elmina inquiring as to the whereabouts of a bomba who had served on the slave ship *De Goude Put*. If the rumours were true that the bomba had returned to Elmina, Hertogh wrote, then the bomba should return to Appa as soon as possible, so that he could be returned to his owner. Hertogh explained that the bomba was not a company slave but belonged to one of his 'boys' (*mijn jongens*), a term used to refer to local traders working for the Company who often came from influential families.[30] Hertogh concluded his letter with an inquiry on the whereabouts of two other bombas, which had accompanied the slave ships *Leusden* and *Duinvliet*. They too had belonged to 'his' boys as well.[31]

Hertogh's letter is proof that bombas need not be wage earners: they could be enslaved workers for the WIC, or they could perform indentured labour for local African traders. Such practices are in line with how enslaved African sailors could end up in the Atlantic trade. In the Portuguese slave trade, enslaved African sailors working on Portuguese ships were property of Lisbon slave owners, who seemed to have temporarily loaned their enslaved property to the captain.[32]

The varying labour relations that stood at the base of bomba labour may explain why some bombas were not naturally inclined to work in the interest of the crew. On several occasions, bombas formed serious liabilities to European captains. In 1764, the surgeon of the *Haast U Langzaam* wrote in a letter that a bomba had planned to kill the crew and was put in chains.[33] In a similar vein, the bomba of the *Vrouw Johanna Cores* attempted to organise an insurrection the year before. Had it not been for several enslaved women who informed the captain of the bomba's plans, the insurrection might have succeeded.[34] Possibly, these bombas had not been interested in working on a slave ship in the first place and considered insurrections as a drastic way to change their fortunes.

29 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 532, f. 32 (scan 19), August 20, 1773; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 535, f. 19 (scan 24).

30 Everts, "Captains, Terre Grandes, Brokers & Enslaved Servants".

31 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 138, f. 110 (scan 56), October 9, 1733.

32 Candido, "Different Slave Journeys", 396–7.

33 Zeeuws Archief, "Aan boord van de Eenigheid".

34 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1239, f. 87 (scan 87), January 18,1765.

Although bombas could constitute a significant security risk, evidence found in the WIC and MCC archives suggests that the use of bombas remained a popular security tool for captains throughout the Dutch slave trade. When the WIC gave up on the slave trade in 1738, private slave traders continued the habit of using bombas. From the 1740s onwards, bombas appear in records of the MCC. The last recorded appearance of a bomba was Primo Januarij in 1773, who was contracted by the MCC slaver *Haast U Langzaam* to work the ship on its third consecutive voyage.[35]

The employment of bombas throughout the period of Dutch participation in the slave trade refutes Stephanie Smallwood's argument that the introduction of new firearm technologies to the slave trade made the use of black personnel in the management of security on slave ships obsolete. Smallwood claimed that African slave overseers became 'an all-but-obsolete presence on slave ships during the seventeenth century,' to explain the dissolution of the practice of the aforementioned type of slave oversight deployed on slave ships of the Royal African Company.[36]

From a business perspective, it is not difficult to see why Dutch captains would continue the use of African slave overseers: why would a captain bet his profits and his life on the use of repressive violence in the event of an uprising if there was a mechanism that minimised the chance of it ever taking place? As Smallwood herself pointed out, minimising the need to ever put force to direct use against the enslaved men, women, and children on board was just as important as the actual use of physical force itself.[37] The inhumane practices that were inherent to the slave trade notwithstanding, for obvious commercial reasons it was vital for a captain to get both crew and captives across the Atlantic alive. As said, using bombas was a way of preserving crew and captives, whether through the oversight of the captives or through the transmission of intelligence about their dealings on and below the deck to the rest of the crew. The increasing availability of guns to European crews, then, was not necessarily followed by a decrease in the use of African guardians. Like the enslaved sailors who worked, amongst other things, as guards on Portuguese ships in the second half of the eighteenth century, bombas continued to work on Dutch ships as the military might of crews improved.[38]

The repeated praise of the 'good work' of bombas by company officials is a testament to their effectiveness as a security strategy. A captain and the

35 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 535, f. 19 (scan 24).

36 Smallwood, "African Guardians", 708–10.

37 Smallwood, 681.

38 Candido, "Different Slave Journeys", 395–409.

governor-general of Curaçao 'praised the heavens' for the work of the bomba that had accompanied the slave ship *Adrichem*. Captain de Weeteringe had been close to facing an uprising, but had been lucky that the bomba found out about the revolter's plans in time, for which the governor-general thanked 'the heaven'.[39] In a similar fashion, captains Wolff and Buttel who had commanded the WIC slavers the *Beekesteijn* and *Vrijheid* reported in 1722 that the two 'bombas onboard had proven to be particularly fruitful during their voyage', ordering them to be sent back to Guinea, so that they could be employed on other slave voyages.[40]

The social control captains were able to exert over the captive Africans through the use of bombas proved detrimental on multiple occasions to those who had mustered the courage to revolt. The crew of the private slave ship the *Philadelphia* knew this all too well, for they would have faced an uprising by the enslaved Africans during their voyage in 1756, had it not been prevented by the two bombas who were among the crew. If not for the bombas, the plan of several enslaved revolters to kill all the crew, bombas included, may have been successful.[41]

If the use of bombas was so essential to securing a slave ship, how often did it happen? Henk den Heijer has questioned whether all slave ships had a bomba working for the crew.[42] Archives of the WIC and the MCC mask a coherent strategy on behalf of companies and captains to enrol a bomba in their crew. An investigation of all muster rolls and *soldijboeken* of MCC slave voyages shows that a total of seven different West African men were employed as bombas on eleven slave voyages carried out by the ships *Grenadier*, the *Prins Willem de Vijfde* and the *Haast U Langzaam*.[43] An investigation of several journals kept by captains on other MCC ships reveals, however, that at least three other ships – the *Philadelphia*, the *Vrouwe Johanna Cores* and the *Nieuwe Hoop* – employed bombas as well. These bombas were not registered in the muster rolls, soldijboeken, or contracts. Thus, not all captains recorded the employment of bombas during their voyage between West Africa and the Americas, indicating that more bombas worked on Dutch slave voyages than records show.

39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 571, f. 188–9 (scan 201), May 1,1712.

40 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr 464, unmarked (scan 27), August 15, 1722.

41 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 116.

42 Den Heijer, *Nederlands slavernijverleden*, 86.

43 MCC-musterrolls that mention bombas: NL-MdbZA, 20, there: for *the Grenadier,* see inv. nr. 442, f. 20 (scan 28), inv.nr. 445, f. 15 (scan 25), and inv.nr. 464, f. 12 (scan 15); for *the Prins Willem De Vijfde*, see inv.nr. 971, f. 18 (scan 21), inv.nr. 976, f. 15 (scan 18), inv.nr. 997, f. 21 (scan 24), inv. nr. 1002, f. 20 (scan 23), and inv.nr. 1007, f. 20 (scan 24); for *the Haast U Langzaam*, see inv.nr. 526, f. 22 (scan 26), inv.nr. 530, f. 20 (scan 23), and inv.nr. 535, f. 19 (scan 24).

The occasional silence on African slave overseers by captains notwithstanding, the degree to which bombas appear in the Dutch slave trade is a testament to the 'normality' of employing bombas among Dutch slaving crews. Aside from the WIC and the MCC, private slave trading companies based in Amsterdam employed bombas as well, while the Rotterdam-based Coopstad and Rochussen employed a bomba at least on one occasion.[44] This shows that all major players in the Dutch transatlantic slave traders employed West Africans as slave overseers. This, combined with the fact that Dutch slave traders spoke in such non-explanatory terms about bombas, as Balai pointed out, are important signs for the frequency with which Dutch captains had a want for them.[45]

Managing the Risk of Enslavement

The significance of bombas to security management of slave traders notwithstanding, there is reason to doubt whether bombas were always employed by slave traders. This would mean that there would always be West Africans willing to work on a slave ship or – in the case of slave owners – willing to hire out their enslaved labour force.

There were significant risks involved in doing so. As Jeffrey Bolster stipulated, 'free black sailors circulating around the Atlantic faced the constant and greater fear of enslavement.'[46] West Africans were well aware of these risks when they stepped on a European ship. As Natalie Everts has argued, in spontaneous trade situations, African traders were sometimes hesitant to board a slave ship out of fear of being enslaved themselves.[47] Similar fears existed among West African maritime workers. This fact becomes clear when reading a plea of an agent of the WIC on the misfortune that befell two sailors from Elmina.

The men, Kwasi Entjakon and Kwaku Aprintja, had been brought on board the naval vessel *Beschutter* in 1770 to join the crew, the first as cook,

44 These were the ships *Guinees Welvaren* (1761), *Guineesche Vrienden* (1762), and *Vrouw Cornelia* (1763). The former two voyages were organised by Pieter Volkmar, the latter by Bartholomeus van den Santheuvel. The ship of Coopstad & Rochussen referred to in the tekst is the *Vrouw Maria Isabella* (1770): NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 298, f. 110 (scans 464-465), January 13, 1762; NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 298, f. 198 (scans 1006–7), November 10, 1762; NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 304, f. 83 (scan 239), July 26, 1771; The voyage of *Vrouw Cornelia* can be found in a resolution of the Estates General: NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 3821, fs. 110–3 (scans 140–1), February 27, 1766.

45 Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 112.

46 Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 30–1; For a similar argument: Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 60–1.

47 Everts, "Social Outcomes of Trade Relations", 147–8.

the second as a sailor. The captain of the ship, Pieter Meijdel, had faced a shortage of crew members when he arrived in Elmina, and had persuaded the men to work for him. The men agreed, but because the ship had been all but destroyed by the time it had reached Suriname, Captain Meijdel had been forced to send both men ahead in another ship to the Republic. Meijdel had arranged for the men to stay in Flushing, but he had failed to provide Entjakon and Aprintja with money to pay for their costs of living, 'as the company always does so for bombas.' Having spent fifteen weeks in Flushing, Entjakon and Aprintja had become significantly indebted to their *slaapbaas*.[48] Without the means to settle the debt, they were stuck in Zeeland, a company agent wrote, 'finding themselves in the unhappiest of circumstances, in a strange country, not only without money, but even in debt.' The agent feared that upon their return, Entjakon and Aprintja would tell other Elminans about the ordeal, which may discourage Africans in Elmina to work for the Company in the future. To prevent this from happening, the Company decided to pay the men's wages, settle their debts, and arrange their return voyage to Elmina 'sooner, rather than later.'[49]

The case demonstrates the unexpected events African sailors might face when stepping on board a slave ship. More importantly, it proves that maritime workers who had returned to their home ports shared their work experiences, of which the WIC was well aware. Therefore, those West Africans willing to set foot on board European slave ships were aware of the risks of death and enslavement that potentially awaited them. How did bombas manage these risks and ensure a safe return when they joined the European crew on such a hazardous journey?

In the case of enslaved or indentured bombas, they of course lacked agency in the decision-making process as to whether or not they would board a slave ship. In this case, however, they had owners who would want their property to return. This is illustrated by the bombas from Appa mentioned earlier, whose African owners drove the local company agent to inquire about the men's whereabouts. In a similar vein, it was in the self-interest of the WIC to return bombas who were considered enslaved property of the Company. Bombas who were self-employed did not have the protection of such a third-party, leaving the question of how people like Quambina managed risks.

48 *Slaapbazen* provided sailors with lodging in cities in the Dutch Republic, often loaning them money and providing the newly arrived with clothing. Slaapbazen are notorious for designing schemes to profit from travelling sailors, creating a debt being one of the methods to do so. See for instance: De Kok, *Walcherse Ketens*, 135.

49 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 425, f. 236–41 (scans 251–6), November 6, 1770.

Documents of the WIC on its dealings with coastal communities on the Gold Coast show that 'free' West Africans too were protected by mechanisms that curbed the risks of transatlantic travel. When a free Elminan man called Kwaku Kwatta joined the slave ship *Vlissing*, a certificate was drawn up between Kwatta and the captain. The document explicitly states that Kwatta was granted 'free and unimpeded […] passage and repassage,' which referred to the voyage that passed the West Indies, Europe, and back in Elmina again. Furthermore, in case of emergency Kwatta would be provided 'all help and assistance.'[50] The document clearly shows that the WIC, which was responsible for drawing up the document, was well aware of the precarious position of West Africans who ventured out into the Atlantic world.

Significantly, the document reveals that the director general was responsible for the compliance with this particular contract. A similar role was bestowed upon the director general in two labour contracts drawn up for bombas who were employed by private slave traders. Both contracts stem from 1762 and were drawn up in Elmina between two bombas, who were called Essan and Fosoe, and the owner of the ships, Amsterdam slave trader Pieter Volkmar.[51] The contracts, which were identical, stipulated that Essan and Fosoe 'hired themselves out' to Volkmar, agreeing to oversee the captives until the ships reached the designated port in the Americas. For the remainder of the voyage, Essan and Fosoe committed themselves to serve the captain as sailors. During their stay in the Republic, both men were granted board and lodging and, once they were back in Elmina, a new contract could be arranged between 'mister Volkmar' and the men.

The contract explicitly mentions the asafo wards to which Essan and Fosoe related. As Natalie Everts has explained, an asafo 'consisted of the fighting men of a ward of a town, [and] was an elementary institution among the coastal Akan.'[52] These companies had taken influential positions in Elminan society by the middle of the eighteenth century.[53] The reference to the asafos – Essan belonged to the Ankobia ward, Fosoe to Allade – most likely served as a reminder to the company, the captain, and the shipowner that in the case of any wrongdoings, they would have to justify this to these wards.

50 NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 299, f. 47 (scan 189), June 20, 1763.

51 NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 298, f. 110 (scans 464–5), January 13, 1762; NL-HaNA, 1.05.14, f. 198 (scans 1006–7), November 10, 1762.

52 Everts, "Incorporating Euro-Africans", 94.

53 Feinberg, "Africans and Europeans", 106–8.

It was customary in legal arrangements such as those mentioned above that the WIC served as an intermediary between Dutch private trading companies and the kinship groups to which bombas were related. The contracts of Essan and Fosoe contained a clause that, in the case of the untimely death of both men, the wages earned before they died would be transferred to the director general in Elmina. The director general would then make sure these wages were paid to relatives of the bombas in the region of Elmina. This happened when Jan Daams, also an Elminan bomba, died during his work for the crew of the *Margareta en Christina* in 1749. Two years later, the director general Van Voorst of Elmina sent a letter to the Dutch governor of Curaçao, requesting information on the wage Daams had accumulated upon his death. The director general wished to know the specific amount so that he could return this to Daams' 'friends', who kept 'harassing' Van Voorst.[54]

Not only did the friends of Daams – who may have been members of the asafo or other members of his kin – understand that the WIC was able to ensure that earlier agreements were complied with, they proactively used this knowledge to pursue their own interests. The contracts, therefore, demonstrate that Eurafricans and Africans in Elmina perceived the WIC as an administrative body that allowed them to enforce transatlantic agreements on labour that fell outside of African jurisdictions, and used it as such when needed.[55] On their end, the company was willing to provide this service due to the reciprocal relationship that existed between the WIC and the Elminan community. The WIC relied on Elminans for their landed trade connections, security, and their labour, while the Elminan community depended on the WIC because of their maritime trade connections and military capacity, which protected the town against neighbouring African states and other European powers.[56] Although conflict was inherent in this reciprocal relationship, 'mutual advantage and self-interest dictated that the Elminans and Company officials work to maintain a positive mutual relationship.'[57]

This fits in the analysis of the Dutch-Elminan relationship as presented by Gerhard de Kok and Harvey Feinberg. De Kok and Feinberg argued that pressure from members of kin in Elmina was an important factor in the willingness of the company to protect Elminans against disorderly conduct of European slave

54 NL-SAA, 5075, inv.nr. 11112, f. 107 (scans 413–7), 11 March 1749; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, inv. nr. 286, unmarked (scans 114–5), September 22, 1752.

55 For a case that illustrates this: De Kok et al., "Captured on the Gold Coast", 274–95.

56 Everts, "Social outcomes of trade relations", 158–62.

57 Feinberg, "Africans and Europeans", 145.

traders. In a case of the illegal enslavement and eventual repatriation of several canoe men, both authors showed that friends and family could exert significant influence on the company to obtain justice.[58] The dependency of the company on the members of the Elminan community created an environment in which the company acted to prevent public outrage and please the local people in power.

Ultimately, this system was based on fear, and the fear resulted in the protection of African maritime labourers, as the behaviour of the company in reaction to the ordeal of Kwasi Entjakon and Kwaku Aprintja demonstrates. Such mechanisms of protection only worked if local members of kin enforced it by keeping the fear alive, either through complaints or protests in the form of trade embargoes. Thus, it was because bombas – at least from Elmina – were embedded in local kinship or communal ties that they enjoyed some form of assurance that they would return from sailing the Atlantic.

Conclusion

A 'bomba' was a catchall term for African men working on Dutch slave ships that consisted mainly of, yet was not limited to, the oversight of enslaved Africans held up below decks for the better part of their captivity on slave ships. Their presence constituted a form of social control that functioned in tandem with the repressive powers of punishment and incarceration that were used by captains to retain total control over the enslaved Africans. As this chapter has demonstrated, the dependence of captains on bomba labour was a historical continuum in the Dutch participation in the Atlantic slave trade. The reports of the successful prevention of revolts, together with the gratitude proclaimed by colonial officials, are a testament to the importance of bombas to the security mechanism that captains instated to ensure an uneventful and profitable slave voyage.

A crucial insight this chapter has brought forward is that the conditions and arrangements under which bombas carried out their labour varied widely, depending on the place of origin and the social embeddedness of the bomba in West African coastal societies. Bombas could be enslaved labourers belonging to the WIC, or they could be rented out by local African merchants. The incomprehension of Dutch company officials often obscured this on the ground reality. In these instances, working on a slave ship was not of a bomba's own choosing, which may explain why multiple Africans sought to use their fragile position of power to plan insurrections.

58 De Kok et al., "Captured on the Gold Coast", 274–95.

To regard bomba labour only in terms of forced labour, however, would be a simplification of a complex historical involvement of West African persons in the workings of the transatlantic slave trade. Africans working as bombas could do so for want of personal profit. It is therefore crucial to underline that not all bombas working for Dutch slavers did so for the same reasons, nor did they necessarily experience the same labour conditions or even carry out the same tasks.

As this chapter has shown, the social and geographical background determined the way bombas managed the risks of stepping onboard of a Dutch slaver. Whatever the labour relations bombas were involved in, social relations – whether it be slave owners or members of kin – provided them at least some form of protection during their transatlantic labour. This insight warrants a global comparison between the importance of kinship to mechanisms of protection for maritime workers.

Having considered the complexities of bomba labour through its embeddedness in West African societies, a next step of research would be to see how historic changes to slavery and maritime labour in the Atlantic world impacted the work of bombas. What happened to the security mechanisms described in this chapter when power hierarchies in West Africa started to shift? This would give insight into the reverberations of the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa, and how this changed the lives of Africans involved in this trade themselves.

About the Author

Matthias Lukkes completed his research Master's degree in Colonial and Global History with a thesis on bombas and the racialisation of Atlantic slavery. His work focuses on early modern slavery and cross-cultural trade in West Africa. As Prof. J.C.M. Warninck Fellow, he studied European gardens in early modern Ghana as sites of cross-cultural diplomacy and conflict resolution.

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8. Business as Usual: Persisting Narratives of Commodification, Racialisation and Humanisation in the Archive of the MCC

Michael Thomas Rowland

Abstract: The focus of this article is on linguistic strategies of commodification, racialisation, and humanisation in the archive of the Dutch slave trade. Against the traditional economic approach to the historical study of documents produced by Dutch slave traders, this chapter centres the role of seemingly empirical, self-evident (ideological) language in the normalisation, naturalisation, and reproduction of the social system of slavery. In particular, it will discuss the ritualised and hierarchically enforced employment of specific terminology, tenses, limited economic narratives, and calculative discursive appropriation of humanity for the purposes of enslavement in view of their role in reproducing the racialising mercantile ideology and the wider Dutch transatlantic slave trade it sustained. In this vein, terms and descriptions used to describe reality conceptualised in Dutch and western historiography at large as objective are problematised due to both their insufficient "empirical basis" and function as means with which to legitimate exploitative social relations.[1] Although not restricted to documentation produced in view of recording, facilitating, and narrating the trade in humans, the majority of sources drawn upon are taken from the archive of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) – the most prolific Dutch private slave trading company of the Free Trade era (1730-1802). Specifically, five MCC sets of instructions, ten letters and five types of documents produced onboard the slave ship – the journal, surgeon's journal, negotiation book, logbook, and report – pertaining to four separate voyages are directly referenced.

Keywords: transatlantic slavery, antiblack racism, ideology, capitalism, Early Modern.

1 Nimako, "Conceptual Clarity", 179.

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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> "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."[2] – Walter Benjamin

Forming the vast majority of sources available to historians of slavery, slave trader and holder created documents continue to define the contours of how the largest system of bondage in human history is represented, rationalised, and remembered. In the Netherlands, the dearth of sources left behind by the enslaved and the relative abundance of perpetrator created documents has shaped the way in which slavery has been studied within academia. Beginning in earnest during the interwar and immediate post-war period, since its inception the institutionalised study of the Dutch slave trade has almost exclusively concerned itself with commerce.[3] This approach was set in motion by a number of historians investigating the Dutch transatlantic slave trade in the early to mid-twentieth century.[4] Limited in number and scope, research such as Van Brakel's *Bescheiden over den slavenhandel der West-Indische Compagnie* (Documents about the slave trade of the West India Company) and Hudig's *De scheepvaart op West-Afrika en West-Indië in de achttiende eeuw* (Shipping to West Africa and the West Indies in the Eighteenth Century) (re)established the conceptualisation of Dutch companies transporting enslaved Africans as primarily trading institutions through their employment of economic-centred philosophies and methodologies of history. Unger's post-war investigations into the slave trade further formalised and popularised the economic approach through his detailed quantitative overviews of Dutch slave trading companies, centring on the expansive archive of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* (MCC).[5] Epitomised by the prominence of the (un)profitability question within the Dutch debate, in the Netherlands (and across the West at large) practices of the production of historical knowledge continue to conceive of the archive 'as merely a repository of free-floating empirical facts to be lifted off the page by the researcher.'[6] Rather than being seen as 'part of the process of colonial

2 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 256.

3 Oostindie and Hoefte, "Historiography of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles", 608.

4 Meilink-Roelofsz, *Dutch Authors on West Indian History*, 7–8, 26 and 43–4; Coolhaas, *A Critical Survey of Studies on Dutch Colonial*, 122–43, 130; Van Brakel, "Bescheiden over den slavenhandel der West-Indische Compagnie"; and Hudig, *De scheepvaart op West-Afrika en West-Indië in de achttiende eeuw*.

5 Unger, "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse slavenhandel".

6 Van Rossum and Brandon separately argue that the emphasis on profits and losses in Dutch historiography has occluded investigations into antiblack slavery's wider economic links to

violence,' the documentation of the Dutch slave trade at large therefore remains enshrined within historiography as a collection of perfunctory and neutral documents.[7] In this regard, the methodologies and epistemological assumptions of the field's pioneers in the Dutch and western world remain dominant.

Against the grain of the aforementioned approach, this chapter revisits the archive of the Dutch slave trade from a different vantage point, namely, that of ideology.[8] Ideology here is understood as the 'imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,' that is, the interpretative means through which reality and, above all, its social dimensions are (mis) recognised and rationalised.[9] As understandings of reality forged through historically contingent social relations, ideologies serve to explicate the social formations from which they arise. This leads Fields to posit: 'Ideologies do not need to be plausible, let alone persuasive, to outsiders. They do their job when they help insiders make sense of the things they do and see – ritually and repetitively – on a daily basis.'[10] Being the means through which everyday social relations are explicated, ideology operates foremost through language and hence is omnipresent due to its central role in the formation of human reality – language being the internal (cognitive) and external discursive means through which the material world is interpreted. What Zupančič describes as 'the highest form of ideology' is the recognition of socially determined lexical representations as reflections of the real, rather than abstractions. In practice, this encompasses the voluntary, spontaneous linguistic expressions employed to make sense of the reality that we do not think of ideological but nonetheless is. (Successful) ideology thus operates invisibly, presenting itself 'as empirical fact (or biological, economic [...]) necessity (and that we tend to perceive as non-ideological).'[11] This also implies that, for insiders of a given ideology, alternative modes of interpreting reality emanating from different social formations are received as ideological in the traditional sense of its usage, as in, underdeveloped, false, and chaotic renditions that distort rather than reveal reality.

social and political developments, including the growth of Early Modern imperialism and global capitalism. Van Rossum, "New Perspectives on Early Modern Dutch Atlantic Slavery and Slave Trade", 5-6; Brandon, 'Rethinking Capitalism and Slavery', 135; Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved", 117–32, 123.

7 Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive", 124.

8 Smallwood, 123.

9 Althusser, *On Ideology*, 36.

10 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 135.

11 Zupančič, *The Shortest* Shadow, 77.

As an integral component of the social system of the Dutch Atlantic, itself a part of the Dutch Empire (and in turn the wider European-instigated 'transnational, capitalist order' founded through conquest, slavery and colonialism), the continuation of the centuries old Dutch slave trade depended to a considerable degree upon the perpetuation of ideology.[12] The particular iteration within the Dutch trade relates to, and is a manifestation of, the ruling ideology of the elite of the Dutch Republic, a grouping that expanded its power by extending control at home and overseas. This vertically imposed form of interpreting reality – comprised of various economic, national, legal, and racial ideologies – served to, and in many ways continues to, justify and normalise the unequal relations of the Dutch Republic and its colonial empire. Within the trade of enslaved Africans, ideology upheld the social structure through its continual generation of a social imaginary. This particular vision of the social relations interpellated the humans existing within the system of slavery as either qualifying for, or being disqualified from, ethical consideration.[13] Through this matrix, the imagined existence and characteristics of distinct groups and the relations between them were rendered normal, legitimate, and natural as opposed to consciously crafted. This recognition, in turn, secured the legitimacy of the trade's structure and the practices which contributed to the enterprise. It was in this vein that slavery was formulated as necessary. As opposed to being an organic or self-perpetuating framework of interpretation, the collective social imaginary required to sustain the trade was actively and continually reproduced. In addition to the renewal of the material conditions of the trade and the use of violence, which both reflected and induced Dutch slave trade ideology, this reproduction was achieved through individuals' adherence to institutionalised linguistic rules and practices. As well as within the organisations that made up the Dutch slave trade – the private-public corporate partnerships operating at each node of the Dutch Atlantic system – the particular linguistic representations, logics, and narratives, as well as the epistemic principles that undergirded them, were disseminated by components of the culture industry directly and indirectly connected to the trade and the broader globalising projects of Dutch and European racial capitalism and colonialism. From academic to literary texts, the reproduction of particular framings of reality contributed to the maintenance of a hierarchal social structure that, despite its perilous working conditions and

12 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 45.
13 Jackson, 44.

low pay for those sailors on the front line of the industry, in addition to the destruction ingrained within the practice, lasted for hundreds of years.

In order to recognise and demystify Dutch slave trade ideology, this chapter identifies the most frequent and established ways of writing used to describe the brutal buying and selling of humans across and within the various classes that participated in the practice. This work entails highlighting the employment of specific vocabulary, grammatical strategies, and overarching narratives specific to, and within the context of, (Dutch) Early Modern racial capitalism. In turn, linguistic ways of representing and producing knowledge are viewed as the basis for a particular framework of interpretation and its associated social imaginary that form the conditions of possibility for antiblack slavery. To achieve this, the archive of the MCC is drawn on, a company that dominated Dutch slavery during the Free Trade period (1730-1802), during which the trade materially and ideologically reached a point of maturity. As the biggest slave trading company in the Dutch Republic during this period, organising 113 slaving voyages between 1732 and 1807, its (discursive) practices are considered reflective of the wider Dutch trade as well as other contemporaneously operational British, French, Iberian and Scandinavian slaving corporations.[14] Five sets of instructions, ten letters and five types of documents produced onboard the slave ship – the journal, surgeon's journal, negotiation book, logbook and report – pertaining to four separate voyages are directly cited, in addition to Gallandat's well-known Middelburg-published slave trader manual, *Noodige onderrigtingen voor slaafhandelaren* (Necessary teachings for slave traders).[15] Furthermore, various non-economic texts are referred to and quoted from; of note, the colonial travel novel *De Middelburgsche avanturier, Of het leven van een burger person* (The Middelburg adventurer, Or the life of a civilian person). The identification of representations, narratives, and epistemologies present within economic texts produced in service of the Zeeland slave trade, as well as literary, religious, and philosophical-academic writings, in this context are assessed in order to ascertain their prevalence and interconnected nature within Dutch and European societies at large. Beginning with the observation that this ideology, the mode of being, and wider social system it upheld principally benefitted the upper echelon of Dutch participants in the trade, control over language is conceptualised as a top-down imposed reality. To this end, the ways in which discourse

14 Van der Blij, "Shareholders in the Dutch Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Trade", 71; Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 95.

15 Van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, 24.

and its reproduction was regulated through institutional practices are considered. This principally revolves around the assessment of the role of instructions and the imposition of atomising forms of knowledge production in view of how they enforced the master narrative of the company. Dictating how slavery could be recorded and, by extension thought of, control of language is conceptualised as a means to promote those behaviours that reproduced the system and limit those that threatened its survival. With a focus on identifying invisible as much as immediately recognisable linguistic instances of slave trade ideology, the argument is made that limited economic narratives – undergirded by racialising conceptions of Africans and Europeans – acted to legitimate slavery and bind the white(ned) slave trading participants together. A secondary focus is on how the wealthier participants' economising and racialising interpretation of reality was transposed and sustained onboard the slave ship. Here, discursive rituals – repeated ways of writing about slavery – are conceptualised as mediums and expressions through which the ideology of the trade was enshrined. To this end, the use of specific terminology, tenses, limited economic narratives, and the calculative discursive appropriation of humanity for the purposes of enslavement are discussed in view of their role in reproducing ideology and the social system of Dutch transatlantic slavery.

This chapter disrupts the framing of Dutch slavery and its 'foundational racialised epistemological presuppositions' by drawing on interdisciplinary approaches.[16] A plurality of the insights employed here stem from the African(-diasporic) intellectual tradition, specifically its centuries old, globally-orientated engagement with antiblack Early Modern slavery. Amongst the historical literature employed here, Smallwood's conceptualisation of the archive as a historically contingent narrative, rather than simply an empirical means to record and facilitate the trade, informs this chapter to a considerable extent. In addition, the critical assessment by Nimako, Fields, and Dragtenstein of slave trader-specific terminology and arguments as products and means of naturalising strategic viewpoints are incorporated. Further, Jackson and Ferdinand are drawn upon in view of the genealogy of racial ideology and its interconnection with destructive ways of being that extend beyond (human) social reactions. The literature forming the basis of this study hence uniformly problematises the assumed universality and objectivity of western knowledge production and epistemology in view of the transatlantic slave. In this light, both the archive of the Dutch slave trade and its treatment by successive historians inform the approach undertaken

16 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 18.

in this chapter. This study can, therefore, be situated within a proliferating body of research that critiques what Nimako et al. term the 'bookkeeping model' of historical study as a severely limited means of assessing slavery.[17] This school of thought considers the uncritical employment of sources produced by individuals with a vested economic, political, and social interest in antiblack slavery to result in the (re)insertion of the opinions of the individuals with a vested interest in upholding slavery and its ideological structure into contemporary historiography.[18] As posited by Brandon and Fatah-Black alike, the commitment to quantifiable 'facts' has engendered the obfuscation, denial, and banalisation of racism, and the interlinked denial of its long-standing effects in the Netherlands.[19] In line with the aforementioned scholars, the content of the archive and historiography is assessed as a means of determining the utility of traditional Eurocentric historical narratives.

Economic Ideology

The social structure of the Middelburg-based MCC, as with other private and state-owned (Dutch) slave trading corporations, was dominated by its board of directors and the intertwined group of investors who financed the company. The majority of this group hailed from Zeeland's commercial and political elite – a network of individuals that controlled both domestic and overseas economic enterprises. Despite having little to do with the physical practice of slavery, the MCC's managerial class controlled and financially benefitted the most from the continuation of the enterprise. The accumulation of wealth derived from their standing in the company, in turn, protected and propagated their elaborate lifestyles, privileged identity and (generational) social capital as corporate elites of the Dutch Republic. As a result, MCC directors and investors gained access to the very highest commercial and governmental offices and communities in the province of Zeeland, itself a source of prestige and a means of acquiring further wealth.[20] Correspondents, meanwhile, similarly engaged in the trade from an abstracted position, acting as liaisons between different parties such as the planters in the colonies

17 Nimako, Willemsen and Abdou, "Chattel Slavery and Racism", 33–52, 34–5.

18 Dragtenstein, *Trouw aan de Blanken*, 81–93.

19 Brandon, "Slavernijgeschiedenis zonder polderen", 258–64, 262; Fatah-Black, *Slavernij en beschaving,* 137.

20 Paesie, "De zeven slavenreizen van het Vlissingse fregat Magdalena Maria", 8.

and financiers in Europe. Their involvement in the transatlantic economy revolved, in this light, around meta issues like total number of captives requested by a given party rather than the step-by-step material reality of taking human beings against their will away from their homeland across the ocean to the colonies. The interests of this upper echelon of the MCC – the Zeeland-based participants and correspondents – were therefore firmly centred on maintaining the social structure and their dominant, privileged position within it, in addition to increasing the accumulative capacities of the company. The central means of achieving this goal was maintaining the (reproduction of the) enterprise and social regime of the slave ship and its crew's allegiance to the company. This was because, as the material basis for the MCC's production of wealth and knowledge, traded matter and data were both indispensable to the functioning of the company, and refusals by those onboard to carry out the practice or to adhere to the corporate hierarchy would reduce, if not totally undermine, the social standing of the richer managerial participants of the trade.

Within and outside of the company, (the threat of) violence was a primary means by which its structure was maintained. The MCC and the state jointly functioned to defend private property – any internal and external forces seeking to undermine or dismantle the corporate social structure and the upward flow of wealth it generated were countered by force. From the side of the company, this was evident in the brutal suppression of crew insubordination and mutiny by higher paid and ranked employees onboard the slave ship, notably the captain and first mate. Seizure or damage of MCC property – which ultimately was held by the company's wealthy directors and investors – could also be counteracted by Dutch state maritime power, with the military here, as in the colonies, stepping in to protect capital. Another principal way the social structure of the MCC and the practice of slavery proliferated was through the enforcement and reproduction of ideology, in particular the ideology of the intertwined elite of the corporation and the Dutch Republic. This was facilitated to a great extent through the control and regulation of written language, a goal achieved in part through the use of instructions. Instructions ostensibly outlined rules of conduct, allowing investors and '*Heeren Directeuren*' (Gentlemen Directors) of the company to dictate to employees how they should carry out slavery as a physical and discursive practice.[21] Of the two types of instructions, general and voyage-specific, the latter were usually written by an accountant. This individual was often an investor in the voyage; thus, as well as in their

21 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 53.

professional capacity, they acted as the main point of contact between the crew and financial elite – all documentation produced onboard being produced for this privileged group.[22] At a more fundamental level, instructions established the master narrative of the MCC as a social system and shaped the contours for how this narrative should be reproduced. This is reflected by the instruction's representation of the description of its activities – comprised of specific terminology, arguments and assumptions – as objective and self-evident. The directors' and investors' idealised visualisation of the trade was passed onto participants prior to the practice of slavery, likely through the reading or vocalising of the instructions, in addition to other forms of documentation, prior to any voyage to Africa. In particular, adherence to the instructions and their interpretation of slavery was tasked to the higher-ranking members of the crew such as the captain, first mate and surgeon. Regarding the captain and first mate, cascading down to the subordinates within the ship's regime, their task was to control the activities of the wider crew so that humans were successfully traded. Further, they were given the responsibility of textually narrating this process, producing knowledge, and extracting data that induced and was reflected by the idea that the MCC's activities were purely economic. If it is the case that realities as yet unexperienced are informed and mediated by preconceptions, it can be determined that, following the original and continuous instilment of the notion of the trade in slaves, the language of the instructions was subsequently deduced and verified by participants of the trade at the level of cognition based on their experience of the real-world events of slavery.[23] The instructions therefore structured how employees made sense of the social system of the MCC and its activities in a manner that benefitted the company's elites, namely, in naturalising the 'comforting and harmonious' stories of a progressive trade as objective, rather than crafted, forms of representation.[24]

The instructions define the MCC as a private company engaged in, amongst other commercial activities, the trade of slaves. In the context of a society structured by wage-labour and laws permitting the enslavement of Africans abroad, the physical processes of slavery are hence subsumed under a narrative of legal economic activity.[25] Economic discourse renders

22 Paesie, "De zeven slavenreizen van het Vlissingse fregat Magdalena Maria", 8.

23 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 135.

24 Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive", 125.

25 Van Nifterik, "Arguments Related to Slavery in Seventeenth Century Dutch Legal Theory", 180.

the social system of the company, meanwhile, as being composed of buyers and sellers. Here the ideology of the MCC formulates the crew as employees, with their participation in the trade consisting of the buying, transporting, and selling of goods on behalf of corporate superiors. Within this master narrative, victims of slavery are represented as commodities rather than agents. This representation is reflected by the basic units of analysis applied to the captives held by the MCC: the word *slaaf* (slave), as well as the term *armazoen*, which refers to a cargo hold filled with captives.[26] The prominent use of *slaaf* in the instructions, in turn, crystalises the way in which those writing on the slave ship should conceive of and refer to the enslaved; that is, as one type of goods amongst many traded by the company and owned by the company's elite.[27] As well as outlining the overarching master narrative and its constitutive parts, the instructions also stipulate that this narrative should be reproduced onboard the slave ship in the form of written documentation. This is charted and formalised by injunctions to record the material reality of slavery in digitised and monetised means. Specifically, the instructions charge the captain – usually executed by himself or the first mate – to meticulously textually track and, by extension, narrate each captive in terms of their exchange cost and the cost of their enslavement. Slavery is rendered exclusively in view of the purchase, transportation and resale of atomised discrete commodities, with each event and materiality onboard formulated in terms of profitability. For example, employment, metal chains, and expenditure resulting from time delays are all subsumed under the metric of monetary value. It is in this vein that MCC documentation produced by the slave ship elite ascribes numbers to each enslaved person as a means to dispassionately monitor, move around, and resell individuals. Enslaved humans are hence thought of in terms of unit value, total sums in terms of volume, and collective value. This limited and rudimentary manner of knowledge production imposed on the slave ship elite is reflected by the injunction to narrate slavery according to particular textual structures and formations. For instance, the company's instructions require the slave ship elite to produce and provide a ship journal for each voyage, as well as, to varying degrees, ship's books, logbooks, registers, reports, summaries and letters – all of these documents consisting of financial data, calculations and overarching narrations of trade.

Functionally, the digitising narratives produced onboard the slave ship served to facilitate the goal of accumulation. Of note, the quantification of

26 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade,* 228.

27 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 53.

enslaved humans in terms of monetary cost and resale value was used to judge the success of each voyage, the sum being edited after each purchase, sale, murder, or suicide. Being theorised as potential sources of profit, as such, enabled the crude comparison of voyages for the purposes of investment, speculation, and the reproducibility of the corporation's actions across time and space. For example, the recorded numbers helped to determine the amount of capital and equipment needed for future voyages in order to enslave a given number of humans. Equally, the establishment of a stable, impersonal language benefitted the company elite in terms of their capacity to hold MCC employees to account, as the data made each voyage transparent through quantification. In this regard the datafication of reality underpinned mastery on- and offboard the slave ship through the creation of limited and nihilistic narratives that stripped the record of the context and consequences of slavery. For instance, the routine description of a death using a digit – 'On this date a female slave passed away, No.10' – reduces a complex social event to a mere calculation.[28] The specific context which led to the enslavement and death of 'No.10' is thereby concealed, ensuring no traces of the lives of enslaved individuals are encoded into a MCC record. This, in turn, allowed crew members as well as the upper tier of the MCC to better ignore and repress the company's barbaric practices.[29]

As a narrative directed to the slave ship elite and crew, the notion of the trade in slaves evokes a social system comprised of subjects (traders) and commodities (captives). To this end, the ideology of the MCC interpellated African captives as objects rather than agents acting within a social system. The imposition of a non-subjectivity – that is, the demand to become a commodity – suggests that in reality, in view of the enslaved, Dutch transatlantic slavery operated almost exclusively through repressive force rather than ideology. This is because despite vastly outnumbering the sailors and company employees at large the system did not need the recognition of the validity of the MCC directors and investors' interpretation of reality by the majority of humans encompassed within the corporation's social system to persist. The ideology's visualisation of the social structure of slavery hence conceived of two groups, one whose interests or consent were not required or considered to any degree and one whose interests and subjectivity were. This is reflected by the fact that, although the enslaved and sailors at the bottom of the MCC's hierarchy were jointly subjected to violence and suffered

28 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 10. Original citation: 'Op dato is er een vrouwslaaf overleden'. NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390.

29 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade,* 53.

from the continuation of the system, only the interests of the sailors were factored in within slave trade ideology. For example, sailors were paid a wage and given a certain type of social capital, a position with some ethical and moral value. The captives, meanwhile, were considered to be outside of the social system at the same as being fully subjected to it. It is in this vein that Nimako argues that the usage of the notions of 'trade' and 'slave' are strategic forms of representation that warp the complexity of slavery as a social reality. Judging the utility of words on their basis of their capacity to 'grasp a generalised situation and to refer to something that is happening on the ground,' he determines that the terms presuppose that a supply of slaves exists in Africa and is ready to be accessed by European merchants.[30] The logic of the MCC's charter, therefore, envisages the company's activities as an agreement between African and European traders over the sale of a set of goods. As Nimako outlines, not only does this logic ignore the perspective of the enslaved, who 'do not necessarily accept their status as slaves,' it also disregards the violent processes by which humans were materially and discursively enslaved.[31] This includes the geopolitical interventions of Europeans in Africa as a means to expand the number of captives on the continent. The notion of trade in slaves also implies a simple transfer of human property, a narrative construct that does not incorporate all those individuals who were murdered in the various stages of violence inflicted upon them throughout the process of enslavement, from (un)freedom in Africa to chattel bondage in the New World. In addition, the term 'trade' fails to encompass all those who resisted the process.

Racial Ideology

Underlying the division of humans in the MCC's system of slavery was the racial ideology of the trade. This is expressed by the use of the term *neger*, the Dutch variety of the Early Modern European word evoking a type of human, which is used in the MCC instructions and correspondingly throughout discourse reproduced on the slave ship. The term was used to denote human commodities, along with the categories of *slaaf*, and to a lesser extent *swarte* (black). The interchangeability of black(ened) humans and slaves was widespread throughout the Dutch Atlantic, reflected by the categorisation of humans 'goods' as '*Negers* or *Slaaven'* in

30 Nimako, "Conceptual Clarity", 179.

31 Nimako, 184.

one set of MCC instructions for the crew, and in the governor-general of Suriname Jan Nepveu's single taxonomy entry referring to one type-group of human(s) with three names: *negers*, *slaven* and *swarten*.[32] Rather than being a synonym for slave, however, *neger* was used to refer to those with a darker skin tone than Europeans; that is, generally, the (diasporic-)Africans encountered by Europeans at all three corners of the trade.[33] For example, discussing the purchase of captives, the captain of the *Nieuwe Hoop*'s seventh journey notes that he 'understood from the *negers* that some slaves were brought ashore.'[34] Gallandat likewise uses the term to describe non-enslaved Africans, positing: 'Nothing, I think, can be more unpleasant for the surgeon than to discover in the future that he has been betrayed by the *neger-kooplieden* (negro merchants).'[35] One can therefore observe that, within the logic of the transatlantic Dutch slave trade, although not all those with darker skin are recognised as slaves, all those who are enslaved have darker skin. The notion is reflected by the usage of the term in Dutch legal fiction – darker skin signifying one's status as a potential, and therefore natural, slave.[36]

Rather than being a rationale for inferiority in and of itself, the visible difference indicated and embodied by the term *neger* was used by European slave traders and colonists at large as 'a prop for invisible things.'[37] This dynamic persists in contemporary racism through the hijacking of skin tone as a symbolic indicator and manifestation of 'the presumed inward, invisible content of that person's character.'[38] In the context of the MCC, a company principally active during the Free Trade period, a time when the practices of transatlantic slavery and antiblack discourse had reached a point of maturity, the conception of the African was deeply imbued with notions of inferiority. Jackson argues that rather than being nonhumans, antiblack ideology imagined here as a dehumanising framework of interpretation, black(ened) humans were envisaged to be teleologically less advanced than their racialised counterparts, white Europeans. Racial

32 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3; NL-SAA, 231, inv.nr. 298, p. 221–2.

33 Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 55.

34 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 853. Original citation: 'Verstonden van de Neegers dat er eenige slaven aan de wal werder'.

35 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3–4. Original citation: 'Niets kan, myns bedunkens, voor den heelmeester onaangenamer zyn, dan in 't vervolg te ontdekken dat hy zig door de neger-kooplieden [...], heeft laten bedriegen'.

36 Cau, *Groot placaatboek*, 526-8.

37 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 207.

38 Fields and Fields, 207.

ideology contrasted the two groups, positioning white(ned) humanity as: 'Man in its idealized form, [...] understood simultaneously as an achievement and bio-ontology.'[39] This status was undergirded by the belief that European superiority resulted from white(ned) elites' transcendence from a primitive state into a new state of rationality, a perspective and being attained 'in opposition to nature'.[40] Reason, in this light, is seen as a scientific and objective framework through which reality could be known, manipulated, and mastered. Stabilising and facilitating this self-understanding was the material and discursive intertwined realities and discourses of both the objectification of the animal and racialisation. To this end, the nonhuman was conceived of as fundamentally lesser, operating with a type of mechanical consciousness that clouded the reality of the world and kept one in a state of immanence. Humans who were conceived of as culturally, spiritually and biologically non-European likewise were considered the 'animal in the form of a human,' that is, 'devoid of the achievement of Reason of the full realization of perspective.'[41] This outlook configured both the black(ened) human and nonhuman as ahistorical beings, unable to grasp the reality of things and, therefore, undeserving of ethical consideration. The relationship of white(ned) humans to black(ened) humans, animals, and nature at large, in turn, was formulated as the necessary and inevitable domination of the underdeveloped by the rational, that which would bring order, stability, and progress to a world conceived of as inherently chaotic. The interconnection between discourses of rationality, the objectification of the nonhuman, and racism is, in the Dutch context, epitomised by the depiction of Surinamese slavery in *De Middelburgsche Avanturier*. In this novel, slavery is cast as depraved but inevitable – 'Fate has, unfortunately, made us Slaves,' one imaginary captive decries.[42] Undergirding this view of reality is the conception of black(ened) humans and the nonhuman as atomised elements of reality to be rationally reordered and managed by European Man. As such, 'one of the Blacks' in the story posits:

> We are your Slaves, act to us like Gentlemen, not like Executioners, [...] If you treat us as merciful Lords, and restrain the cruelty of the High

39 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 32.

40 Jackson, , 29.

41 Jackson, 60.

42 *De Middelburgsche Avanturier,* 186. Original citation: 'Het noodlot heeft ons, helaas, Slaven gemaakt'.

> Negroes and Commanders, your Land will bear double fruits; your slaves will be more fertile, and your wealth will increase to an infinite sum.[43]

Following 'Eric Williams' non-racialising approach to slavery' and the literature it has informed, here the term 'negro' (*neger*) is viewed neither as an outdated, albeit objective, self-evident category nor a 'synonym of "black" or "race"' nor a 'social and political condition [...] inherent in the skin of Black people'.[44] Rather the term and the racial delineation of humanity at large is considered to be "the result and not the cause" of the European-instigated and controlled system of transatlantic slavery.[45] In this vein, Jackson argues that "skin colour was not the essence of racial difference" in pre-1650 European descriptions of (west) Africans; instead, early European travel accounts dating from the Age of Discovery tend to project discrepancies between the 'degrees of civility' of Africans and Europeans, specifically concerning the former's' 'sexual mores and virility.'[46] As much as skin tone is less prominent in earlier sources, so too is the 'coherent ideology' of race that hierarchically ordered life, with Europeans cast as the most rational and progressive beings and Africans as ahistoric and savage animals in the form of humans. For example, Africa is discussed in certain late medieval European discourses as a region populated by potential Christian friends that could aid in the struggle against Islam. Following the 'epochal rupture' of antiblack slavery and the construction of the New World, however, European colonial elites began the trial-and-error process of demarcating those who became white and black as a means of dividing the lower classes in the colonies so as to sublimate resistance to, and thereby stabilise the establishment of, hierarchically ordered Atlantic societies. This process, present throughout Europe's colonies and onboard the slave ship, gradually engendered the invention and enshrinement of skin tone as a legal marker of difference – this development complementing the early differentiation and justification of slavery on the basis of religion.[47] To this end, one can argue that 'slavery as a coherent ideology

43 *De Middelburgsche Avanturier*, 189. Original citation: 'Een der Zwarten [...] Wy zyn uwe Slaven, handelt ons als Heeren, niet als Beulen, [...] Zo gy ons als mededogende Heeren behandelt, en de wreedheid der Opper Negers en Bevelhebbers beteugelt, zal uw Land dubbele vruchten voortbrengen; uwe Slavinnen vruchtbaarder zyn, en uw vermogen toenemen tot een oneindige rykdom...'

44 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 60.

45 Ferdinand, 60.

46 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 7.

47 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 45.

did not spring into being simultaneously with slavery,' but rather that it followed and was induced by the piecemeal efforts of those who stood to benefit financially and ideologically from the (emergent) social systems of the Atlantic world.[48] In this vein the term *neger* as a category can be seen as having '[come] into existence at a discernible historical moment for rationally understandable historical reasons.'[49]

One of the earliest usages of the term *neger* in Dutch, deriving from a 1602 description of the arrival in Antwerp of a Spanish ship holding African captives, attests to the transnational nature of this process.[50] In this light, antiblack slavery as a reality, materially and discursively pioneered to a considerable extent by Iberian expeditions, reproduced itself across Europe as nations increasingly operated in, and saw themselves as part of, a global and racialised social system. In view of the expansion of transatlantic slavery and the growing interconnection of European and New World social systems, ideology served to reflect and explicate the burgeoning order. The continual reproduction of culture and knowledge functioned to naturalise and normalise the hierarchy of races that the transatlantic slave trade grew to rely on.

In the Dutch Republic, this ideology was actively promoted by trading corporations and state institutions directly connected to slavery and colonialism; for instance, Leiden University facilitated the production of the former WIC captive Jacobus Capitein's 1742 religious treatise defending the enslavement of Africans.[51] In a similar vein, Montesquieu's 1748 *De l'esprit des lois* (The Spirit of Law) and Rousseau's 1750 *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (Discourse on the Sciences and Art) – both of which were quoted by governor-general Nepveu to justify the enslavement of Africans – critique slavery as a practice whilst at the same time reproducing a social imaginary dividing Europeans and Africans into hierarchically ordered racial groups.[52] This too is evident in oppositionist accounts of New World slavery that simultaneously call for the reform of violent disciplinary practices whilst adhering to the validity of the system itself and the racial justification that undergirds it.[53] The (re)production of written and visual culture – including economic, academic, religious, philosophic, literary, scientific, and artistic texts – in this regard tended to substantiate rather than unpick the 'mode

48 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 128.

49 Fields and Fields, 121.

50 Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe*, 133.

51 Hondius, "'No Longer Strangers and Foreigners'", 131–53, 134.

52 NL-SAA, 231, inv.nr. 298, p. 221–2.

53 De Crèvecoeur, *Brieven van eenen Amerikaenschen landman van Carlisle in Pennsijlvanien*, 245.

of thought and representation that continually adheres to predefined rules and narratives that legitimate antiblack ordering and premature death.'[54]

The enforced company-specific and wider Dutch and European discourses of antiblack racism offered an explanation as to why Africans could be enslaved and Europeans not.[55] In this sense, it created the conditions for slavery by forging an insular community with a narrow focus, that being the interpellation of slave trade participants as white, generating both upward loyalty and a social value that legitimated and necessitated violence towards African captives. In this light, the MCC's social system masquerades as being based on racial unity rather than dominated by a small, extracted group. The institutionalisation of difference between MCC sailors and the enslaved hence functioned to remove the possibility for alliances between these two groups. Instead, the reproduction of a racial social imaginary established alternate ways of relationality as impossible and undesirable. This framing of social relations rendered the material and discursive practices underlying the Dutch slave trade as ethical, in that black(ened) humans were conceived as rightly subordinate and having no inherent value outside of their usage to white(ned) humans.

Following Dragtenstein's critical approach to Dutch colonial sources by reading the documentation of the MCC in view of its intended audience and purpose, one can also note that the projected racial ideology of the company's upper tier envisaged trade itself, and the trade of African captives more specifically, as progressive historical forces.[56] This is because the variety of transnational commerce developed through the conquest of the New World, with the establishment of slave plantations and settler colonial societies, was conceived as a material and mental achievement of the superior white race. The pursuit of economic goals to this end were conceptualised not only in view of accumulation, but also from the perspective of trade as a vehicle of knowledge production and, by extension, mastery. It is in this vein that Mbembe argues that capitalism was (and remains) underscored by 'the compulsion to categorise, to separate, to measure, and to name, to classify and to establish equivalences between things and between things and persons, persons and animals, animals and the so-called natural, mineral, and the organic world.'[57]

Unlike previous European connotations of trade, which considered the unrestrained pursuit of accumulation to be 'irrational and/or immoral by

54 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 43.

55 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 141.

56 Dragtenstein, *"Trouw aan de Blanken"*, 93; Dragtenstein, *Van Elmina naar Paramaribo*, 9–10, 126.

57 Mbembe, *Necropolitics*,158.

holders of political and moral authority,' Early Modern elites – through and as a means of extending their power – increasingly articulated trade as a wholly virtuous endeavour.[58] In the Dutch Republic, this shift was reflected by a change in poetic discourse from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, wherein trade was elevated 'to the level of a divine power, not only comparable to worshipped phenomena like art and poetry, but to "Nature" or even to God.'[59] Terms and their associations to commerce previously conceived of negatively, such as *eigenbaat* (self-interest), *begeerte* (desire) and *begeerzucht* (yearning), during the Free Trade period of the Dutch slave trade became lauded.[60]

The notion of trade as a progressive product and tool of the Enlightened white race is evident throughout the social imaginary as projected by the MCC. At the level of the imagined Dutch nation, for example, richer participants viewed slavery as an essential component of the construction of new colonial societies in the *terra nullius* of the New World. One correspondent, for instance, requests that the MCC help 'fill up' the Dutch colonies with captives so as to overtake France and England's quantity of human captives, with captives here viewed as an extension of Dutch economic power – itself an index of prestige and spiritual worth.[61] This is also evident in the States General's partnership with the MCC centred on forwarding Dutch elite interests in the New World, plantation slavery and colonialism being at once a collective and competitive European project.[62] As Africans were deemed to be animals in human form, their appropriation for the purpose of creating a world for, and in the image of, Europe was viewed not only as legitimate but also as altruistic in the scope of a teleological western-centric philosophy of world history. In this light, one can observe that the upper echelon of the trade was concerned with more than their own personal or familial enrichment; rather they were motivated by the prospect of contributing to the strengthening of eternal and spiritual entities such as the Dutch nation and European civilisation at large. The notion that slavery and the wider colonial project was a force for good is reflected in the popular view of the trade as a necessary evil. This is reflected by the notorious WIC slave trader Willem Bosman's description of the practice as 'very barbarous' but

58 Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 15.

59 Johannes and Leemans, "O Thou Great God of Trade", 343.

60 Johannes and Leemans, 338.

61 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 100, Original citation: 'Met slaaven vervuld zijn.'

62 Cossart, Van Raadt, and Georgien, *Memorie uyt naame ende van wegens d'ondergeschrevene boekhouders en reders*, 1–4 and 6.

nonetheless a 'mere necessity.'[63] Gallandat likewise conceptualises Africans as having no (ethical) value outside of their usage to white(ned) humanity as sources of energy to be harnessed to maintain and extend their power and way of life. The teleological ethics of Gallandat renders the violence and suffering inherent in the trade not as an issue in and of itself, but rather as a commercial problem. Articulated from a perspective of white superiority, Gallandat promotes paternalistic care by arguing that surgeons 'must in some ways be the fathers of [the captives].'[64] This current is also present in MCC discourse, with instructions that captives 'should not be debauched or abused in any way by any of the Officers or other Ship people.'[65] Considering slaves as living and breathing investments, this rationalisation of slavery safeguards economic and civilisational interests, and the Dutch pursuit of economic growth; the Dutch themselves are, in turn, viewed as civil and benevolent as well as supreme, thereby inscribing the social order of the Dutch Atlantic as something to be defended rather than dismantled. The visualisation of slavery as a tool for both material and spiritual upliftment is reflected throughout the discourse of the MCC's upper echelon, as in the use of the language of desire and emotionality within abstracted descriptions of the practice. The correspondent De Graaff, for example, writes that if more 'advantageous prices' can be negotiated for slaves 'it will be especially pleasant to me.'[66] Writing from Middelburg, financiers of the trade in humans, Daniël Denis and Pieter Lucas Grymalla, console a correspondent and planter in Suriname noting: 'We were saddened to learn from your noble writings about the sharp fall in the prices of slaves.'[67] Elsewhere a correspondent writes: 'We wish dearly' that slave credit payments will be repaid; whilst

63 Dabydeen, "Commerce and Slavery in Eighteenth Century Literature", 6.

64 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 12–3. Original citation: 'Zy moeten 'er in sommige opzichten de vaders van zyn'.

65 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3. Original citation: 'Zoo is het ook onze expresse begeerte, [...] dat niet zal worden gepermitteert dat de Negers, Slaaven of Slavinnen door eenige Officieren of ander Scheeps-Volk, zullen gedbaucheert of in eenigen maniere mishandelt worden (so it is also our express desire, [...] that it shall not be permitted that the Negroes, Slaves [masc.] or Slaves [fem.] shall be debauched or mistreated in any way by any Officers or other Ship People).

66 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 55.8. Original citation: 'Het zal my byzonder aangenaam zyn als capt. C. Loef in de colonie Essequebo voordeelige pryzen bedingen kan en meerder geld voor zyne slaaven kan maaken dan wij hier kunnen besteden. [...] om daardoor aan zyn begeerte te voldoen [...] dat my meede zeer aangenaam is (It will be a great pleasure for me if Capt. C. Loef in the colony of Essequibo can negotiate favorable prices and make more money for his slaves than we can spend here. [...] in order thereby to satisfy his desire [...] which is very pleasant to me).

67 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 102. Original citation: 'Het deed ons leed uit u edele schrijvens te verneemen de sterke daaling der prijsen van slaaven'.

Stavorinus and Waterlander inform the directors that a recent shipment of 350 slaves 'gave us a lot of pleasure.'[68] In addition to generating more wealth from the trade than those on the ship, the privilege of interacting with the enslavement of humans purely or largely through the medium of (written) economic discourse also likely informs the positive diction of the company's elite. In this sense, the day-to-day reality of the trade was, for the wealthier participants, a financial game wherein players were positioned to 'seek their fortune with the slaves' through the monitoring and manipulation of abstractions such as 'the supply of slaves' which, in turn, were viewed as rational and teleologically ethical pursuits.[69] In addition to the avoidance of the physical dangers of participating in slavery, the virtual nature of the directors' and correspondents' activities likely explains why upper echelon MCC employees remained in the business for life, even constructing small commercial dynasties around the trade.[70] The wage-labouring slave ship elite meanwhile, and in particular the lower class crew members, rarely persisted in the industry, often dying during or shortly following slaving voyages.[71]

Discursive Rituals

Unlike the enthusiastic and lofty discourse of the wealthier participants of the trade, the discourse of the slave ship elite is decidedly mechanical and cold. In view of the conception of MCC ideology as a means of binding together and reproducing the social system of the company, the difference in tone can be seen as a product of the proximity of the captain, first mate, and surgeon to the enslaved people. In this light knowledge production onboard can be seen as means of facilitating, normalising and naturalising slavery as a material and ideological reality, in addition to compiling the

68 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 102. Original citation: 'Wij wenschen van harten' and 'den 27 februarij aan de mond der rivier van Surinamen was gearriveerd met een armazoen van 350 slaven dat ons zeer veel pleyzier doet' (on the February 27 at the mouth of the river Suriname a cargo-load of 350 slaves arrived that gave us a lot of pleasure).

69 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 100. Original citation: 'De partij moeten kiesen om hun fortuijn met de slaaven elders te soeken' (the party must choose to seek their fortune with the slaves elsewhere) and 'met 195 pieces kustslaaven […] wij hoopen het [in Essequebo) goed fortuijn zal vinden' (with 195 pieces of coast-slaves […] we hope that in Essequibo a good fortune shall be found) and 'den aanvoer van slaaven […] moeten ophouden en stilstaan' (the supply of slaves […] must cease and be at a stop).

70 Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 27.

71 Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade,* 382–7.

raw data required for the trade. As the textual transposition of the logic and demands of the company instructions onto the physical world, which structured ways of thinking and behaving, patterns of writing can be seen as synergetic with violence. In particular, strategies and learned modes of reproducing the trade's ideology inform and act alongside repression to evacuate the plurality of personhoods needed in order to reduce a group of people to a slave cargo. At the level of the ship's crew, the reproduction of MCC ideology functions in part through what Fields describes as 'confirming rituals', that is, 'deeds that fit into the profane comings and goings of everyday life' which serve to verify beliefs – in the case of Dutch slavery, beliefs being encased in the master narrative of the trade.[72] This includes the discursive rituals performed by the captain, first mate, and surgeon that describe the enslaved people using racialising language in a dispassionate, mundane manner, thereby reaffirming their lack of value outside of their usage by a removed elite as sources of wealth and energy. In view of Fisher's discussion of ideology, one can note that discursive rituals of slavery did not need to be held sincerely by employees of the MCC. Rather ritualistic compliance to the MCC elite's social imaginary in the place of fervent belief functioned to cement ideology and the social order it upheld through normalisation, the eradication of alternate modes of interpretation, and ultimately the externalisation of ideology into practice.[73] In turn, the 'psychological beliefs' of the slave trade can be seen as products of 'going through the motions of complying with official languages and behaviours' – economic and racial ideology experienced as objective after it has structured action.[74] Whether believed or not, the system only required participants to act as if the ideology of the trade was accurate for it to be reproduced.

One such discursive ritual common throughout every document produced onboard a slave ship is the address by the document producer to the intended recipient, normally the directors and financiers of the voyage. For example, journals and logbooks begin with a note to the *Agtbaare Heeren* (respectable gentlemen), a practice which continually affirms the social hierarchy of the company by prefacing all recorded activity with the reminder that every action and record is in the service of enriching the MCC's honourable, deserving, and powerful elite.[75] Such repeated written acts function to internalise of the interests of the company elite by

72 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 204–5.

73 Fisher, *K-punk*, 462.

74 Fisher, 405.

75 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1068; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1069.

the subordinate employees, allowing the socially dominant participants of the trade to maintain their position from afar. This repetition keeps doubt and the conception of other social formations at bay by saturating one's outlook with 'evidence' of the objectivity and permanence of the current structure.[76] Surmised by Fields through the argument that 'rituals express and create observations, express and create realities', one can argue that the wider behaviour of writing in view of the upper echelon's reception of the documentation also serves to inculcate the notion of service to one's betters.[77] In this vein, the reproduction of ideology through language stems not only from habit and social subordination, but also from the assumed value of the work to the worker. The meticulous and precise nature of the vast majority of MCC documentation produced onboard attests to this notion, indicating that members of the slave ship elite – reconciled to their position within the company – gained satisfaction from performing their job to the best of their abilities.

Regarding the practice of slavery itself, discursive rituals similarly serve to embed the logic and hierarchical structure of the trade. For example, the use of the possessive facilitated the continual conceptualisation of human captives as the property of someone else. This pattern begins even before the voyage, with instructions stating that all captives are property of those who financed the voyage.[78] The notion of humans as goods is also repeated at the level of elite discourse, as when the correspondents Wagtels and Timmerman inform the directors of the whereabouts of Captain Noordhoek who is travelling 'with the remainder of his slaves from Suriname to St. Eustatius.'[79] Likewise, MCC sources describe captives in Africa as the merchant's slaves, and in the plantation colonies as the property of the colonists, with the captain and first mate only referring to the enslaved as 'my slaves' after purchase and during transit.[80] As well as reflecting the legal fiction of enslavement in the Dutch Republic – the principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* only allowing for captives already enslaved or born into slavery to be held under Dutch jurisdiction – the tense arguably reflects the contested reality of slavery. In particular, the possessive can be seen as the discursive manifestation of the struggle to establish total social dominance,

76 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 201.

77 Fields and Fields, 201.

78 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3.

79 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 100. Original citation: 'Capteijn Noordhoek, die met zijn restant slaaven van Suriname naar St. Eustatius was vertrocken'.

80 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 54.7. Original citation: 'Hunne oude slaven' and 'mijn slaavens'.

an attitude towards reality necessitated by the desire to supress the will to freedom of fellow humans. This is evident in references to the discrepancy between how human commodities are described, using the possessive, and other 'goods', namely, the unliving, non-resistant commodities such as 'sugar', and 'coffee' referred to using the impersonal definite article 'the'.[81]

The commodification of captives is furthered through the recurrent use of the passive tense which records reality in a manner that conceives of captives as inanimate living objects – they are 'given' food and 'visited' by the surgeon at regular intervals, the passive rendering invisible all activities, reactions, and thoughts made independent of the crew.[82] This is likewise present in Gallandat's description of the ideal physical examination in which he refers to the enslaved people as animate only when the surgeon manipulates their bodies, a mode of representation that once more obscures any resistance to the invasive actions of the slave ship elite.[83] The standardisation of the ways in which bodies are described and referred to reflects one of the fantasies which structured the practice of Dutch slavery, namely, the notion that Africans were 'renewable resources.'[84] The conceptualisation of bodies as homogenous and replaceable within slave trade ideology belies a social imaginary that does not distinguish between individuals. The unique nature of each captive and their connections to one another and the earth are not broached. Rather Africans are envisaged as a self-generating off-world reserve to be exploited as much as the market dictates with no external consequences. The scope of this framing is limited, reflecting an understanding of the world that cleaves Africa from Europe, the history of its people and land formulated as worthy only as it pertains to the European appetite for extraction.

The commodifying ritual discursive practices of the slave ship elite are also present in the use of obfuscatory, banal, and reductive narratives,

81 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 54.7. Original citation: 'De suikers en koffie' (the sugars and coffee).
82 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383. Original citation: 'Gaven de slaven pisank (gave the slaves bananas)' and 'op dato quam surgijn-majoor aan boordt [...] om onse slaven te visenteeren' (on this day a surgeon-major came onboard [...] to visit our slaves).
83 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 5. Original citation: 'Hy moet niet alleen het gantsche lichaam van den neger op het allernaauwkeurigst bezichtigen, [...] maar hy moet hem ook betasten, doen gaan, springen, de armen en vingers bewegen en uitsteken, om hier door ten vollen verzekerd te zyn dat hy niet mank gaat, dat hy geen wonden, breuken, styve leden, bedekte kwaalen of eenige andere ongemakken heeft' (Not only must he examine the whole body of the negro most closely, [...] but he must also touch him, make him go, jump, move and extend the arms and fingers, in order to be fully assured by this that he is not limping, that he has no wounds, fractures, rigid limbs, hidden ailments or any other discomforts).
84 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 59.

undergirded by the master narrative of a trade in slaves. For example, in the ship report from the *Eenigheid*'s third journey, written predominantly as a free-flowing letter, first mate Pruymelaar switches to the tabulating style when discussing a revolt. He notes, on '13th of May 1764 a revolt amongst the slaves on the ship broke out, which was violently countered to preserve the ship and goods;' the mission to 'preserve the ship and goods' was a success, as Pruymelaar concludes: '9 were lost from the revolt [...] Therefore, 104 slaves were preserved.'[85] As well as affirming their status as 'goods', Pruymelaar's use of the passive tense to describe deaths caused by the crew detracts from both their active repression of the revolt and the reasons behind it.[86] Unlike in previous parts of the report, which goes to great lengths to discuss the various crew members, their dispositions, and behaviours which threaten the success of the voyage, the accounting style, with its limited explanatory power, clouds the re-emergence of the captives' subjectivities during their efforts to counter enslavement. As such the enslaved people's will to be free is distorted and rendered a temporary blip in an otherwise predictable mercantile narrative of service to the company.

In addition to the suppression of revolts, other forms of violence inflicted on those enslaved are described in a manner that covers up the specific reasoning as well as the emotion of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s). For example, one surgeon reports, 'a female slave died, she had been beaten about four weeks before her death, so that the blood had flowed strongly from her ear.'[87] Suicide – 'a *neger* jumped overboard and drowned' – is similarly recorded mechanically and without speculation as to why captives took their own lives.[88] Likewise, descriptions of the captives' mental states are rendered in a cold fashion. One surgeon posits that a 'man-slave's' unwillingness to eat is the reason for the 'deterioration of his strength', as opposed to his enslavement by initially African and later European traders.[89] Similarly, speculations as to why a captive may be 'sad' are never made; their

85 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 375.4. Original citation: 'Op den 13 Meij 1764 een tumult onder de slaven op gem schip, onstaan, welk met geweld is moeten tegen gegaan worden on schip en Goederen te behouden Door den opstand zijn verloren 9 [...] Dus 104 slaven behouden'.

86 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 375.4.

87 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390. Original citation: 'Een vrouslaaf overleden, deselve was een week of vier voor haar overlijden geslagen, soodat het bloed haar sterk was uit 't oor gelopen'.

88 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 574. Original citation: 'Sprong een neger over boordt die verdronck'.

89 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390. Original citation: 'Een mansslaaf overleden in 't begin of wanneer eerst is gekocht geweest, heef niet willen eten, waarop verval van kragten is gevolgt' (On the 18th of this month a male slave passed away, who had refused to eat since had been bought, which entailed a deterioration of his strength).

suffering is simply recorded in terms of its effect on the process of buying, transporting and reselling the individual.[90]

Another way of writing common to the slave ship is the funnelling of diverse individuals held captive into one of four categories, namely: man, boy, woman, and girl, usually combined with the suffix of slave or negro, for example, '*manneger*' (man-negro).[91] These terms affirm the participants' imagination of the enslaved as racialised human commodities – each of the four compound terms relating to types of humans being associated with different monetary values and ways in which they should be treated. The only unique features given to individuals are the cost and resale price imposed upon them. Informing these numerical values is the theorisation of captives in terms of perishability. Gallandat's manual establishes that the quality, quantity, cost and resale price derive from the physical and mental condition of a given captive.[92] This view is also reflected in the MCC's general instructions which inform the crew to ensure that 'Slaves are properly maintained and properly inspected and treated.'[93] The logic behind this, according to Gallandat, is that there is 'less value to be gained from old, sick or infirm slaves for sale in the West Indies.'[94] In turn, the health of the captives is incorporated into MCC documentation almost exclusively in generalised terms such as estimated age and perceived level of sanity, a product of the surveillance of the mental and physical aspects of humanity carried out not in service of the individuals but for the purposes of their saleability. The wellbeing of each captive is hence formulated in view of the company's interests, a dynamic reflected in the common reference by MCC surgeons of the practice of applying grease to the skin of captives as a means 'to clean the body.'[95] Referring to 'the body' as a stand in for multiple African captives renders each individual indistinguishable, each human a material good with malleable properties. As well as keeping the enslaved at a distance, thereby precluding their recognition as potential social allies rather than commodities, this mode of description textually transforms

90 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3. Original citation: 'Wanneer zy treurig zyn' (when they are sad).

91 Captives were often described simply as humans, for instance, during death, 'on this date a child passed away' (*op dato is er een kindt overladen*). NL-MdbZA, 20 inv.nr 383.

92 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 1567.1.

93 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3. Original citation: 'Ook zal den Commanderende moeten zorgen, dat de Slaaven wel onderhouden en behoorlyk nagezien en behandelt worden'.

94 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 3. Original citation: 'Omdat 'er veel minder voordeel van oude, zieke of gebrekkige slaven, by de verkopinge in de West- Indien, te halen is'.

95 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390. Original citation: 'Om het lichaam te suiveren'.

the intrusive medical violence of enslavement into commercial frugality. Commodification is rendered good practice as opposed to an active struggle; the contested nature of such processes are minimised through the exclusion of resistance from the narrative.[96]

The recognition of the captives' humanity within slave ship documentation reveals the limitations of the ideology of slavery. The irregular ways in which captives are referred – ranging from digits or racial language to descriptions attesting to their suffering – reveals that the abstract scientific language of commerce maintained by the spatially removed elites was unable to fully manifest, as the spontaneous interpretative language used by the slave ship elite reveals. However, from a different vantage point, the humanisation of the captives can be seen as an intensification of the logic of slavery by means of appropriating human features so as to further and better enslavement. For example, the records abound with details of the anxiety of the captives. Captain Jan de Moor reports that 'the continual silence onboard disturbs the slaves;' likewise first mate Pruymelaar notes multiple times that the crew 'let the slaves wander', indicating that he acknowledged the captives' desire to be unchained, to stand and walk on the deck.[97] Petrus Couperus, a surgeon aboard the *Eenigheid*, speculates that the cause of a captive's death was 'her melancholy' which 'started because she has had a child, and the negroes had kept it on the coast.'[98] Rather than reflect an extension of empathy, the recognition of sorrow and the will to improve one's level of comfort is a calculative process. This is reflected by the companywide provision of alcohol, prescribed as a means to numb the captives from the reality of enslavement onboard and in the colonies; correspondents Wagtels and Timmerman note 'our *negers* over here prefer [dram] to the best jenever.'[99] In addition to dispelling the notion that slavery persisted on account of the enslaved not being recognised as (fully) human, the appropriation of human features of the captives as a means to sustain the functioning of slavery materially and ideologically demonstrates the base assumption of the social imaginary upon which racial ideology and the

96 The *Eenigheid*'s journal, for instance, describes captives' bodies as entities that can be manipulated: 'suiverde 't lighaam eens en andermaal door 't…' (I purged the body twice with…). NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr 390.

97 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 574; NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 383. Original citation: 'Want door de continueele stilte vallen de slaaven zeer af' and 'lieten de slaven cuijeren'.

98 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390. Original citation: 'Ik geloof dat haar melancolij sal hebben ontstaan dat sij een kint sal hebben gehad en dat de negers 'tzelve sullen hebben gehouden'.

99 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 5. Original citation: 'Onse negers alhier prefereer deselve verre boven de beste genever'.

trade depends:. that is the notion that whilst both are human, only white Europeans are the worthy of ethical consideration.

As well as a means to preserve life, the recognition of the captives' physical and emotional states sustained the dominance of the crew. For example, Gallandat promotes the manipulation of the conditions of slavery in view of doing 'everything possible to ease their sad fate,' including ensuring that 'they have no lack of water,' so as to stave off revolt.[100] This criminalisation of humanity supposes the universal human and nonhuman will to be autonomous is a threat to the company's profit and personnel. This is evident in MCC guidelines:

> Care must also be taken, and all possible precautions employed, as not to become overwhelmed by Negroes or Slaves; keeping the rifle in hand ready for this purpose; also good Watch must always be kept, and every circumspection used so that there be no disorder, confusion, or the like.[101]

Another iteration of the document likewise affirms, 'you are admonished to take good care lest you be overtaken by Negroes or Slaves.'[102] Planting a seed of fear, exemplified by the caution to be armed and on constant alert, the instructions sustain the social system of the company by sublimating the desperation of the enslaved into a source of dread for the sailors. The repression of one group, the captives, carried out by another, the sailors, in the service of the upper tier of the company is formulated as a means to prevent the breakdown of the reigning social order. Rather than a starting point to critique the social order, MCC discourse portrays conflict as an affixed and expected part of reality – alternate interpretations of resistance in this context constituting mortal threats to the system's survival.

Whilst the potential violence carried out by the captives is pathologised as a threat to the social system, the brutality of the slave ship crew is conceptualised as the result of inevitable and generalised forces and objective realities. This is exemplified by the monitoring of captives' deaths, an interpretation

100 Gallandat, *Noodige onderrichtingen*, 13. Original citation: 'Alles in 't werk stellen wat hun droevig noodlot kan verzachten [...] vooral zorge dragen dat zy geen gebrek aan water hebben'.
101 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3. Original citation: 'Ook moet wel zorge gedragen en alle mogelyke praecautie gebruikt worden, om van geen Negers of Slaaven overrompelt te worden; houdende ten dien einde het Hand geweer op bequaame plaatsen in gereedheid; ook moet altoos goede Wacht gehouden en alle omzigtigheid gebruikt worden: dat 'er geen wanorde, confusie of iets diergelyke plaats hebbe'.
102 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3. Original citation: 'U vermaant is, goede zorge te dragen om van geen Negers of Slaaven overrompelt te worde'.

of the fatal violence of slavery which is integrated into the (discursive) practices of the company. Evidence of this formalisation is present in the MCC rules which state that each death onboard must be recorded.[103] In practice this translated to brief tabulated and banalised descriptions. For example, the death tabulation on the *Hof van Zeeland*'s fifth journey records each death of *Negrosse slaven* (negro slaves) on the basis of date, number of dead individuals per day, and gender, with 'disease in the water' being one of two vaguely defined causes of death listed above the tabulation.[104] Another discursive ritual was to state the number or gender of the captives and dates of death without causation – 'on this date a man-slave passed away.'[105] These generalised, repetitive, and atomistic records homogenise each demise so as to present such events as matter of fact. Deflecting from systemic critiques of slavery, deaths are also recorded as a result of captives 'jumping overboard,' being 'emaciated', old, weak, sick, or even because they gave birth.[106] This linguistic sleight of hand renders death a consequence of the practice of slavery which, in view of racial ideology's essentialisation of Africans as inferior and natural slaves, attributes the captive's absorption into the MCC as a product of their blackness, not because they have been made black.

Conclusion

The traditional conceptualisation of the Dutch slave trade as an object of historical inquiry envisages the practice as an outdated but otherwise

103 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 889.3.
104 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 575. Original citation: 'ziekten 't water'.
105 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr 383. Original citation: 'Op dato is er een manslaaf overleden, No. 16'.
106 NL-MdbZA, 20, inv.nr. 390. Original citation: 'Op dato is er twee manslaaven van ons overboordt gesprongen en verdronken: twee slaaven doodt, No. 5 en 6' (on this day two man-slaves of ours jumped overboard and drowned: two slaves dead, No.5 and 6); 'was dootlijk mager, geleek eerder een geraamte dan een mensch' ([He] had been deadly skinny, more skeleton than human); 'at seer weinig' (ate very little); 'maar de jaren tamelijk hoog zijnde en seer weinig kragten hebbende overleed tsavonts op dato voornoemd' (But since he was of old age and lacked strength he died during the evening on the previously mentioned date); and 'Den 23 dito beviel een vrouslaaf in de kraam van een meijsje, had lange seer onpasselijk geweest, kreeg een sterke afgang, had een swaare kraamvloeijing, ook 't menstruorum flux album [...] Ook somtijtdts een glaasje wijntint, gaf se ook van 't decoctum (voorsch. 8) maar doordien de afgang en kraamvloeijing sterk bleef aanhouden, soo overleed den 26 dito' (On the 23rd of this month a female slave gave birth to a girl. She had been very ill for very long, however, and had serious diarrhea. She had a heavy birth flow and white discharge [...] Sometimes I gave her a glass of wine and some of the decoction (prescription 8), but the diarrhoea and birth flow continued, and she died on the 26th).

(economically) rational activity. The commercial goals of the Dutch elite in both the trading of humans and the wider production of colonial commodities in this light have been formulated as the logical pursuit of a necessity: economic growth. The concepts of trade, slave, and racial differences under this matrix are assumed to be self-evident – a trend reflected by the uncritical reemployment of economising and racialising categories of humans used by Dutch slave traders within scholarship. By reinscribing the differences between the enslavers and enslaved as obvious, historical narratives in the Dutch context have cast Africans as inherently natural targets of slavery. In turn, the process by which humans were ideologically made into and rationalised as slaves has not featured prominently, if at all. Likewise, the reproduction of epistemologies necessitating and glorifying continual accumulation for the purposes of a small elite has detracted away from questions concerning the historical record and the consequences of the relentless bourgeois pursuit of economic expansion (at any cost). This chapter has identified general linguistic patterns within Dutch slave trade discourse as a means to recognise, and hence denormalise and denaturalise, the racial and economic representations and narratives that facilitated and reflected the material practice of the trade in African humans. Terms and descriptions used to describe reality conceptualised in Dutch and western historiography at large as objective have been problematised due to both their insufficient 'empirical basis' and function as means with which to legitimate exploitative social relations.[107] Following that 'ideology is impossible for anyone to analyse rationally who remains trapped on its terrain,' alternative epistemologies and social-environmental imaginaries have been employed so as to call into question the utility of traditional Dutch historical approaches to the slave trade and (the legacies of) Early Modernity at large.[108]

The ideology of western Europe's Early Modern upper echelon – of which the Dutch Republican elites were a part – financialised the social and environmental systems of Europe, America and Africa in view of accumulation. Onboard the slave ship, this dynamic was reflected by the costing of white(ned) sailors, referred to using the term *kopp* (head), alongside numbered captives.[109] Pre-modern social imaginaries in Europe and beyond had long delineated groups as those either deserving or undeserving of ethical consideration, to the extent that inequalities were perceived as empirical

107 Nimako, "Conceptual Clarity", 179.
108 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 119.
109 NL-MdbZA, 20 inv.nr. 54.7.

facts.[110] Nonetheless, European Early Modern ideology marks a point of departure for, amongst other factors, the (global) scale, institutionalisation and technicality of the violent material and discursive establishment of a hierarchically ordered social system that culled not only human from human, but human from the web of life itself.

About the Author

Michael Thomas Rowland is an independent researcher based in Rotterdam. He studied Early Modern history at Leiden University and followed the track 'Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence' for the Research Masters. His thesis centred on governor-general of Suriname Jan Nepveu's *Annotatiën op de Surinaamsche Beschrijvinge van Ao. 1718* (Annotations of the Description of Suriname Ao. 1718), with a focus on the Eurocentric colonial metaphysical categories of the human and animal.

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110 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 123.

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9. Abolitionist Grandstanding: Resisting the Illegal Slave Trade in Nineteenth Century Suriname*

Aviva Ben-Ur

Abstract: Previous scholarship on the mixed-court effort to suppress the illegal slave trade in Suriname after 1807 has argued that the acquiescence of colonial officials to government venality was inevitable in the face of a powerful system whose political might and sociological reach subsumed individuality. This inevitability was also fostered by the hierarchy and colonial careerism that inclined officials towards quiescence and even collusion. The activities of English-born Christopher Edward Lefroy (1785–1856), however, raise a potential challenge to these contentions. In his professional capacity as British Commissary Judge in Paramaribo, he confronted both the Dutch government and British metropolitan authorities about their unofficial tolerance of the enduring illegal slave trade. His protests rebuffed, Lefroy resorted to publishing the novel *Outalissi* (1826), a sensational exposé of the connivance of British and Dutch officials with the local planter class in sustaining the contraband traffick in humans. This chapter closely examines Lefroy's life to determine whether he was in fact a hypocrite who benefited from illegal trafficking, or a naïve idealist. A close examination of Lefroy's public and private personas allows us to draw new conclusions about the nature and efficacy of Britain's ban against international smuggling in forced migrants.

Keywords: Dutch Suriname; slave society; illegal slave trade; Christopher Edward Lefroy; John Henry Lance.

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'Every man who pretends to more righteousness than his neighbours is either a rogue or a fool or both.'[1] So remarked John Henry Lance in a private correspondence to his family in England in 1823. Lance, a British barrister, had been appointed the year prior as Commissioner of Arbitration in Paramaribo to ferret out the illegal slave trade in Suriname. The target of his critique was his veteran colleague Christopher Edward Lefroy, an Oxford-trained barrister who had served as British Commissary Judge on the same colonial court since 1819.[2] Lefroy, like Lance, had quickly grasped Britain's strategic disregard of the smuggling of African captives into the Dutch colony. But unlike Lance, who chose to follow orders without hesitation, Christopher Edward Lefroy – the focus of this chapter – made it his mission to expose political corruption, even at the risk of his physical safety and professional standing.[3]

Previous scholarship on John Henry Lance (1793-1877) has argued that the acquiescence of colonial officials to government venality was inevitable in the face of a powerful system whose political might and sociological reach subsumed individuality. This inevitability was also fostered by the hierarchy and colonial careerism that inclined officials towards quiescence and even collusion.[4] The activities of Christopher Edward Lefroy (1785-1856), however, raise a potential challenge to these contentions. In his professional capacity, Lefroy confronted both the Dutch government and British metropolitan authorities about their unofficial tolerance of the enduring illegal slave trade. His protests rebuffed, Lefroy resorted to publishing the novel *Outalissi* (1826), a sensational exposé of the connivance of British and Dutch officials with the local planter class in sustaining the contraband traffic in humans. This chapter closely examines Lefroy's life to test his colleague's indictment: was Lefroy a hypocrite who

helpful comments, and to Carl Haarnack for corresponding with me about interleaved copies of *Outalissi*. Finally, I am beholden to the innumerable libraries and archivists in the U.S., the U.K., and the Netherlands for assisting with access to manuscripts and rare books. Archival abbreviations are: British Library (BL); Duke University Libraries, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, USA (DUL); Hampshire Record Office, United Kingdom (HRO); Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, the Netherlands (KB); Nationaal Archief, The Hague, the Netherlands (NL-HaNA); The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Archives and Special Collections, University of Southampton Library, United Kingdom (USL). All translations are mine.

1 NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, inv.nr. 24, March 31, 1823.

2 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy of Cambray* 9 (for his dates); Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers, 1820–1821* 163 (for May 11, and November 3, 1819 as the dates of his appointment and installation, respectively).

3 Lance's censure of Lefroy appears in DUL, John Henry Lance Album, box 1 of 1, passim.

4 Ben-Ur, "Surrender to a Slave Society", 205–28. The argument is mine.

himself benefited from illegal trafficking, or was he a misguided idealist? Furthermore, what can Lefroy's public and private personas tell us about the nature and efficacy of Britain's ban against international smuggling in forced migrants?

Christopher Edward Lefroy and John Henry Lance were active in the years following Britain's abolishment of the African slave trade in 1807. In an effort to apply the ban to other European powers, the British government signed bilateral agreements in 1817 and 1818 with Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands. By way of these treaties, these three European powers pledged to eradicate the illegal import of Africans to the Americas and to establish mixed courts that would locally monitor adherence to the treaties. Binational commissions were thus established in Sierra Leone, Rio de Janeiro, Havana, and in 1819 in Paramaribo. That same year, Christopher Edward Lefroy was appointed 'His Majesty's Judge [...] to the mixed English and Netherland Commission to be established at Surinam,' while Thomas Sherard Wale (b. 1794), a barrister from Cambridge, England, was named Commissioner of Arbitration.[5] After 'labouring under a severe sickness,' Wale died in office in 1821. The following year, John Henry Lance was appointed in his stead.[6]

The service of colleagues Christopher Edward Lefroy and John Henry Lance in Suriname coincided with the initial phase of a major international policy that, as scholars have shown, proved more of a gesture to an ideal than an effective measure to curb international trafficking in human beings. Britain's bilateral treaties with Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands did not 'entail an unequivocal rejection' of either slavery or the slave trade. In fact, these pacts affirmed the continued legality of the slave trade within imperial realms. Moreover, metropolitan orders to mixed commissions prioritised proprietary rights over slaves and ships, and mandated strict adherence to complicated legal procedures that in practice favoured the prerogatives of slave traffickers.[7] This paradox, as this chapter will suggest, can be addressed by closely examining the inner workings of the mixed

5 "Foreign-Office, May 12, 1819", 1 (Wales is denoted as 'Arbitrator'); Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers*, 163 ('Commissioner of Arbitration'); *England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975* (accessed April 5, 2023, for Wale's hometown).

6 TNA, PROB 11/1664/532, will of Thomas Sherard Wale; NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, inv.nr. 705 (for Lance's new commission starting April 27, 1822); *Cambridge University Alumni, 1261–1900* (for Wale's death year); *England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975* (for his baptismal year), accessed April 5, 2023.

7 Lesaffer, "Mixed Commissions, Mixed Blessing", 2; Benton, "Abolition and Imperial Law", 355–74.

court as represented in the writings and political campaigns of Christopher Edward Lefroy.

Unlike the case of his colleague John Henry Lance, Christopher Edward Lefroy left behind few surviving records of his innermost thoughts. In 1856, Lefroy willed that all 'private letters found about my house or person at the time of my decease [...] be burned or otherwise effectually destroyed unread.'[8] On the other hand, he carefully curated his public image. In his last will and testament, Lefroy specifically mandated that papers related to his 'public service in the suppression of the slave trade,' as well as his 'long subsequent but unsuccessful appeal' to the British government in connection with his reduced pension, be preserved at his mansion 'as heirlooms.'[9] Late in life, he dictated to his niece a memoir, whose whereabouts are not publicly known.[10] For decades, he contemplated issuing a second edition of his novel *Outalissi*, even scribbling editorial notes on several printed copies in anticipation. A number of these interleaved copies survive in libraries in North America, Britain, and in a private collection in the Netherlands.[11] After his return from Suriname, Lefroy also authored lectures, political treatises, and newspaper editorials concerning a variety of issues, including the management of land labourers in England. Lastly, much of his correspondence to the Dutch and British governments while serving as Commissary Judge has survived.[12] In summary, the extant sources allow for a scrutiny of Lefroy's public thoughts and activities, but the private arena of his life remains largely a matter of speculation.

8 TNA, PROB/11/2236/399, October 13, 1844. Evidently, his descendants interpreted this clause to refer to personal letters authored—as opposed to received—by Lefroy. The latter were bound in two volumes he maintained and likely bequeathed to Anna, widow of his younger brother Benjamin Lefroy in the 1850s. Anna's granddaughter, Mary Isabella, gave them to Captain C. Maxwell-Lefroy. They eventually reached his daughter Helen Lefroy. Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mr. Lefroy*, x.

9 TNA, PROB/11/2236/399.

10 I have verified that Lefroy's personal papers were in the hands of his collateral descendant Helen Lefroy. She and the late Gavin Turner had access to a source denoted as 'Lefroy Archive', which includes a silhouette of Christopher Edward Lefroy. Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, page opposite title page and 243. Access to these heirlooms and oral family tradition is also evident in Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 19, 28, 112–4, 139–40, 146, 162–3.

11 'Lilly Library Annual Report, 1985-1986', *Annual Report of the Lilly Librarian* 10; Haarnack, 'Outalissi, a Tale of Dutch Guiana', (accessed 15 March 2023; for the privately-held copy).

12 KB, Bijzondere Collecties (Special Collections), J. H. Lance, 135 D 22; NL-HaNA, 2.21.083, inv.nr. 59 and 2.21.183.45.

The fifth of eight children of patrilineal Huguenot descent, Christopher Edward Lefroy was born in 1785 in southcentral England to Reverend Isaac Peter George Lefroy, who served as Rector of Ashe from 1783, and Anne Lefroy (née Brydges) of Wootton Court, Kent, best known among scholars for her close friendship with the young English novelist Jane Austen.[13] Like many married women of the landed elite, Anne Lefroy served as a vital helpmeet to her husband in his parish affairs and farm management, and was key in creating and sustaining the networks that led to her children's marital alliances and professional opportunities. An archival repository preserves over three hundred letters she, and to a lesser extent her husband and children, addressed to Christopher Edward Lefroy from 1799 to 1808. Anne Lefroy characterises these correspondences as 'my journal,' and indeed they often read as a diary of her life, particularly as it evolved around the activities and wellbeing of her progeny.[14]

These letters detail the centrality of religion in the daily lives of the Lefroy family members. In his capacity as rector, Mr. Lefroy officiated at religious services, visited and administered sacraments to the dying, and instructed children slated for confirmation.[15] Mrs. Lefroy taught Sunday school and frequently engaged in charitable good words, such as donating needle books and pin cushions to an elderly woman, instructing local labourers to read, write, and craft straw baskets, and administering to the poor inoculations against smallpox.[16] Both parents often discussed religious publications with their son, who in turn advised his mother on her Sunday school curriculum. The parents also regularly transmitted advice about leading a proper life,

13 Lefroy's younger brother Benjamin married Jane Austen's eldest niece. Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 364; Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 139 (for Huguenot descent); Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 209. Anne and Jane Austen were already distantly related. The Austens, at Steventon Rectory, and the Lefroys, at the Ashe Rectory, lived about two miles apart by road and a mile-and-a-half across the fields. Margaret Usborne, "Jane Austen—The Lefroys", 257-258. Sources conflict as to the family composition. 'Eight children' is based collectively on Deirdre Le Faye, *A Chronology of Jane Austen and Her*, 745; 'Christopher Edward Lefroy', ancestry.com (accessed March 14, 2023); and Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 237. Le Faye's pedigree of the Lefroy family overlooks Christopher Edward's siblings Anthony Brydges Lefroy (1783 or 1784–1800), Julia Elizabeth (1783), and William Thomas Lefroy (1787–91).

14 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 29, June 4, June 16, 1801, June 29, 1802, 3, 5–6, 38–9; Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, ix. The two sources in this footnote largely overlap but the transcriptions vary slightly.

15 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, June 6, 1801, August 28, 1802, 5, 43.

16 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, June 6, 1801, August 28, 1802, 4, 9, 19, 43–4; Lefroy, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 19; "Obituary, with Anecdotes, of remarkable Persons", *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1178–9, 1179 (over 800 inoculations).

exhorting him to maintain '[r]eligion and moral conduct,' the former always promoting 'innocent chearfulness, and good spirits.'[17]

During his childhood, Christopher Edward Lefroy exhibited heightened opposition to hypocrisy within the Church of England. In one poem, written 'when quite a Boy,' he observed 'some Characters in the Church, that appeared to him dreadfully inconsistent.' He railed against officials, identified only by their initials, who acted in 'self-interest and the love of gain' and turned religion into 'a trade to purchase worldly station.' Lefroy's criticism also hinted at class consciousness. He discerned that religion could function as a 'state fetter; something to keep the poor in awe of what they'd have them think is law, whilst they themselves know better.' Pastors of the Church of England, he claimed, picked the pockets of their followers, enslaved their minds, and stood on their 'servile neck.'[18] The poem foreshadowed Lefroy's later embrace of Methodism, the activist branch of the Church of England that formally broke with it in 1795. Religion instilled within Lefroy 'a strong sense of both duty and guilt,' one that family members and descendants sometimes found excessive.[19] His father once quipped that Christopher Edward had 'too much vehemence, and enthusiasm in some of your notions.'[20]

Lefroy benefited from an aristocratic education, typical of the male members of his class. His father advised him to improve his English History and Classics, and not to forget his 'Greek & Latin & French.' When living away from home, Christopher Edward Lefroy attempted letters in French to his parents and even penned one in Latin that included a list of living expenses he wished his father to cover.[21] As devoted as they were to the Church of England, the men in the extended Lefroy family were also materialistically ambitious and status seekers. For them, matters of faith overlapped with the attainment of worldly influence. Lefroy's older brother John Henry George Lefroy (known as George) received his training at Westminster and Christ Church Oxford, succeeding his father as Rector of Ashe in 1806.[22] The advice an uncle transmitted to George in 1802, while still a student at Oxford, is telling. If George had 'the least ambition & Desire to rise in rank & affluence in your Calling,' he would take on the challenge of an 'ordeal Trial,' a public examination in the Classics and sciences for

17 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, August 28, September 12, 1802 43, 45 (for quote).

18 Lefroy, *Carmina Domestica*, 131–6.

19 Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 16.

20 Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 195; HRO, 143A05/F4/3, January 24, 1805, 130.

21 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, October 14, November 9, 1801, January 24, 1805, 13, 14, 18, 129.

22 Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 14.

the purpose of graduating with honours. If he declined, he would 'remain unnoticed' and 'unknown,' 'a miserable country parson' barely scraping by and 'horribly pinched & distressed.' Whether or not he excelled in the exam was irrelevant, for the mere 'exertion' would win him the protection and friendship of his university patrons and would fix him on 'the Road to the Honours & Emoluments of your profession.' 'Where there is Wealth & Influence,' Uncle Langlois continued, 'it matters little whether a young man passes thro' his education with credit or not.'[23]

Christopher Edward Lefroy's parents subjected him to similar pressure to excel in his studies and forge professional connections. Although his older brother had pre-empted him in a career as rector, Reverend and Mrs. Lefroy emphasised religious instruction for Christopher Edward. In 1800, at the age of 15, Lefroy was sent away to Berkshire, north of Ashe, to study with Reverend John Faithfull, Vicar of Warfield.[24] Then, Lefroy's path veered towards the law. By 1801, he was boarding with and receiving 'his articles' (a kind of internship in legal studies) from attorney and solicitor Richard Clarke, on the Isle of Wight, to whom he bound himself for five years.[25] For Lefroy, pursuing the law was not contradictory to religious aspirations. In 1802, Lefroy consulted with his parents on his decision to receive confirmation.[26] Before long, Edward began to assert himself independently. In 1803, against the fervent wishes of his mother and father, he volunteered as an officer in the armies mobilising against the threatened Napoleonic invasions.[27]

In 1804, a violent fall from a horse abruptly ended Anne Lefroy's life. The death of his mother, the social glue and charismatic centre of the family, proved a watershed for the Lefroy clan.[28] In what one author interprets as 'a reaction partly caused by his grief at his mother's death,'[29] Christopher Edward Lefroy continued to assert himself against his father, abruptly leaving the tutelage and home of his employer, Mr. Clarke, in 1805, without giving advance notice.[30] Reverend Lefroy interpreted this behaviour as 'irreligious excess' and scolded Lefroy for running 'wild both in Body and Mind.'[31] Lefroy

23 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 4, 1802, 35; July 2, 1802, 40.

24 Lefroy, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 29.

25 Lefroy, *Carmina Domestica*, 53–7 ('To Her Son, C.E.L. when with Richard Clarke, Esq. in the I. of W,' poem dated February 15, 1802); HRO, 143A05/F4/3, October 14, 1801, 13; Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, ix; TNA, CP 5/133, 1807.

26 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, June 2, 1802, 37.

27 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249.

28 Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 184–92.

29 Lefroy, 196.

30 Lefroy, 195.

31 Lefroy, 197.

caused his father more consternation in 1806, when he began to court a wealthy young woman from the Isle of Wight named Miss Winter.[32] The Reverend opposed the match in part because of his son's 'extreme Youth,' which would obstruct his ability to develop his profession and procure 'a settlement [...] proportionable' to his prospective bride's 'expectations.' But even more objectionable was that Miss Winter and her family were not members of the Church of England, but rather Protestant 'dissenters.'[33] By the Fall of that year, Lefroy's older brother and Mr. Clarke had both convinced the bachelor to give up his marital pursuit.[34]

Reverend Lefroy's death in 1806, after a series of strokes, allowed Lefroy *fils* to weigh anchor.[35] He resumed his relationship with Miss Winter, but his engagement continued to be a cause of conflict in the family on religious grounds.[36] Later that year, Lefroy relocated to London, buttressed by ample funds he received from his late father's estate, which included rent from the family farm in Wales. By 1807, he had found a new position at the office of one Mr. Sanders. Lefroy's older brother George advised his sibling to stay in that post for twelve months and then enter conveyancing, an area of law occupied with the transfer of legal title of real property from one person to another.[37] That same year, Lefroy began to involve himself in politics. In May, he solicited donations for the election of William Wilberforce (1759-1833), leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade, which culminated in the Slave Trade Act of 1807.[38]

In September of 1807, Christopher Edward Lefroy broke his engagement with Ms. Winter.[39] During this period, Lefroy continued to engross himself in religious debates with his brother George, who was now an ordained minister and had assumed his late father's rectorship at Ashe.[40] While George regarded his younger sibling as 'so much my Superior in a religious point of view,' the growing divergence between their respective doctrinal

32 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 16, 1806, 154.

33 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, September 5, and September 12, 1805, 144–5; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 198–201.

34 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, September 21, 1805, 146; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 201-202.

35 Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 197–8, 203, 204–5.

36 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, April 11, April 29, May 16, 1806, 153–5; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 205–6.

37 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, September 2, 1806, undated, received March 8, 1807, 158, 166; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 206.

38 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 25, 1807, 173; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 207.

39 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, George Lefroy to Christopher Edward Lefroy, September 20, 1807, 181; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 207.

40 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, January 14,1808, 186; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 208.

beliefs is yet discernible beneath the surface of cordial words.[41] By the close of the decade, Christopher Edward Lefroy had publicly embraced Methodism, an activist branch of the Church of England that had formally schismatised in 1795.[42] In 1809, Lefroy manifested his new set of beliefs in what a biographer calls 'a very creditable book' titled *Are these things so?* With this publication, Christopher Edward Lefroy established himself among the first generation of Methodists and among its doctrinal expiators. His defence of the denomination constituted his first book publication.[43]

More publications would follow. In 1808, brother George had consulted with Lefroy on whether to publish their late mother's poetry for the 'publick eye,' or whether to issue it solely for private circulation among family members.[44] Lefroy took a middle road. The collection, edited by Lefroy, was released by a London press in 1812 under the title *Carmina Domestica* (Latin for "Domestic Songs").[45] In addition to honouring his late mother, the compendium proved an opportunity for Lefroy to exhibit both his leadership within the family and his literary talents. It opens with a letter he addressed to his brother George in the form of a dedication. In this piece, Lefroy calls the book 'a small private edition of our mother's Poems,' intended for 'her own family or the circle of her intimate friends.' At the same time, he anticipated the volume 'may occasionally fall into the hands' of persons outside that network. Lefroy also took the liberty of adding 'one or two effusions' of his own.[46] They proved to be presentiments of a later literary output that would extend beyond the genre of poetry to political treatises, secular sermons, and newspaper editorials.

In the meantime, Christopher Edward Lefroy made new inroads into his legal training. Trailing behind his younger brother Benjamin and older brother George, Lefroy secured a place at Magdalen Hall at Oxford University in 1810, thus overlapping with the former.[47] He took his B.A. in 1814 and his M.A. two years later.[48] In 1815, he was admitted to the Middle Temple

41 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, John Henry George Lefroy to Christopher Edward Lefroy, May 2, 1808, 192; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 208.

42 Robert Leonard Tucker, *The Separation of the Methodists from the Church of England*, 161; Henry Wheeler, *History and Exposition of the Twenty-five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church*.

43 Lefroy, *Are these things so?*; Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249 (for quote). The book is mentioned in Tucker, *The Separation of the Methodists from the Church of England* 179.

44 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 2, 1808, 192; Lefroy, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 208.

45 Lefroy, *Carmina Domestica*.

46 Lefroy, 12.

47 Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 17.

48 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 28.

and was called to the bar in 1819. Lefroy had left his vocation as solicitor because of its 'chicaneries' and decided to try his hand as a barrister.[49] Most barristers at that time, including John Henry Lance, found it challenging to find clients. But Lefroy's 'gown made him eligible for salaried appointments.' By this time, Lefroy had experienced more than one 'disappointment of the affections.'[50] One of his potential mates had refused him because 'he was "too religious."'[51] Immediately after his call to the bar, he accepted the position of British Commissary Judge on the Mixed Court. He did so because 'he thought it a good cause.' In his own words, he 'went out on a most dangerous and disagreeable service simply in compliance with what I thought the spirit of Christianity.'[52]

Dwelling at length as we have on Christopher Edward Lefroy's upbringing and early career provides the context to understand the expectations Lefroy brought with him to Suriname and his reaction to his frustrated duties as Commissary Judge. Rather than psychohistory, a rather dubious approach to the study of the past, this detailed sketch of his background and experiences in the metropole provide a platform for comparison with other colonial officials who officiated during the mixed court era.

Suriname Sojourn

Christopher Edward Lefroy was selected as 'British Judge or Commissioner' in the Spring of 1819 for a decade-long appointment, with a guaranteed pension. He was one of five judges appointed, as prescribed by the British-Dutch treaty.[53] Lefroy's employment package included a

49 Lefroy, 164 (for the quote); Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 18 (for his aversion to the profession of solicitor). In the British system, a barrister defended people in Court, wearing a wig and gown, while a solicitor undertook legal work outside Court.

50 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 164 (for the quote); Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 18 (without attribution, but likely citing from Lefroy's manuscript memoir). Later, in Suriname, he would also be disappointed by a 'pretty young German girl just come out from Holland'. NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, inv.nr.63, September 13, 1825, 239.

51 Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 18.

52 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249; Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 17 (for quote, referencing 'Reminiscences', in Lefroy Archive); Stove, *Jane Austen's Inspiration*, 210. The sequencing of his degrees is contradictory in the literature. Agnew says he was called to the bar around 1811, which cannot be correct, but I have followed his dates for the B.A. and M.A. because they include exact months and days (January 15, and July 6, respectively). Stove, following Lefroy and Turner (*The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 17), indicates he took his B.A. and M.A. in 1815 and 1817 respectively.

53 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249.

'handsome' annual salary of £1,500 sterling, a £750 annual pension, and £400 sterling towards his relocation costs.[54] A decade-long commission must have felt like a prison term, for Lefroy immediately began to negotiate a mitigation of his time commitment, as would John Henry Lance after him, and found that he could retire after eight years if his health became a concern.[55]

Soon after his arrival in Suriname, Christopher Edward Lefroy discovered—as John Henry Lance would too—that the colonial government's lower officials 'conspired with the planters to prevent the laying of complaints before the Commissary Court.' Moreover, the Court of Police (*Hof van Politie*), presided over by planters, 'practically reversed' any judgment laid against individuals prosecuted for illegally trading in humans.[56] Authorities also failed to engage Dutch cruisers to patrol the coast. Slave ships were careful to fly French flags (as opposed to British or Dutch colours) to immunise themselves against capture. Lefroy's frustration mounted after he, with 'great labour and pains,' procured an order from the King of the Netherlands to seize the cargo of a slave ship, set free five young African men aboard, and deliver them to the government at Paramaribo. Instead of affirming the liberty of these men, government officials sold them to planters, who swapped them with 'an equal number of old superannuated and crippled negroes.'[57] In the eyes of Dutch colonial leaders, Africans were literally interchangeable.

In another case, which transpired in 1822, Lefroy managed to find witnesses to make depositions about a recently disembarked contraband slave ship, but Dutch colonial authorities took no steps to make the documents available for dispatch to the British metropole. Lefroy then decided to visit the new arrivals himself. When he examined them, he found that they 'could not speak or understand one word of French,' thus demonstrating that they 'could not have been resident in Martinique' since September 1818, as local planters claimed.[58] Governor Abraham de Veer dismissed Lefroy's contention, insisting that 'the suspicion' Lefroy had entertained had 'not been justified by the fact' and that his personal observations of the slaves carried 'very little weight.'[59] Even the Dutch King and his ministers 'strenuously' maintained 'a very inauspicious scepticism' that there flourished in Suriname

54 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, interleaved copy from the Library of Congress, 3 (for quote), 5 (unpaginated).
55 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249; TNA, FO 84, September 25, 1822, 209.
56 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 249.
57 Agnew, 250 (no year provided).
58 TNA, FO 84, September 20, 1822, 140.
59 TNA, FO 84, October 26, 1822, 210.

an illegal trafficking in Africans.'[60] Lefroy was, of course, absolutely correct in his suspicions. At no time were the shipments of captive Africans to the Americas more numerous and more profitable than in the Age of Abolition.[61]

Lefroy's vexation over government malversation chipped away at both his diplomatic discretion and his professional boundaries. In 1822, he attempted to publish advertisements in the local Surinamese newspapers offering a reward for information leading to the discovery of English subjects connected with an illegal slave ship. Since the local press was censored by the Surinamese government as well as by the attorney general, his request was denied.[62] He then resorted to subtle threats. In a letter to governor de Veer, Lefroy alluded to a hypothetical 'future arrangement between our two governments' that might again subject Suriname 'to British authority.'[63] When Foreign Office officials learned of Lefroy's correspondence, they quickly reminded him that '[s]uch a supposition however qualified was sure to be offensive.'[64]

Lefroy was aware that his actions exceeded the boundaries of his job description. In a letter to the Foreign Office in May of 1822, he admitted that he was 'not absolutely called upon by the letter of [his] judicial commission here' to broach the inaction of the Dutch government, but hoped that the British government would find these efforts not in contradiction with the 'spirit of [his] appointment.'[65] Notably straying from any discussion of the law, Lefroy gestured to values he imagined were universal, or at least universally Christian. His reports became increasingly saturated with moral and emotional language, and soon morphed into the fire and brimstone of a Christian preacher. In one letter in late 1822, he told Secretary of State George Canning: 'It is painful to me to be obliged to continue to impinge the authorities here at a period so long since the exclusion of the treaty [in 1818].'[66] To the Dutch colonial governor, Lefroy described those guilty of contraband as 'the atrocious scoundrels who thus persist in provoking the indignation and defying the retributive justice of their species and of God.' Appealing to the governor's concern with public opinion, Lefroy urged him to 'vindicate this colony and your country from the imprecations of bad faith and utter indifference to all the prospective interests of the great

60 TNA, FO 84, October 24, 1822, 172.
61 Tersen, "Victor Schoelcher", 15–21, 15.
62 TNA, FO 84, May 1, 1822, 97 (handwritten 138).
63 TNA, FO 84, September 17, 1822, 162.
64 TNA, FO 84, December 27, 1822, 235.
65 TNA, FO 84, May 1, 1822, 138.
66 TNA, FO 84, December 23, 1822, 226.

family of man, to which the continuance of the transactions described in the enclosed must expose them in the eyes of all Europe.'[67]

By the time Lefroy reached the halfway point of his tenure, three other Commissary Judges with whom he had served had perished from 'the effects of the climate.' Fearing his own death was at hand, Lefroy threw caution to the wind and resolved to 'leave behind him a strong and sounding protest against the evasion of the treaty' and against the West Indian slave trade, which he called 'the revolting, frightful, all-crime-comprising, all-depravity-inducing, all-humanity-deriding, heaven-outraging, and demoniacal practice.'[68] In the metropole, Lefroy had experimented with a number of genres, sometimes pseudonymously, including poetry, a theological treatise defending Methodism, and newspaper editorials.[69] But in Suriname, Lefroy decided that the most efficacious instrument of protest would be a novel.

In an attempt to protect himself from backlash, Lefroy adopted the well-known conceit of attributing his novel to an unknown author, implicitly one of his deceased colleagues. This 'found manuscript trope,' popularised in eighteenth-century English fiction, was a useful tool for authors dealing with sensitive topics and succeeded in duping critics well into the twentieth century, despite his insertion of notes and an epilogue using his own name and referring to himself as 'the Editor.'[70] Lefroy dedicated *Outalissi; A Tale of Dutch Guiana* to William Wilberforce, 'the moral Wellington of his country and saviour of the British West Indies.' In 1825, he dispatched the manuscript to England for printing. When copies arrived in Suriname in early 1826, he disingenuously delivered exemplars directly to the governor and his ministers.[71] By the following year, Lefroy began to liberally distribute copies to numerous persons in the colony, 'both English & Dutch.'[72]

The plot centres around a real incident that provoked Lefroy's outrage. The protagonist is Outalissi, the fictional chief of an unnamed African village, who is wrongly captured and transported to Suriname, where he is enslaved.

67 TNA, FO 84, December 23, 1822, 230.

68 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 250.

69 His known publications prior to 1826 include *Carmina Domestica*; *Are these things so? or, some quotations and remarks in defence of what the word calls Methodism, etc.* (London, 1809); under the pseudonym 'Peter the Hermit,' *Letters that have lately appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge papers*; *Six speeches on the crusade of the nineteenth century*; and *A Review of Mr. Gandolphy's letter to Dr. Marsh*.

70 Burstein, "A Forgotten Novel", 585; Dykes, *The Negro in English Romantic Thought,* 114, 157, 179n59 (for a duped critic).

71 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 250.

72 NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, inv.nr. 93, April 19, 1827 (for quote); inv.nr. 96, September 9, 1827.

The ship conveying him is French and commanded by Captain Légere, a thinly veiled reference to the eponymous slave brig La Légere, detained under Lefroy's jurisdiction.[73] An English crewman, Bob Jackson, makes a deposition before Captain Edward Bentinck, an officer in the Dutch army and alter-ego of Lefroy (Christopher Edward was known to close family members as 'Edward'). Bentinck learns that the naïve crewman, who joined the expedition without knowing that its goal was human trafficking, had been fooled into serving as a fall guy for the ship's captain.[74] Bentinck's professional and personal lives intertwine when he falls in love with Matilda Cotton, daughter of a white plantation owner who turns out to be involved in illegal slave trafficking and whom Bentinck is compelled to betray to the colonial authorities. One of the people trafficked by Cotton is Outalissi, who escapes captivity and leads a slave revolt involving a fire that engulfs much of Paramaribo. As Judith Stove notes, *Outalissi* was 'part of a wave of Evangelical novels' that saw the light in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[75] Morality and political ideology, not literary style, were Lefroy's chief concerns.

While verifying the financial success and circulation of *Outalissi* is challenging, more is known about its reception. One late nineteenth-century biographer complimented Lefroy on his 'ingenuity, warmth, and humour,' and declared the book a success.[76] Lefroy's nephew, John Henry Lefroy (1817-1890), praised the work as 'very readable, full of simple but vivid sketches of tropical life and nature, of the insight of a clever high-principled man,' while acknowledging that aficionados of *belles lettres* would dismiss it as 'prosy.'[77] An anonymous review in the *British Chronicle* (1827) characterised the book as a 'bad novel [...] in a literary point of view,' while acclaiming the 'feelings which dictated these pages.'[78] That same year, another critic argued just the opposite. He extolled the author for 'being a very able sentimentalist,' but condemned the ideology of the pages, arguing that employing sectarian

73 KB, Bijzondere Collecties (Special Collections), 135 D 22, John Henry Lance to George Canning, September 20, 1823; John Henry Lance to George Canning, February 16, 1824; Christopher Edward Lefroy and John Henry Lance to governor, December 16, 1824; Christopher Edward Lefroy and John Henry Lance to George Canning, January 6, 1825.

74 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, 76-88. The last name is probably an allusion to the Anglo-Dutch military officer Charles Ferdinand Bentinck (1764–1811), who served of governor of Suriname from 1809 until his death.

75 Stove, "Hampshire Evangelical", 3 (accessed February 28, 2023).

76 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 251.

77 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 113n.

78 Anonymous review of *Outalissi*, *Meyer's British Chronicle,* 239.

Christianity in the conversion of slaves (under the aegis of Moravian Christianity) was akin to 'putting a match to a barrel of gunpowder.'[79]

By all measures, the novel was also controversial in both the colony and in Dutch and British metropolitan government circles. In a political pamphlet from 1831, Lefroy calls *Outalissi* 'a little ephemeral publication which gave offence to the Foreign Colonial Authorities.'[80] The professional implications for Lefroy, however, were far from ephemeral. Two European governments lodged formal complaints against him. The British cabinet judged that the author had written a libel and considered his recall. They deemed his 'conduct, language, and writings to be injurious to the court and dangerous and inflammatory to the whole colony.'[81] Lefroy entreated the Duke of Wellington, the British Prime Minister, to allow him to retire at the conclusion of his eighth year, in 1827, as per the initial terms of his employment. But the government decided that Lefroy should 'consider himself recalled' even while continuing to live out the remainder of his original ten-year term in Suriname.[82] Adding insult to injury, the British government slashed Lefroy's pension by £150, a fine Lefroy later calculated as amounting to a total of £2,000 sterling, underestimating the length of his life by fourteen years.[83]

After the conclusion of his Suriname sojourn and return to the metropole, Lefroy inserted into several published copies of *Outalissi* various manuscript notes, with the intention of issuing a second edition. While most of these interpolations amount to little more than ideological rants, some include details of the experience of enslavement of the kind so sensitive they were rarely committed to paper. Surely the most stunning of these is Lefroy's discussion of the fate of 'every slave girl upon a plantation' on her attainment of puberty. 'It was considered as the privilege of the director or chief resident white officer,' Lefroy explained, that 'mothers should reserve for him the refusal of the first enjoyment of their child's person.' Mothers who attempted to evade the practice were subject 'almost *ad libitum* to the spite and resentment' of the 'claimant.' To add credibility to his claim, Lefroy related an account from an acquaintance who had been temporarily employed on a plantation near Paramaribo. Lefroy's informant bragged that 'he was obliged to lock his adolescent victim into

79 Urban, review of *Outalissi*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 612–3.

80 HRO, 44M69 G2 470, 3.

81 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 251; NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, April 19, 1827.

82 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 164.

83 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, interleaved copy from the Library of Congress, 7 (unpaginated).

his chamber and compel her to sleep with him for a whole week before he could overcome her repugnance to submit to his embraces.'[84] Lefroy, anticipating censure for his indecency in recounting such shocking sexual exploitation, offered this trenchant rejoinder: 'Talk not to me of delicacy gentlemen critics! In a practice of such frightful flagrant enormity and guilt, the plainest statement is scarcely obnoxious to a charge of indelicacy, because all thoughts of indelicacy in every honest heart should be overborne by indignation.'[85]

Lefroy's public persona makes it clear that he was a staunch abolitionist opposed to both the slave trade and slavery itself. But did he practice what he preached? The answer would elude any researcher focusing solely on Lefroy's public persona, the one he so carefully cultivated in his professional papers, editorials, and published works. But incidental archival references suggest that, despite his fulminations, Lefroy was deeply imbricated within the institution of slavery. One example appears in a missive from Campbell James Dalrymple, who served alongside John Henry Lance after Lefroy's final return to England.[86] Dalrymple recalled in 1841 that, during the first year of his arrival in the Dutch colony, he met 'Negroes who spoke the English Language.' These individuals turned out to be natives of the British West Indian islands. Christopher Edward Lefroy had recommended one of them, 'an elderly Woman [...] as a servant.' This woman had informed Dalrymple that she was a native of Barbados and had been 'sent from thence to Surinam about thirty years before.' On arrival, she was sold to 'a person named De Leon,' but since he had 'more servants than he required,' he allowed her to work for herself. She died about a year and a half before Dalrymple's departure from the colony in 1838.[87]

This 'person named De Leon' sold Christopher Edward Lefroy a slave. On February 10, 1823, Lefroy came before the Surinamese Court of Police and Criminal Justice presenting himself as the 'owner of the negro Jan,' who had been baptised on an unspecified date as Johan Daniel Louis de Leon.[88] Lefroy had purchased Jan/Johan on January 31, 1823 from Abraham de Leon and now, in anticipation of his recently approved one-year's leave of absence in England, wished to 'bestow upon this negro the precious

84 Lefroy, 9 (unpaginated).
85 Lefroy, 11 (unpaginated).
86 *British and Foreign State Papers*, volume 20, 183.
87 TNA, CO 28 142, November 1841, 51–2.
88 NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv.nr. 717, frames 47–9.

gift of freedom.'[89] Since this manumission could not materialise without approbation from the court, Lefroy turned to the authorities and 'most humbly' requested a 'favorable disposition.'[90] Abraham de Leon promised to serve as guarantor for 'the negro Jan' that he would never fall onto the burden of the country's charity chest.[91] In the aforementioned interleaved copy of *Outalissi*, Lefroy alludes to two of his 'servants, one free and the other a slave.'[92] The former was fluent in English, Dutch, and 'Talkee Talk,' the Surinamese Creole language now called Sranan Tongo.[93] Lefroy had requested of governor Abraham de Veer the consular privilege of allowing the two to marry, the prerequisite Lefroy imposed upon himself before he would purchase the woman. Lefroy was refused. Implicitly, the rejection of his request did not prevent him from acquiring her, even though the ban on marriage among slaves is strongly derided in Lefroy's novel.[94]

Unlike John Henry Lance, Christopher Edward Lefroy did not leave behind any direct evidence of his libido. Notably, both Christopher and his older brother John Henry George often called their deceased parents saintly, but never used this word to characterise each other.[95] Indeed, Christopher Edward's older brother alluded obliquely to the fact that both sons bore guilt for being 'imprudent.' Clearly, the two must have been close enough to have spoken about sexual desire, for shortly before marrying, John Henry George confided in his brother that he had decided to rush his wedding for reasons other than 'gross passion.'[96] As noted earlier, Reverend Lefroy had once recalled that his son Christopher Edward Lefroy had 'for 15 years' run 'wild both in Body and Mind.'[97]

The closest Lefroy came to mentioning his own sexual desire was through his alter-ego, Edward Bentinck. In one scene of *Outalissi*, Bentinck's enemies attempt to corrupt him through an enslaved woman, dispatched to his room totally naked, late at night. Clad only in a cloak, Bentinck resists the temptation by grasping a beautifully plaited grass necklace hanging from his neck, a talisman from his love interest Matilda Cotton. As Judith

89 NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv.nr. 717, frame 48; NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, March 31, 1823, (for Lefroy's leave of absence).

90 NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv.nr. 717, frame 48.

91 NL-HaNA, 1.05.10.02, inv.nr. 717, frame 49 (February 10, 1823).

92 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, 11 (unpaginated).

93 NL-HaNA, 2.21.083, February 16, 1827.

94 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, 11 (unpaginated), 182 (for slaves' complaint about the ban).

95 See, for example, Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 251.

96 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, May 25, 1806, 155.

97 HRO, 143A05/F4/3, March 6, 1805, 132.

Stove notes, the necklace offers 'moral prophylaxis' against what Lefroy considered 'irretrievable moral ruin.'[98] Tellingly, the young nude woman in the novel is not real – she turns out to be a vision that disappears as soon as Bentinck gropes for his necklace. In his narrator's voice, Lefroy notes that Bentinck (read Lefroy?) was often confronted with similar temptations 'as well as facility of indulgence.' Nothing could have allowed Bentinck to escape sexual relations with slaves except 'such a spell upon his heart, or religious impressions of more than human strength.' A footnote to this scene, supposedly a 'Note by the Author,' could also pass for Lefroy's authentic voice: 'whoever supposes a sable Venus to be without attraction supposes so from having never had an opportunity of experiencing it. They have often not only the grace of the most perfect symmetry, but the most acute vivacity and intelligence, as well as benevolence of feature.'[99] African-origin women, for Lefroy, were not only slaves whose sexual virtue had to be defended against brutal male owners, but also erotic temptations to all males – even ones who strove for Christian integrity.

It may have been important for Lefroy to emphasise resistance to sexual temptation with enslaved women, given the 'oft-repeated slur that Methodists were liable to conmingle sexual and religious passion.'[100] But all this is conjecture. If Lefroy had sexual liaisons with enslaved girls and women, they have not surfaced. As Travis Glasson has noted in a parallel Atlantic context, the motives and often the acts of officials, even those with the most public of roles, are so often 'impossible to determine.'[101]

Perhaps his last public act before departing Suriname for good was his subscription to a fundraiser for a local Moravian church, intended for slaves, and built with the capacity to hold from two to three thousand worshippers. In January of 1829, he dispatched a letter to the *Guiana Chronicle* indicating that the chapel had been completed the previous July. He also enclosed a list of subscribers, including himself, whose donation surpassed those of his 'superiors.' To avoid a potential charge of 'ostentation or a breach of proper etiquette,' Lefroy assured readers that the governor-general had 'repeatedly expressed his wish to me that neither myself nor others should consider the amount of his own as an impassable maximum.'[102]

98 Stove, "Hampshire Evangelical", 6 (for first quote); Lefroy, *Outalissi*, 116 (for second quote).
99 Lefroy, *Outalissi*, 115.
100 Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, 18.
101 Glasson, "Missionaries, Methodists, and a Ghost",47.
102 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 252.

Back to England

Christopher Edward Lefroy embarked upon his final return to England in 1829 at the age of 44, 'flush with cash.' The death of his younger brother Benjamin on August 27, 1829 at the age of 38 coincided with Lefroy's arrival in the metropole. Dipping into his savings and his inheritance, Lefroy purchased the property of West Ham, near Basingstoke, amounting to over 200 acres and 'an excellent house,' and moved there with his widowed sister-in-law and her children. There, he took on the role of father to his seven nieces and nephews.[103] That same year, he paid for the dowry of his niece Anne, who upon her marriage to John McClintock became Lady Rathdonnell.[104] These acres included both arable and pastureland, which he leased to local farmers and 'poor neighbours.'[105]

Lefroy's return to London also overlapped with the news that the Duke of Wellington had slashed his annual pension to £600, a penalty 'imposed on me,' Lefroy pointed out, 'without judge or jury.' Lefroy fought this fine unsuccessfully for many years. During that time, he seriously considered publishing a second edition of *Outalissi*, one that would openly display his authorship, in partial vindication of his colonial career and in protest of his docking. Although he compiled a preface dated 'West Ham, May 1830,' the project never came to fruition.[106]

Lefroy spent his retirement as a 'country gentleman,' highly visible in public affairs. He published letters and circulars advocating for Christian morality in politics.[107] In 1835, he was nominated for one of the new offices of the Guardians of the Poor, which he opposed on the grounds that the New Poor Law contradicted both Christianity and the British Constitution. Lefroy considered serving, aware that such a position would allow him to officially correspond with the Board in London and advocate changes to the legislation. In the end, he declined for fear of alienating both the poor and the board.[108] In 1832, he addressed the members of one of the

103 Lefroy and Turner, *The Letters of Mrs Lefroy*, 18; Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 166.

104 "Lefroy of Carrigglas (Lonford), Ewshot (Hampshire) and Canterbury (Kent)", 29 (accessed April 10, 2023; 203 acres).

105 BL, *Letter to Sir T. Baring on the subject of Allotments of Land to the Poor,* 4 (206 acres).

106 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 164; Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 253.

107 HRO, 44M69_G2_470, April 29, 1831 (printed circular).

108 HRO, 0M57/PA24, *Letter from Christopher Edward Lefroy, Esq. of West Ham, in the Parish of Basingstoke, to the Guardians of the Poor of the Same Parish, Under the New Poor Laws.*

Baskingstoke Benefit Clubs. In this highly conservative speech, he argued that aristocratic education is available to only a small sliver of society. The rest of humanity must derive its happiness through religion.[109] Similarly, Lefroy condemned the Swig riots of 1830 – an uprising of agricultural workers protesting mechanisation and working conditions – as 'some mistaken opinion of either interest or duty.' He warned his readers, implicitly land labourers, not to break the laws.[110] In the 1840s, Lefroy served as President of the Basingstoke Mechanics' Institution, published editorials in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* and *The British Emancipator*, and attended meetings of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, of which he was a member.[111]

His ten-year sojourn in Suriname had a profound impact on Christopher Edward Lefroy's public persona. In both his will and on his bookplate, Lefroy identified as former Commissary Judge in Suriname.[112] His epitaph, which he perhaps commissioned, identifies him as a man who served for 10 years as 'British Commissary Judge at Surinam for the Suppression of the Slave Trade.'[113] In his political letters, he often referenced his experiences in Suriname, which for him constituted proof of the universality of social structures and human behaviour. Among any population group, he argued, 'hope [...] is the great secret [...] of all moral struggle and social exertion.'[114] His experiences abroad coloured his assessment of land labourers in England. The poor tenants to whom he leased his land (known as the 'Hunting Box'), he wrote, rejoiced even when they lost money on their farming, for their spare time was dedicated to work and thus diverted from the alehouse. Industrious labour, Lefroy argued, instilled in his tenants 'moral self-respect.'[115] In this conservative vein, Lefroy continuously fashioned himself as a defender of the poor. One of his open letters to the British government carried the byline: 'A bold peasantry, their country's pride/When once destroyed, can never be supplied.'[116]

109 HRO, TOP19/1/10, 28.

110 HRO, TOP19/1/10, 25.

111 HRO, TOP19/1/10, *The Address of Christopher Edward Lefroy, Esq., President of the Basingstoke Mechanics' Institution, delivered at the town Hall, at the opening of that Institution, 1841*; *The British Emancipator* (February 14, 1838), 20; "British Guiana-Mr. Commissioner Lefroy" and "Correspondence," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* (January 24, and February 7, 1844), 15, 21; *The Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend,* vol. 5–6 (1844–1845), 110.

112 TNA, PROB-11-2236-399, last will and testament of Christopher Edward Lefroy; Haarnack, '*Outalissi, a Tale of Dutch Guiana*', 18 (for bookplate).

113 Lefroy, *Notes and Documents Relating to the Family of Loffroy*, 166.

114 BL, *Letter to Sir T. Baring on the subject of Allotments of Land to the Poor,*, 7.

115 BL, *Letter to Sir T. Baring on the subject of Allotments of Land to the Poor,* 4.

116 Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village", 153.

In 1844, Christopher Edward Lefroy sat down to write his last will and testament. The very first line conveyed the public image he had worked for decades to shape. He was an Englishman (of Westham near Basingstoke Hants), a barrister, and had served his country for ten years as British Commissioner Judge of the Mixed Court for the Suppression of the slave trade established at Paramaribo, the capital of the Dutch colony of Suriname. He left five hundred pounds sterling to the Anti-Slavery Society, headquartered in London, and additional sums to his servants and the local poor. He even penned a widely circulated novel, *Outalissi*, a thinly disguised account of colonial corruption, which so incensed the British government that it deprived Lefroy of twenty per cent of his pension. Lefroy ordered all his personal papers to be burned, but specifically not his official ones, particularly as related to his suppression of the slave trade and matter of his pension. His was a carefully curated public persona.

In December 1852, Christopher Edward Lefroy suffered what was probably a stroke, which left him with partial paralysis. His household cared for him until his death four years later at the age of seventy. Although by training a solicitor and barrister, Lefroy was in essence a religious activist. To understand his conduct while serving as a Commissioner of Arbitration at Suriname, one must understand not imperial law or bilateral treaties, but rather religious, abolitionist fervour in a colonial context. The scenario Lefroy encountered in Suriname – widespread malversation among the colonial and metropolitan governments – repeated throughout the Atlantic World wherever bilateral treaties were introduced, including Sierra Leone and Cuba. A trans-Atlantic comparison of the conduct of mixed-court commissioners may reveal that there were two main reactions to the public secret of government connivance with the illegal slave trade: acquiescence, the path chosen by Lefroy's colleague John Henry Lance, and public protest, which often resulted in the official-activist getting sacked for 'exceeding orders.'[117]

Conclusions

This chapter has tested the theory that metropolitan officials dispatched to Suriname to fight the illegal slave trade could not but compromise their official orders and expectations in the face of a slave society, whose power

117 For Sierra Leone's governor Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783 – 1869) as a parallel to Lefroy see Turner, "The Limits of Abolition", 347.

and reach led to a creolisation of ambition. Prosopographically, Christopher Edward Lefroy was remarkably similar to his colleague John Henry Lance and to the dozens of other officials who joined the mixed-court tribunals of the Anglo-Atlantic World. But in their discovery that the abolitionist treaty was honoured only in the breach, the two men took very different paths. Lefroy, scion of a fervently religious Anglican family and an enthusiastic convert to Methodism, would, on the surface, seem to challenge the pattern his colleague John Henry Lance exemplified. The main obstacle in verifying whether Lefroy was an exception is his wilful destruction of his private papers and equally conscientious preservation of every record bearing on his public service as British Commissary Judge in the Suppression of the Illegal Slave Trade in Suriname. Moreover, Lefroy carefully chiselled his public image and actively courted the public eye through his political pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and, most famously, his ambiguously anonymous novel, *Outalissi*.

The surviving records, nonetheless, suggest that the colonial environment of Suriname was a fertile place not only for colonial careerists, but also for religious careerists. Lefroy poured all his efforts towards publicising his 'good works' in Suriname, from his protests against colonial and metropolitan governments to his public support of the Moravian Church as a moralising institution to serve the colony's enslaved population.[118] Moreover, the period Lefroy spent in Suriname had a deep influence on his attitude towards the land labourers who worked on his English farms. It universalised his attitude toward servile peoples, whether native Englanders or sub-Saharan forced migrants. In scattered documents produced by and about Lefroy, one can glimpse the creolisation of his religious ambition. Christopher Edward Lefroy was a government-appointed legal official who turned out to be a religious activist. But his activism was wholly anchored within a colonial framework.

Within this colonial framework lay interimperial antagonism. It is no accident that Bentinck, Lefroy's alter ego in *Outalissi*, is half English and half Dutch. An Anglo-Dutch protagonist efficiently masked the loathing many British colonial officials in Suriname felt towards the Dutch, fuelled by the memory of four Anglo-Dutch wars and a recent British occupation of Suriname.[119] Lefroy's abolitionist stance while serving in Suriname must be understood in part as an expression of anti-Dutch sentiment, informed by ongoing political and moral rivalry.

118 Agnew, *Protestant Exiles from France*, 252.

119 Ben-Ur, "Surrender to a Slave Society", 12 and note 75 above.

Finally, Lefroy's religious fervour – and perhaps, too, his zealous character – impeded him from understanding that slavery was a system that, by his generation, had to be fought as a system, not as a moral ideology. Fighting it through a religious ideology was, by the 1820s, a rather old-fashioned approach to the problem. Given that, the assessment of his colleague John Henry Lance is apposite. *Outalissi*, and Lefroy's abolitionist writings in general, were 'merely a vehicle for conveying his opinion on slavery & Christianity.' Though his intention was 'very good,' the novel itself – if not his activism as well – were 'very simple,' if not simplistic.[120]

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120 NL-HaNA, 2.21.240, December 11, 1826, p. 344.

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Epilogue. Tides of Remembrance: People, Nations, and Power Unlocked

Sowande' M. Mustakeem

The future of memory will depend not just on the archive, but on the bold and most willing to venture within dusty faraway places and online repositories to ask new questions of old sources that innovate expansive learning about the past; especially of slavery. Fractured memories of a globally active slave trading past persist, yet so too does the rise and continuation of contemporary battles generationally rooted over whether to fully acknowledge or gradually erase centuries of a racialised system of global entrepreneurial pursuits steeped in blood and death. Public histories of the transatlantic slave trade often remain centred on, and therefore consisted primarily of, North American narratives with a twist of British involvement before their campaign to abolish the commerce of human bondage. As such, the global world of international partners in the business of slavery becomes, and perhaps remains, sidelined and forgotten in the volcanic commercialising of memory. What do we know of the Dutch's participatory role in the world of slave trading as they negotiated, marketed, bought, and sold black bodies? Even more, where, how, and do we reckon with the history of Dutch people, businesses, monopolies, and corporatised regulations, Dutch controlled paper trails, profits, successes, and failures built on a legalised human manufacturing system?

Each slaving vessel, ocean wave, bondsperson, weapon, shipworker, negotiation, and currency exchanged collectively holds memories of, and comprises vital keys to unlocking, an active slaving past. Yet how can the tides of remembrance persist if the history of Dutch slave trade is never learned and, in turn, never told to the next generation? Deeper activations of national memory tied to money accrued from the legal sale of people as sanctioned business practices require consideration of the current politics at stake and what the present wants to embolden in the future basics of

Ramona Negrón, Jessica den Oudsten, Camilla de Koning, and Karwan Fatah-Black (eds), *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Methods, Perspectives, and Sources*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
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public understanding. What is the history that fits a/the national narrative of the time, as endless attempts are waged to erode memories of racial discomfort connected to centuries of slavery? Moreover, how is the future of learning being tangibly shaped by current tides of memory making and memory erasing?

We write for the future and perhaps a great many more. Yet, very rarely does the present invite the future to be actively part of the conversation from the side of producing history, leaving untapped cross-generational threads that could further strengthen the enduring legacy of slavery's remembrance. *The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade* opens new future of creative possibilities for teaching, learning, and historical understanding through a critically engaged, archival-driven, multi-authored compilation. Immersing audiences in a wide array of Dutch financial pursuits, risks, and sometimes failures amid quests for power through global slave trading, this volume of new scholars offers the most recent and rather engaging innovative telling of the past through the multi-worlds constructed within the business of slavery, on land and across overlooked spaces that proved vital to the interconnections of what the editors foreground towards establishing Dutch Middle Passage Studies. Through a fascinating volume, organised in three parts, the historical context of the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is closely examined to provide fresh thoughts on long overdue historiographical and archival queries that emerge from primary source engagement, which in turn significantly helps to catapult common understanding of the foundational ties of Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Not since *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, published two decades before, has historical illumination been so engaging and widely cast, into and across complicated interplays of people, spaces, monies, rules of engagement, and slaving realities.[1] Even more crucial to the future of memory are the Dutch legacies within an internationally violent economy of slavery that, through this volume, can become widely unveiled.

Uncovering any nation's tie to slavery begins primarily with its scholars, those equipped and willing to mine the archives and primary sources of many kinds to show the evolution of slavery at sea across time, space, company, and present generational values. From beginning to end, the conversations within this volume embody a varied set of powerful tides ushering in a more viable future of historical learning. We gain a trifocal

1 Edward Baptiste and Stephanie Camp, *New Studies in the History of American Slavery* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006).

lens into the past beginning in Part I, with the first tide moving in and across West Africa, as authors give deeper thought to goods, people, and spaces – on land, off land, seen and unseen – beginning with Chapter 1, "A Versatile Island." São Tomé comes from the crevices of memory as the vitality of this overlooked space is recentred not only during the seventeenth century slave trade but also amid the Dutch West India Company (WIC) occupation of this coastal island. Close examination of historical records enables seeing structurally how threats of wars and revolts, treaties, and local demand made this coastal space more than a place of unending conquest between nations, and far more than mere storage or site of sales and re-exportation of bondspeople. São Tomé became an island of power and conquest that the Dutch sought to maintain in their effort to grow an empire in the mid-seventeenth century. Through it, we gain a deeper view of the triage functionality of this one space as a victualling station, an amalgamated haven for foreign crews to experience temporary island life, and a seminal additional market operating in the sales of enslaved people for the Dutch and El Mina merchants and brokers.

Guns have long been known to have played a central role in the enforcement of violent power during the slave trade. Chapter 2, "Arming the Slave Trade," builds upon this understanding by calling unprecedented attention to the dual commodities of guns and gunpowder, showing how both were integral to the operation of the slave trade. For the Dutch in particular, as the second most prized commodity after textiles, and despite a reduction in gun manufacture over time, the value of guns for trade never decreased, nor did the world of slave trading and traders lose interest in them. In turn, firearms emboldened their receipients, resulting in the instability of unexpected wars and significant rise in slave raids, altering leadership while making the market of trading relationships and future supply of available bondspeople less tenable. The author makes an additional important macro-observation that guns were more valuable to the Dutch private corporation *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC) than to English slavers. This point undoubtedly counters the typical association of alcohol commonly associated with the American and British slave trades. Yet, the records of early Dutch slave trading reveal that the commodity of gunpowder, along with guns, greatly facilitated the slave trade. Localising the production of gunpowder near the MCC headquarters led to a correlation between amassing wealth and the arming of Africa, further solidifying local profits and partnerships within the Dutch slave trade. Space and mobility being the centrepieces of the human manufacturing system, the focus is most often held on the triangular movements between Europe, Africa, and North America.

Chapter 3, titled 'The Slave Trade on the Return Shipments,' disrupts the focal expectation by shifting a lens to lesser-examined routes and untraced contours associated with return shipping voyages forged by the Dutch company MCC between Europe and West Africa. This chapter teases out the dynamics of engagement and negotiations, using archival records from close to thirty-eight voyages, to shed light on the business of slavery on and off land, offering valuable insights for future research.

The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade plunges into the global waves of memory. Yet it does more than just trouble the waters that meagrely cover the surface of slavery's far-reaching history. Part II goes much further by opening multi-portals to bring another tide of remembrance allowing audiences to gaze closer in, and on, the ghostly relics of slavery at sea forced from the watery shadows amid the complications of human bondage. Chapter 4, "The Middle Passages of the *Christina* & *Geertruyda*, and *Zeemercuur*" enables the volume to take even greater shape in making Dutch Middle Passage Studies more tangible, as this comparative analysis of two voyages not only raises probing questions about the treatment of bondspeople aboard invested slave ships, but also investigates what seemingly unusual high rates of mortality on two Dutch company ships. Through this work we get to see the fatal cost of cheap investments in the securing and preservation of bondspeople, and why sailors boarded high numbers of captives despite the likelihood of high rates of death amid a ship's passage. The primary goal of acquiring the biggest possible cargo of captives meant unusually long coastal stays, rotting old ships, open unavoidable inclement weather, poor allocation of healthy food, sickness, and of course death. Readers also gain a rare glimpse into the ties of kinship, especially among black mothers, and the increased mortality rates of enslaved infants, a phenomenon often overlooked by traders in their pursuit of importing live adult black bodies, which were typically preferred.

With the ocean being the key area in the making and unmaking of bondspeople, resistive power aboard slave ships takes on new meaning in Chapter 5, "The Significance of Slave Ship Insurrections". This chapter offers a comprehensive perspective on the death, life, and violence of ships' officers on multiple voyages together, illustrating the hierarchies of business, power, and the expectations of Dutch company directors of their labourers, but also the unmaking of the lives of sailors who sought to hold on to illusions of long-lasting power that were never to be. Chapter 6, "Rice, Barley and Beans" extends the three-century historiographical probing of the consequences for enslaved people connected to diet, toxicity, and malnutrition, and the unending repercussions of the business of captivity and food in the world

of slavery at sea, through which innovative questions and new datasets can emerge.

Nuancing the individuals historically remembered within the pyramid of Dutch slave trading power reveals the arrival of the final triage waterway. This tide in Part III is represented through an exploration of people, business management, and the multifaceted life of a politician tasked with halting the continued influence of the illegal slave trade. Thus, this section of the volume introduces readers to African men known as *bombas* in Chapter 7's "Guarding Security, Managing Risks," where readers delve into the central roles played by black men within the Dutch slave trade. Although their historic presence has been blurred behind the popular image of slave ships being divided along lines of black and white or ship crew and the enslaved, the shipboard and coastal experiences of bombas as black labourers, on and off slave ships and in between spaces, becomes even more crucial from the perspective of the maritime world. Bombas served dual roles for the Dutch as both guards on slave ships and negotiators facilitating coastal deals made for bondspeople. Through an in-depth exploration centered on race, we are better able to see that variance within the Dutch slaving business could mean contracted employment allowing black labourers to provide a range of services to assist both overseas and local trade.

We likewise gain insights into the worlds of bookkeeping, monetary exchanges, monitoring, surveillance, and how all of that was part of a chain of commercialisation of black people in Chapter 8, "Business As Usual". Using the archive of the MCC, the most prolific Dutch private slave trading company of the free trade era, this chapter argues against the static, traditional, narrow economic approach to documents that were produced during of its involvement in the slave trade. These documents were largely shaped by a core of deep set racialised assumptions that not only further emboldened anti-black slavery as the author argues but largely tempered the world of business to the violence and racial realities of slave trading, keeping the focus primarily on the day-to-day business as usual. This chapter rightly reminds us that the bookkeeping model of the historical study of Dutch involvement in the slave trade severely limits how tangential the violence seems amid the Dutch top-down business model.

Through an unexpected and more micro-personal level, Chapter 9, "Abolitionist Grandstanding," extends the long gaze of the Dutch slave trade on land to Suriname with a focus on English-born Christopher Edward Lefroy, a British government official whose story is used to consider the distinction between his private and public personas in his actions against the slave trade while raising questions about his possible 'double life' as a

slave owner. It also points directly to the ever-fragile political lines of slavery and its aftermath which Lefroy confronted, as well as the massive personal power he asserted in crafting how his own life as an alleged crusader for the less fortunate would continue to be remembered in future.

Many hands, many nations, many archives remain untapped and are, thus, overdue for new generations of historians to acquaint and immerse themselves in their depths. This volume shows a bright future of possibilities and tangible learning. It provides a three-headed model based on archive and company sources that, due to digitisation, are now part of the conversation rather than disparate and disconnected. Equally germane to the future of memory are the possibilities this volume not only points to but actively employs. By transcending typical language barriers that often deter, through translations of the past, the scholars in this volume give to the future in new ways that can lead to a unified learning and understanding of the operative global slaving past. The chapters prompt even more consideration: what if more and many nations engage in conversation on the slaving past with correlating sources and diasporic waves, bringing local learning to the global centre by way of the digging into archives, translating and writing collectively for and to the future. Writing of slavery's past, this volume expands what the wider public can learn and know within these exciting new currents of Dutch slave trade scholarship. To know is to awaken, and it is through and from the tides of many that new remembrances can happen. Although shapeless and ever-moving in the flow across multiple spaces and corners of the diaspora made through the sale and transporting of black bodies, some can see these massive waves coming from far away, whereas others can become overtaken by the tides that come. The tides, much like this volume of voices, reflect the sun, illuminating depth that shadows and silences keep hidden in, of, and most of all, beneath the waves.

Power may come through silencing. However, the greatest wielding of power arises from activating new ways of learning that ensure the vitality of accessing and remembering slavery's global past; ways that are widespread and generationally ever-changing. This book and the nine essays within make real many more unseen, unrealised potentials amassed in multi-worlds of the Dutch slave trade by offering an array of fascinating and nuanced perspectives on a multicentred past. It shows the way forward on deep archival exploration and production of new slavery histories. For the eager and historically curious, this volume openly invites global historians into the discourse of remembrance, while at the same time providing a three-fold model for future compilations, by foregrounding junior scholars' voices in and on the history, the archives, and with many histories of the

Dutch slave trade. Here, translating Dutch sources and interpretations into another language for the future of global knowledge and historiographical engagement becomes critical to the future. What is likewise anchored in the multiple conversations forged across the volume lay the unseen exciting possibilities for other future compilations and conversations forged in and between and across languages, leading to other tides of remembrance, which this and previous edited volumes have attempted toaddress. As a whole, this volume makes the pursuit grow stronger: clarifying the links of people, power, and space, but also unlocking new ways and new modes of remembrance that can reverberate beyond sea, land, and time. Through it, new untapped realms of power can now become realised by using and expanding the archives of slavery to present a new kind of communal memory and legacy-making.

Like many other nations, the Dutch slave trade evolves in historical memory – ebbing and flowing – while representing another far less known link in the puzzle of slavery's overlooked memory. As such, the triangular trade continues to be primarily remembered by way of passages from Europe to Africa and the Americas. Limited expansion of Dutch historiography and the past of slavery scholarship have given rise to this very intellectual moment, where the future is, and can very much be, in direct conversation with the once present and now past through this volume. The evolution of the African Diaspora through the slave trade can and will come through, prompting future learners to know and, more essentially, to remember. Slavery's full body of past people, investments, nations, violence, and power comes into much fuller view in unexpected and smart multi-angled, multi-peopled moments within that show the coming and the dissolving of new throngs of power that forever transformed the global future of race and the business of human bondage. New unlocking is happening through the influx of the three powerful waves this volume represents, these new tides of remembrance activated on the long ago Dutch slaving past.

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In this book, a new generation of scholars offers fresh perspectives on the history of the Dutch slave trade. Traditionally, Dutch research has focused on business practices, often overlooking the enslaved and the complexities of illegal trade and violence. By experimenting with innovative methodologies and underutilised primary sources, this volume reveals the potential to uncover perspectives of enslaved people aboard slave ships, to investigate unstudied areas like sexual violence, and to examine the roles of Dutch elite in the trade.

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