

RIJKS MUSEUM & SLAVERY

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& SLAVERY

The Rijksmuseum, the Netherlands' museum of art and history, works permanently to present a more complete picture of the Dutch past. The 17th, 18th and 19th centuries represent a critical period in which the Netherlands assumed a dominant position on the world stage. This colonial power is inextricably linked to a system in which slavery was a matter of state practice. Under Dutch rule, men, women and children around the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean were enslaved, subjected to forced labour and reduced to objects in administrative records. For 250 years, people in slavery were forbidden to express themselves, to make themselves heard, to have possessions, to document their lives.

This system is reflected in the museum's collection, as evidenced by 77 *Rijksmuseum & Slavery* gallery texts. The short texts outline the connection between the object and the Netherlands' history of slavery. The subjects covered range from individuals in power at the time, the Dutch presence in occupied territory, the relationships between the Dutch economy and slavery, colonial products, the slave trade, and the church and slavery, to the presence of people of colour in the Netherlands and their portrayal in the arts and crafts, as well as the voices that were raised against slavery.

From February 2021, the *Rijksmuseum & Slavery* texts will be presented for a year on additional panels in the museum, beginning in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Department and extending to the 20th-century Department. They are compiled in this booklet.

In addition, the exhibition *Slavery* will be on view until the summer of 2021. The show and the accompanying catalogue focus on ten people with a relationship to Dutch colonial slavery. This allows visitors and readers to navigate their way through the complex history of all the players within an unjust system.

Both the existing and the new gallery texts in the museum will be evaluated after the *Slavery* exhibition and *Rijksmuseum & Slavery* close. Wherever possible, the new information will be integrated into our museum in order to do greater justice to the Netherlands' complicated history.

THE 16TH CENTURY & SLAVERY

Portrait of an African Man (Christophle le More?)

Jan Jansz Mostaert, c. 1525–c. 1530

This is the only known portrait of a black man in early European painting. He may have served at the Brussels court of Emperor Charles V, who had a black archer called Christophle le More among his bodyguards. The badge of the Virgin on his cap is a souvenir of a pilgrimage to Halle (Brabant), a favourite destination of pilgrims from the Brussels court.

Research on this portrait suggests that the sitter was the African man Christophle le More. Christophle started out as a stable hand and became Charles V's bodyguard. His daily wage was twice that of a craftsman in Brussels in the 16th century. At the time this portrait was painted – before Dutch colonial slavery – people of colour of all ranks and positions were living throughout Europe. At the court of Charles V this constituted two people in 1520.¹

¹ E. van den Boogaart, 'Christophle le More, lijfwacht van Karel V?', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 53 (2005) 4, pp. 412–433.

Purchased with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt, with additional funding from the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, the Mondriaan Stichting, the VSBfonds, the BankGiro Lottery and the Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2005 SK-A-4986

THE CHURCH

& SLAVERY

The Nave and Choir of the Mariakerk in Utrecht

Pieter Jansz Saenredam, 1641

In the young Dutch Republic only Reformed Protestant services were still held in the former Catholic churches. Statues and paintings of saints were prohibited. The 11th-century Mariakerk preserved the decorations of the piers, which Saenredam here rendered in great detail – even applying gold leaf. At the left visitors look at an image of a bull on one of the piers: according to legend, this column continued to sink during construction until it was grounded on a bull's hide.

Dutch pastors initially rejected slavery as something done only by Catholic Portuguese and Spaniards.¹ Their attitude changed when the Dutch themselves became active in human trafficking at the beginning of the 17th century. The biblical story of Cham, who was cursed by his father Noah to serve his brothers forever, was central to this. Pastors explained this story as Africans being predestined to serve Europeans and thus legitimized the slave trade.²

1 G.J. Schutte, *Het Calvinistisch Nederland. Mythe en werkelijkheid*, Hilversum 2001, pp. 30–34.

2 S. Archangel, "As If They Were Mere Beasts." Descriptions of the Black Body in Seventeenth-century Dutch, in E. Kolfin and E. Runia (eds.), *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Zwolle 2020, pp. 76.

Transfer from Nederlandsch Museum
voor Geschiedenis en Kunst, 1885
SK-A-851

SALT

Still Life with a Gilt Cup
Willem Claesz Heda, 1635

The range of grey tonalities that Willem Heda could paint is astounding. With this subtle palette, he deftly rendered the objects – of pewter, silver, damask, glass and mother-of-pearl – on this table. A few yellow and ochre accents compliment this refined interplay of colours. Heda specialized in near monochromatic still lifes, so-called ‘tonal banquet pieces’.

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One year after this picture was painted, the Netherlands conquered Bonaire for its salt pans. The Arawak (the original inhabitants) and enslaved people from West Africa were forced to mine the salt pans. They stood day in and day out barefoot in the stinging salt water and under the blazing sun.¹ In the Netherlands this salt was used to preserve meat and fish or ended up in luxurious salt cellars, like the one shown here.²

1 B. Antoin and C. Luckhardt, *Bonaire, zout en koloniale geschiedenis*, The Hague 2012, pp. 58–63.

2 M. Coomans-Eustatia and H.E. Coomans, *Breekbare banden: feiten en visies over Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao na de Vrede van Munster, 1648–1998*, Bloemendaal 1998, p. 24.

Purchased with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and the Rijksmuseum-Stichting SK-A-4830

SPICES

Still Life with a Turkey Pie

Pieter Claesz, 1627

The Flemish painter Pieter Claesz was just one of many artists who emigrated to the Northern Netherlands in the beginning of the 17th century. This table abounds with luxurious products, among them Asian objects. Especially eye-catching are the porcelain plate and the nautilus shell. Even in unexpected objects, the presence of Asia is implicit – for instance in savoury pies, which contain ingredients such as cinnamon, mace, cloves and ginger.

The spices in these pies were often obtained by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) through violence and slavery. Cloves came from Ambon, one of the Moluccan islands, which was conquered by the VOC in 1605. The Ambonese had to harvest cloves alongside workers enslaved by the VOC. Nutmeg came from the Banda Islands (south of Ambon), which were taken by force in 1621. Enslaved people had to pick the nutmeg seeds on plantations and strip off their covering (aril).¹

¹ R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 82–100.

Purchased with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and the Stichting tot Bevordering van de Belangen van het Rijksmuseum, 1974
SK-A-4646

OOPJEN

Oopjen Coppit

Rembrandt van Rijn, 1634

Oopjen was the eldest of three daughters of an old, affluent Amsterdam family. She sat to Rembrandt one year after her marriage. She was 23 and pregnant with her first child. The marriage was an alliance between families, old and new money. To celebrate this, monumental portraits were commissioned from the city's leading portraitist: Rembrandt.

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After the death of her husband Marten Soolmans (adjacent), Oopjen married Maerten Daey. Prior to this, Daey had spent a few years in Brazil. The tragic story of the enslaved Francisca has come down to us from contemporary sources. Daey had taken her captive, locked her up, and raped her multiple times. When it turned out that Francisca was with child, he sent her away and refused to recognize their daughter Elunam.¹

¹ E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Oopjen. Wealth in the Dutch Republic', in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 107–121.

Joint acquisition by the Dutch State and the French Republic, collection Rijksmuseum/collection Musée du Louvre, 2016
SK-C-1768

MARTEN

& SLAVERY

Marten Soolmans

Rembrandt van Rijn, 1634

Marten and Oopjen are the only couple Rembrandt painted lifesize, standing and full-length. Marten was the son of a wealthy Flemish immigrant who owned a successful sugar refinery in Amsterdam. Attired in a sumptuous costume with expensive lace and enormous rosettes on his shoes, he poses self-assuredly for Rembrandt. They probably knew one another from Leiden, where Marten had studied law.

Marten and Oopjen owed their wealth to slave labour. In Amsterdam Marten's father, and later the couple themselves, made a fortune from the refining of raw sugar from Brazil. It had been cultivated, harvested and processed there by Africans who had been enslaved. Sugar had become very popular in Europe in a short period of time, and a great deal of money was made from it. The demand in Europe was met in large part by the Amsterdam sugar industry. This enormous production would not have been possible without the large-scale deployment of people in slavery.¹

¹ E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Oopjen. Wealth in the Dutch Republic', in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 107–121.

Joint acquisition by the Dutch State and the French Republic, collection Rijksmuseum/collection Musée du Louvre, 2016
SK-A-5033

SERVANT

& SLAVERY

Officers and other Civic Guardsmen of the VIII District in Amsterdam under the command of Captain Roelof Bicker

Bartholomeus van der Helst,
c. 1640–c. 1643

This civic guard painting is a substantial 7.5 metres wide and almost filled an entire wall in the large hall of the Kloveniersdoelen. Van der Helst did not line up the thirty militiamen in a static row, but positioned the ones with the lightest coloured clothing in the front at regular intervals. The painter included himself in the group, at the far left.

A child in a red cape is visible in the middle of this group portrait. He is probably the servant of Roelof Bicker, the man next to him. Having a African servant was a status symbol in affluent circles. Who this youngster was and how he ended up in Amsterdam remains unknown. According to Amsterdam city law, he was entitled to his freedom: 'Within the city of Amsterdam and its areas of law, all men are free, and none are slaves.'¹ The question is the extent to which he was able to attain that freedom.

¹ T.A. van Polanen, 'Snak, Claas, and Bastiaan's struggle for freedom. Three Curacaoan slaves and their court cases about the free soil principle in the Dutch Republic,' *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* (forthcoming 2021).

On loan from the City of Amsterdam, 1885
SK-C-375

CORNELIS BICKER & SLAVERY

Officers and other Civic Guardsmen
of the XIX District in Amsterdam
under the command of
Captain Cornelis Bicker

Joachim von Sandrart, 1640

When the French Queen Mother, Maria de' Medici, visited Amsterdam in 1638, Captain Bicker's company served as her guard of honour. The German artist Sandrart thus arranged the militiamen around a portrait bust of the queen in this group portrait. The painting was made to measure for the large hall of the Kloveniersdoelen; it hung to the left of the chimneypiece.

Cornelis Bicker, the seated man portrayed here, was director and major shareholder of the Dutch West India Company (WIC) during its early years (1622 to 1628).¹ At that time the WIC's aim was to conquer Portuguese-Brazil for its numerous sugar plantations. The indigenous people of Brazil and enslaved Africans were forced to work there.² Bicker also traded in sugar himself.³ His warehouse in Amsterdam overflowed with crates of sugar, which earned him 100,000 guilders (now more than 1 million euros⁴) in a single year.⁵

1 National Archive (The Hague), accession no. 1.05.01.01, inv. no. 18B, 'WIC: Grootkapitaalboek Kamer Amsterdam,' fol. 48.

2 G. van der Ham, *Tarnished Gold. Ghana and the Netherlands from 1593*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2016, p. 45.

3 R. Cordes, *Jan Zoet, Amsterdammer 1609–1674. Leven en werk van een kleurrijk schrijver*, Hilversum 2008, p. 309.

4 According to the calculation model of the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, see www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate-nl.php.

5 J. Zoet, *'t Hollandts rommelzootje*, Amsterdam 1650.

On loan from the City of Amsterdam, 1885
SK-C-393

THE BLACK COMMUNITY & SLAVERY

The Night Watch

Rembrandt van Rijn, 1642

Rembrandt's largest, most famous canvas was made for the Arquebusiers guild hall. This was one of several halls of Amsterdam's civic guard, the city's militia and police. Rembrandt was the first to paint figures in a group portrait actually doing something. The captain, dressed in black, is telling his lieutenant to start the company marching. The guardsmen are getting into formation. Rembrandt used the light to focus on particular details, like the captain's gesturing hand and the young girl in the foreground. She was the company mascot. The nickname Night Watch originated much later, when the painting was thought to represent a nocturnal scene.

As in most other 17th-century works, only white people are seen in this painting. And yet, a modest community of African people actually lived nearby the Kloveniersdoelen complex from 1630. They came to the city as servants, sailors or political emissaries from the moment that Amsterdammers became active in the colonies, at trading posts in Asia, Africa and America, and in the trade of enslaved people.¹

¹ M. Ponte, 'Black in Amsterdam around 1650,' in E. Kolfin and E. Runia (eds.), *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Zwolle 2020, pp. 44–57.

On loan from the
City of Amsterdam, 1808
SK-C-5

CHARLES V

& SLAVERY

Allegory on the Abdication of Emperor Charles v in Brussels

Frans Francken (II), c. 1635–c. 1640

Charles V is enthroned at centre. Battle weary and wracked by illness, in 1555 he divided up his empire. He gave his brother Ferdinand (left of the throne) the Holy Roman Empire, while his son Phillip (at the right) became King of Spain and Lord of the Netherlands. The three figures in the right foreground personify the continents America, Africa and Asia over which Charles's vast empire also stretched. Neptune (left) symbolizes his power at sea.

In the right foreground of this painting, the personifications of the continents of the Americas, Asia and Africa offer their riches to Charles V. In Europe this fealty was taken for granted because Europeans considered themselves to be superior.¹ Charles V, too, took this as a given. In 1518, as ruler of the Spanish Empire, he issued the first *asiento* (monopoly contract) to ship thousands of people directly from Africa to the Spanish colonies in South America.² This was the beginning of the large-scale transatlantic slave trade, which would persist for more than three centuries.

1 J. Leerssen, 'Stranger/Europe,' *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 9 (2017) 2, pp. 7–25, esp. p. 9.

2 L.B. Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America. 1502 to the Present Day*, Cambridge 1967, p. 37.

3 F. Feyten, 'Slavenhandel tussen Afrika en Amerika begon 500 jaar geleden... met een Vlaming,' <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnews/nl/2018/08/24/rechtstreeks-slavenhandel-tussen-afrika-en-amerika-begon-500-jaar/> (accessed 4 June 2019).

Purchased 1805
SK-A-112

WILLIAM OF ORANGE & SLAVERY

Portrait of William I, Prince of Orange

Adriaen Thomasz Key, c. 1579

Of the noblemen who rebelled against Phillip II's Spanish rule of the Netherlands, William of Orange rose to become the great leader of the Dutch Revolt. He defended his own interests, strove for greater independence and advocated freedom of religion. In 1580 Phillip II put a price on his head, and he was assassinated four years later.

In 1580 William of Orange and his followers maintained that Philip II, king of Spain, was no longer entitled to serve as ruler of the Low Countries.¹ Philip would want to enslave the Dutch and treat them as cruelly as he did the colonized South Americans.² Some thirty years later, the Netherlands, then independent of Spain, began to trade in enslaved people and slavery itself, first in Asia and later in the Atlantic region.³

1 S. Archangel, 'Tachtig jaar oorlog – een gedeeld verleden,' in G. van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, Amsterdam 2018, pp. 274–277.

2 W. van Oranje, *Apologie, ofte Verantwoordinghe*. C.A. Mees, Antwerp 1923, p. 44.

3 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 35–37; M. van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek, de geschiedenis van slavernij in Azië onder de VOC*, Hilversum 2015, p. 7.

Purchased with the support of
the Commissie voor de Willem de
Zwijgertentoonstelling, 1933
SK-A-3148

LAURENS REAEL & SLAVERY

Portrait of Laurens Reael

Cornelis van der Voort, c. 1620

Laurens Reael was governor-general of the VOC (Dutch East India Company), the company's highest position in Asia. On returning to the Netherlands, he had himself portrayed full-length by a leading Amsterdam artist. Around his neck, the richly dressed Reael wears the gold chain that the States-General presented to him for his work in Asia.

In the early days of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) the most important administrators did not see eye to eye regarding the deployment of enslaved people.¹ Laurens Reael, for example, maintained that the use of forced, unpaid labour was no solution to the shortage of workers.² This was not because he considered it morally wrong, but rather because people subjected to slavery, according to him, 'always try to escape, (...) as it is difficult to forget the delights of the country where one was born and raised.'³

1 S.E.A. van Galen, *Arakan and Bengal: the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century*, (PhD thesis, Leiden University) 2008, p. 222.

2 J. van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen 1587–1629: Koopman-koning in Azië*, Amsterdam 2014, pp. 352–354.

3 'Generale Missive Laurens Reael, Banda 10 mei 1617,' in W.Ph. Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Part I: 1610–1638*, The Hague 1960, pp. 70–72.

Purchased 1949
SK-A-3741

SERVANTS

The Departure of a Dignitary from Middelburg

Adriaen Pietersz van de Venne, 1615

The warship De Zeehondt is being towed to sea from the harbour of Middelburg by four muscular draught horses. The identity of the departing person who is drawing so much attention from a multitude of low and high-ranking people is unknown. However, it must have been someone of standing, for even Stadtholder Maurice's yacht is present; it fires a salute.

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Prominently portrayed in the middle ship is an African child, who, judging from his clothing, must have been a servant. We know neither whether he had been enslaved nor how he ended up in the Netherlands. This painting makes it clear that African children were brought to the Dutch Republic as early as 1615. That is almost ten years before the Dutch West India Company was founded and Dutchmen actively traded in enslaved people in West Africa.¹

¹ E. Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron. Twee Moren aan het hof van Oranje*, Amsterdam 2017, p. 24.

D. Franken Bequest, Le Vésinet, 1898
SK-A-1775

HUGO DE GROOT & SLAVERY

Book chest of Hugo de Groot
c. 1600–c. 1615

In his fall from grace, Oldenbarnevelt also took down a few friends. The most famous of them was the celebrated jurist Hugo de Groot. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, but managed to escape by hiding in a chest used to bring him books. The chest on display here was long thought to be the one from this famous story.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the well-known jurist Hugo de Groot described the grounds on which someone could legitimately enslave another human being.¹ This, incidentally, did not apply to the Netherlands, so De Groot reasoned, because for centuries anybody was officially free.² Some people attempted to claim this general right through the courts. Others, faced with a forced return to the colonies where they would once again be deprived of liberty, took flight.³

1 G. Oostindie and K. Fatah-Black, *Sporen van de slavernij in Leiden*, Leiden 2017, pp. 48–49; T.A. van Polanen, 'Snak, Claas, and Bastiaan's struggle for freedom. Three Curacaoan slaves and their court cases about the free soil principle in the Dutch Republic,' *BMGN - Low Countries Historical* (forthcoming 2021).

2 H. de Groot, *Inleidinge tot de Hollandsche Rechtsgeleerdheid*, vol. 1, Gouda 1910, p. 9.

3 M. Ponte, 'Black in Amsterdam around 1650,' in E. Kolfin and E. Runia (eds.), *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Zwolle 2020, pp. 44–57, esp. p. 52.

On loan from the Koninklijk
Oudheidkundig Genootschap
NG-KOG-1208

THE TREATY OF MÜNSTER & SLAVERY

**Banquet at the Crossbowmen's Guild
in Celebration of the Treaty of Münster**
Bartholomeus van der Helst, 1648

18 June 1648: a banquet is taking place at the Amsterdam crossbowmen's guild. The occasion was the signing of the Treaty of Münster, which marked an end to the war with Spain. The captains of the civic guard company shake hands as a sign of peace, and the drinking horn is passed around. The poem on the drum proclaims the joy of Amsterdam's armed militia that their weapons can henceforth be laid to rest.

During the war with Spain, Dutch trading companies conquered Spanish and Portuguese colonial outposts in Asia, Africa and America. The Treaty of Münster, to which the Amsterdam militia-men depicted here toast, ensured that the Netherlands retained these captured territories.¹ Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius, among others, were regarded as Dutch possessions. For centuries the Dutch used these islands on a massive scale as a sales point and transit port for enslaved people.²

1 M. Coomans-Eustatia and H.E. Coomans, *Breekbare banden: feiten en visies over Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao na de Vrede van Munster, 1648–1998*, Bloemendaal 1998, pp. 24, 27.

2 National Archive (The Hague), 'WIC maakt Curaçao tot centrum van de slavenhandel (1634)' <https://www.nationaal-archief.nl/beleven/onderwijs/bronnenbox/wic-maakt-curaçao-tot-centrum-van-de-slavenhandel-1634> (accessed 26 August 2019); M. Coomans-Eustatia and H.E. Coomans, *Breekbare banden: feiten en visies over Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao na de Vrede van Munster, 1648–1998*, Bloemendaal 1998, pp. 23–24.

On loan from the City of Amsterdam,
1808
SK-C-2

JAN PIETERSZ COEN & SLAVERY

Gouverneur-generaal Jan Pietersz Coen
1620–1675

With the founding of Batavia in 1619, Coen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, took the first steps towards creating a colonial empire. His pursuit of overseas property ran counter to the aims of the Dutch East India Company's directors, who were interested solely in establishing trading posts. Coen's undertaking involved military manoeuvres that wreaked havoc with the indigenous people. At upper left is Coen's coat of arms, a coconut palm.

The people of the Banda Islands, part of the Moluccas, did not want to sell their nutmeg exclusively to the Dutch East India Company (VOC). To secure this monopoly, Jan Pietersz Coen proceeded to virtually exterminate the Bandanese.¹ Of the approximately 15,000 original inhabitants, an estimated 14,000 were murdered. The rest either fled or were enslaved.² In addition, the VOC seized people from the Indonesian archipelago, India and Madagascar and forced them to work on the nutmeg plantations.³

1 H. Stevens, *Bitter Spice. Indonesia and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2015, p. 23.

2 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 95–96.

3 M. Holtrop, 'Van Bengalen. Shipped to Batavia, Banda, Cape Town and Dokkum,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 147–175.

Transfer from the Ministerie voor
Uniezaken en Overzeese Rijksdelen, 1950
SK-A-3758

FORTS

Views of Dutch East India Company Trading

Johannes Vinckboons (attributed to),
c. 1662–c. 1663

From 1609 the East India Company was sailing to Lawec, near Phnom Penh. There the company purchased provisions, such as rice, butter, pork, and lard, for Batavia. Banda supplied mace and nutmeg. In 1621, Governor-General Coen punished the island for trading with other countries: all fifteen thousand islanders were killed or driven away. The 'slaughterer of Banda' founded nutmeg parcels, heavily guarded by forts.

& SLAVERY

This series of paintings hanging high up in a row features various Dutch East India Company (VOC) trading posts in Asia. Invisible are the thousands of enslaved people who were forced to actually built them or toiled inside their walls.¹ They were traded in these forts and taken to other stations.² The VOC shipped between 660,000 and 1,135,000 human beings in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries.³

1 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 32–35.

2 M. Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14 (2003) 2, pp. 131–177.

3 M. van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek: De geschiedenis van Nederlandse slavernij in Azië onder de VOC*, Hilversum 2015, p. 26.

Transfer from the Departement
van Koloniën, 1857
SK-A-4471, 4472, 4474 up to 4477

THOMAS

& SLAVERY

Thomas Hees and his Enslaved Servant Thomas and Nephews Jan and Andries Hees

Michiel van Musscher, 1687

Thomas Hees served as a diplomat in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, negotiating the ransoming of Dutch galley slaves and combatting the privateering of Dutch ships, among other missions. The name and age of his African servant is indicated on the back of the canvas: 'Thomas the Negro, 17 years old.'

Thomas is standing in the background. He wears a turban, is barefoot and has an iron collar around his neck. He probably got his name from the man to whom he is handing a pipe and a cloak: Thomas Hees. In North Africa, Hees negotiated the release of Dutch sailors who had been forced to work as slaves. Back in Amsterdam he had himself portrayed with his young servant behind him. Thomas' neck collar is a reference to slavery and ownership.¹

1 V. Smeulders and L. Lambrechts, 'Paulus. A "Moor" in the Dutch Republic,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 122–145.

On loan from the Koninklijk Kabinet
van Schilderijen Het Mauritshuis, 1932
SK-C-1215

BATAVIA

The Castle of Batavia
Andries Beeckman, 1661

Here we see the market of Batavia, with the fortress of the Dutch East India Company in the background. A Javanese is selling fruit, a Chinese fish, and Mollucans kick a rattan ball. The market public includes Japanese, Indonesians, 'mardijkers' – formerly enslaved people recognizable by their striped clothes – and a Dutch-Indonesian couple followed by a man held in slavery carrying a pajoeng (parasol). The painting hung in the assembly room of the Oost-Indisch Huis in Amsterdam.

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This painting features several enslaved people. It is thought that the system of slavery under the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was different from that under the Dutch West India Company (WIC). But in both systems, men, women and children had no rights whatsoever. They could be sold at any time without any say of their own. They had no possessions, were not allowed to bequeath anything, and even their children belonged to the slave holder. Many tried to flee from slavery, with horrific punishments as a consequence.¹

¹ M. Holtrop, 'Van Bengalen. Shipped to Batavia, Banda, Cape Town and Dokkum,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 146–175.

Purchased 1859
SK-A-19

SURAPATI

& SLAVERY

Pieter Cnoll, Cornelia van Nijenrode,
their Daughters and Two Enslaved
Servants

Jacob Coeman, 1665

Cnoll was a senior merchant of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Batavia. In that position, in addition to his official function, he could conduct private business and become wealthy in a short period of time. Cornelia was the daughter of a VOC merchant and a Japanese courtesan. This portrait illustrates the opulence of their lifestyle and surroundings. The clothing – the latest Dutch fashion – is adorned with the most precious jewels. In the background are two of their fifty enslaved servants.

The name of the enslaved servant at the far right in this painting is Surapati. He originally came from Bali. Surapati fled enslavement in Batavia and led a group of other Balinese men. Initially he fought in the service of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which, however, later declared him an enemy. Surapati eventually came to rule an area of Java, where he died in 1707 while battling the VOC. Indonesia proclaimed him its national hero in the 1970s for his anti-colonial struggle.¹

1 M. Holtrop, 'Surapati. From Enslaved Servant to Sovereign,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 176–193.

Purchased 1961
SK-A-4062

BENGAL

& SLAVERY

The Trading Post of the Dutch East India Company in Hooghly, Bengal
Hendrik van Schuylenburgh, 1665

This canvas was commissioned by Pieter Sterthemius, director of the Hooghly trading post. The scene bustles with activity. Dutch East Indiamen navigate the Ganges River, the director of the trading post visits an Indian dignitary, and at the upper right an act of religious self-castigation is taking place: a man is suspended from a hook in his ribs and spun around a pole.

Many enslaved people are toiling in this fort. Some are hauling heavy bundles from it. Others are cutting wood at the left, while a number of enslaved men work in the garden at the right. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) considered these individuals as its property. Bengal was one of the places where the VOC and its employees bought most of the enslaved people in the 17th century. They took them to other VOC-trading posts around the Indian Ocean.¹

¹ M. Holtrop, 'Van Bengalen. Shipped to Batavia, Banda, Cape Town and Dokkum,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 146–175.

Transfer from the Nederlandsch
Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst,
1926
SK-A-4282

THE DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY & SLAVERY

Crown for the King of Ardra
c. 1664

Although impressive, this crown is actually made of inexpensive materials. It was meant to be a gift from the English to the king of Ardra on the west coast of Africa. The English (as well as the Dutch) used such diplomatic incentives to foster the trade in enslaved Africans. The crown, however, never reached the king. Admiral Michiel de Ruyter seized it while on a mission to expel the English from the Dutch fortresses on the African coast.

Diplomatic gifts, such as this crown, played a major role in alliances between European countries and African rulers. Ardra, a great kingdom in what is now Benin, was known for 'the multitude of slaves traded there.'¹ With the arrival of the Dutch West India Company, not only did the demand for enslaved people increase, but the nature and scale of the slave trade and slavery also changed. Aside from the fact that people were now transported to other continents, in the colonial system slavery became hereditary and linked to skin colour.

¹ G. van der Ham, *Tarnished Gold. Ghana and the Netherlands from 1593*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2016, p. 89.

Transfer from the Koninklijk Kabinet
van Zeldzaamheden, 1875
NG-NM-816-A

FORT ELMINA

& SLAVERY

Portrait of Jan Valckenburgh and an Enslaved Servant

Daniel Vertangen, c. 1660

Jan Valckenburgh, portrayed in full regalia wearing armour and holding a commander's baton, was twice director-general of Elmina on the African Gold Coast. The enslaved man wears a gold medal with a view of Fort Elmina, which is also depicted in the background. Valckenburgh received the medal from the Dutch West India Company for services rendered. The gold and the African man symbolize the merchandise traded on the Gold Coast.

The young man behind Valckenburgh is one of the many people enslaved by the Dutch West India Company. African traders took him and other prisoners to trading posts to be sold. This human trafficking was organized and coordinated in Fort Elmina (in present-day Ghana). The Dutch transported a total of 550,000 Africans to the Americas and the Caribbean.¹ As slaves they were dehumanized: they were taken far away from their place of birth, separated from their families and friends, branded, and denied any say over their own actions and bodies.

¹ G. van der Ham, *Tarnished Gold. Ghana and the Netherlands from 1593*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2016, p. 109.

Purchased with the support of the Mondriaan Stichting, Stichting Dr. Hendrik Muller's Vaderlandsch Fonds, the Frans Mortelmans Stichting, the M.A.O.C. Gravin van Bylandt Stichting and the Stichting K.F. Hein Fonds, 2001 SK-A-4969

THE 'SILVER FLEET' & SLAVERY

Piet Heyn dish
1684–1687

Piet Heyn became famous for his conquest of the Spanish 'Silver Fleet' in 1628. The Spanish ships were laden with Mexican silver. The sale of the spoils yielded an astronomical fifteen million guilders. It was a painful blow for Spain, particularly because the Netherlands used the money to wage war against the Spanish. This dish was fashioned from the seized silver.

By capturing the gold and silver laden Spanish Treasure Fleet, the Dutch West India Company acquired enough money to conquer Olinda from the Portuguese in Brazil.¹ In doing so, they also took over the lucrative sugar production. Sugar was a popular yet costly product that could only be extracted from sugar cane. Between 1635 and 1645, the Dutch transported about 25,000 enslaved people from various parts of Africa to Dutch Brazil, where they had to cultivate and process sugar cane alongside the indigenous population.²

1 E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 25.

2 D.J. Tang, 'Slaven en schepen. Nederland en de trans-Atlantische slavenhandel, 1600–1863,' in R. Daalder, D.J. Tang and L. Balai (ed.), *Slaven en schepen in het Atlantisch gebied*, Leiden 2013, pp. 19–49, esp. pp. 27, 29.

Transfer from the Koninklijk Kabinet
van Zeldzaamheden, 1875
NG-NM-582

DUTCH BRAZIL

& SLAVERY

Landscape in Brazil
Frans Jansz Post, 1652

From 1630 the Dutch West India Company (WIC) conquers parts of Brazil and ousts the Portuguese based there. Foiling the enemy is a main task of this trading company, and Portugal belongs to Spain in this time. The Dutch take over the profitable sugar production. Sugar is cultivated on plantations, like the one in this painting. Enslaved Africans work there under wretched conditions. What is presented as an idyll to the Dutch, is actually a hellish reality for them.

Frans Post made idealized renderings of Brazilian landscapes for a Dutch audience.¹ The reality in Dutch Brazil was different, especially for the enslaved people who had to work on the plantations under appalling conditions.² Cutting sugar cane was treacherous and sometimes resulted in serious injury. The work in the sugar mills was no less dangerous: people suffered burns from the hot fires and the splashing, boiling liquid and their limbs were torn off by the rotating rollers in the mills.³

1 R. Parker Brienen, 'Who owns Frans Post? Collecting Frans Post's Brazilian Landscapes,' in M. van Groesen (ed.), *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil*, New York 2014, pp. 232–235.

2 E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 27.

3 E. Sutton, 'Bittersweet: Sugar, Slavery, and Science in Dutch Suriname,' *Midwestern Arcadia* (2014), <https://apps.carleton.edu/kettering/sutton/> (accessed 31 July 2019); G. van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 220.

Purchased with the support of the
Stichting tot Bevordering van de
Belangen van het Rijksmuseum, 1934
SK-A-3224

TOBACCO

& SLAVERY

Travellers at Rest

Adriaen van Ostade, 1671

An elderly peasant and a somewhat younger man who has been hunting – his game bag and gun lie next to him – are seated with a tankard of beer or a pipe in the garden of an inn. After 1670 Adriaen van Ostade painted very few interiors; scenes set in the open air gained the upper hand. These tableaux contain little in the way of a moralizing message; instead, they extol unhurried, simple country life.

The man on the bench smokes a pipe. In the 17th century, smoking was so common in the Netherlands that it was widely reported by foreign travellers: the smell of the Dutch Republic was the smell of tobacco.¹ By far the most and best tobacco was cultivated in the Americas by enslaved people. Virtually the entire harvest was shipped to the Netherlands and then sold on to other countries.² Such a system of forced labour thus made it possible for the Dutch to not only light their pipes daily, but also become rich from the tobacco trade.

1 D.J. Maika, 'Crowned by Tobacco,' *Seaport* 36 (2001) 1, p. 32; S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, New York 1987, p. 189.

2 G. van der Ham, *De geschiedenis van Nederland in 100 voorwerpen*, Amsterdam 2013, p. 273.

Purchased 1809
SK-A-299

MICHIEL DE RUYTER & SLAVERY

Michiel de Ruyter as Lieutenant-Admiral

Ferdinand Bol, 1667

In 1667 Ferdinand Bol painted several life-size portraits of Michiel de Ruyter. These were hung in the headquarters of all five Dutch admiralties. This painting went to Middelburg. De Ruyter's hero status made him a powerful man. In the portrait he is richly dressed and holding his commander's baton. Around his neck he is wearing the Order of St Michael, awarded to him by the King of France.

Between 1530 and 1780, North Africans enslaved at sea more than one million Europeans.¹ These 'Christian slaves,' as they were called in Europe, were forced to work on ships and in harems.² By order of the Dutch Republic, Admiral Michiel de Ruyter spared no efforts to buy their freedom.³ But, he also reconquered forts in West Africa from the English, thereby reviving the Dutch trade in African people. De Ruyter apparently accepted slavery as long as no white Christians were involved.⁴

1 L. van den Broek and M. Jacobs (eds.), *Christenslaven: De slavernij-ervaringen van Cornelis Stout in Algiers (1678–1680) en Maria ter Meetelen in Marokko (1731–1743)*, Zutphen 2006, p. 12.

2 A. van Stipriaan, 'Michiel de Ruijter in het Atlantisch gebied (West Afrika en de Cariben)' (internet publication), <https://alexvanstipriaan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015-Michiel-de-Ruijter-in-het-Atlantisch-gebied.pdf> (accessed 26 August 2019).

3 D. Hondius, 'Transatlantische ontmoetingen. Sporen van Afrikanen en Zeeuwen in drie continenten,' Conference Zeeland and Slavery / Slavery from Within, 22–24 June 2005, Middelburg 2005.

4 A. van Stipriaan, 'Michiel de Ruijter in het Atlantisch gebied (West Afrika en de Cariben)' (internet publication), <https://alexvanstipriaan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015-Michiel-de-Ruijter-in-het-Atlantisch-gebied.pdf> (accessed 26 August 2019).

Transfer from the Departement der Konvooyen en Licenten, 1799
SK-A-44

NEW YORK

& SLAVERY

Terrestrial globe

Willem Janszoon Blaeu, 1645–1648

Both Blaeus, father and son, were world famous cartographers. The globes that they made were real showpieces. Naturally, they included the latest discoveries of distant lands, and colonies such as 'Nieu Nederland' (New York). Yet there were still unexplored territories in the world. Only a small section of the Australian coast had been charted – by Dutchmen, as the name 'Hollandia Nova' indicates.

Slavery was also instituted early on in the colony of New Netherland (New York), which is included on this globe by Blaeu. In 1626 the Dutch seized a Portuguese ship and appropriated the enslaved people on board. Portuguese traders had given these people new names, referring to their country of origin, for example Paulo d'Angola, Garcia d'Angola and Simon Congo. The men were taken to New Netherland and forced to remain there for the rest of their lives.¹

¹ M. Gosselink, *New York - New Amsterdam. The Dutch Origins of Manhattan*, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 209, 211.

On loan from private collectors, 2014
NG-C-2014-2-1

THE SECOND ANGLO-DUTCH WAR & SLAVERY

Michiel de Ruyter's goblet

Nicolaes Loockemans, 1667

A continuous scene represents the major episodes in the Dutch attack on the English naval base at Chatham. Two days after the fort at Sheerness had been captured on 20 June 1667, Dutch forces sailed up the Medway and destroyed the English fleet. The States of Holland rewarded Admiral Michiel de Ruyter with this lavish goblet. The lid bears the arms of Holland.

The Raid on the Medway led to a breakthrough in the negotiations on the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War. The peace treaty of 1667 stipulated that the English were allowed to keep New Netherland (the present state of New York), which they had just conquered. The Netherlands retained Suriname and the Moluccan island Run with its many nutmeg plantations.¹ For the Netherlands, this treaty not only brought about peace with England, but also extended the colonial plantation systems in both South America and Southeast Asia.

¹ E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 38.

H.C.H.C. des Tombe Bequest, 1892

NG-NM-9659

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE & SLAVERY

Honorary Medal Awarded by the VOC
to Ysbrant Godske for the Construction
of the Castle at the Cape of Good Hope
1677

People who have performed a heroic deed or reached the end of a long career are sometimes awarded a medal as a token of esteem and gratitude. Often these are made of gold. Especially in the 17th century, gold medals with their chains were literally a reward. They were subsequently melted down and converted into money, which is why so few have survived.

The Castle of Good Hope (on honorary medal number 1) was meant to keep the Khoi-khoi – the original inhabitants of South Africa – and the European enemies out of the Dutch Cape colony.¹ The Dutch East India Company (VOC) made use of people in slavery both inside and outside the fort.² Some of the enslaved Asians and Africans worked in agriculture to provide food for the VOC ships passing to Asia.³ Others worked on cattle and wine farms and in logging.⁴

1 M. Gosselink, 'Why not just buy the Cape?' in M. Gosselink, M. Holtrop and R. Ross (eds.), *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2017, p. 65.

2 W. Dooling and N. Worden, 'Slavery in South-Africa,' in M. Gosselink, M. Holtrop and R. Ross (eds.), *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2017, pp. 119–130, esp. p. 121.

3 V. Smeulders, *Slavernij in perspectief. Mondialisering en erfgoed in Suriname, Ghana, Zuid-Afrika en Curaçao*, (doctoral dissertation, Erasmus University, Rotterdam) 2012, p. 12.

4 W. Dooling and N. Worden, 'Slavery in South-Africa,' in M. Gosselink, M. Holtrop and R. Ross (eds.), *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2017, pp. 119–130, esp. p. 123.

Purchased 1894
NG-NM-9883

GALLEYS

A Coastal Ruin in Italy

Jan Asselijn, 1640–1652

A favourite motif of the Italianates was a small harbour on the Mediterranean Sea with a crumbling quay and a ruin. At right are an African man and a couple of Turkish traders. At the left, a man in northern European clothing gestures out to sea. Overseas trade stimulated an interest for such scenes among Dutch collectors, even though the views were imaginary.

& SLAVERY

A shackled man quenches his thirst at the fountain (centre). A group of men, some with their hair tied in a knot, converse at the right. Their chains and hairstyle make it likely that they are so-called 'galley slaves' rather than Ottoman traders.¹ These men were forced to work on ships (galleys) and in harbours. They had either been captured on ships in the Mediterranean Sea, punished for some criminal offence, or were victims of human trafficking.² The main difference with colonial slavery is that this form was not hereditary.

1 D. Bindman and H.L. Gates, Jr. (eds.), J.M. Massing (text), *The Image of the Black in Western Art. Volume III: From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition, Part 2: Europe and the World Beyond*, London 2011, p. 203.

2 A. van Stipriaan, 'Michiel de Ruijter in het Atlantisch gebied (West Afrika en de Cariben)' (internet publication), <https://alexvanstipriaan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015-Michiel-de-Ruijter-in-het-Atlantisch-gebied.pdf> (accessed 26 August 2019); 'Hugenoten als galeislaven,' *Reformatorsch Dagblad* (16 July 1974) <https://www.digibron.nl/viewer/collectie/Digibron/id/3f-9218c3686fd1d1591591d670d4259f> (accessed 16 April 2020).

Purchased with the support of the
Vereniging Rembrandt, 1908
SK-A-2313

SERVANT

& SLAVERY

Dolls' House of Petronella Oortman
Jacob Appel (I), c. 1710

This painting shows that the dolls' house was once protected by yellow curtains, which when closed created the impression of a four-poster bed, with plumes on the corners. In the painting, the curtains are drawn back and the doors are also open. All the original dolls have been lost, with the exception of a baby in a cradle.

A Black servant can be seen in the left room on the middle floor of this doll's house. He is in livery and wears a shiny silver collar around his neck, a reference to his unfree status. He is standing in what was called the 'best' or most important room in the house, where everything revolved around outward appearances. In assembling a doll's house, wealthy ladies were showcasing the ideal version of a Dutch household and this included a Black servant.¹

1 V. Smeulders and L. Lambrechts, 'Paulus. A 'Moor' in the Dutch Republic,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 122–145.

Transfer from the Nederlandsch
Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst,
1874
SK-A-4245

RICH AMSTERDAMMERS & SLAVERY

View of the Golden Bend in the Herengracht

Gerrit Adriaensz Berckheyde, 1671–1672

Due to the enormous increase of its population, Amsterdam had to expand during the 17th century: the city's rings of canals were dug in phases. Here we see the Herengracht under construction, with a few lots still empty. This particular section of the canal became the domain of the very richest. Some of the residents earned their money from trade in Asia, and almost every interior boasted Asian luxury goods.

These houses were bought by and built for the most affluent people in Amsterdam. They belonged to a select number of families with substantial power and wealth. They and their descendants often served as burgomasters of the city and sat on the boards of the Dutch East India Company, the Dutch West India Company and the Society of Suriname.¹ Through these official positions and as private individuals they profited greatly from the slave trade and slavery in both the trans-Atlantic area and around the Indian Ocean.

¹ L. Balai, *Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse Slavenhandel. Over de belangen van Amsterdamse regenten bij de trans-Atlantische slavenhandel*, Zutphen 2013, pp. 103-133; K. Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname – 1683–1795. Het bestuur van de kolonie in de achttiende eeuw*, Zutphen 2019, p. 130; B. Brommer, *To my dear Pieternelletje: grandfather and granddaughter in VOC time, 1710–1720*, Leiden 2015, p. 70.

Purchased upon the recommendation of the Vereniging Rembrandt – with the support of the Stichting Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit, thanks to a gift of the Royal Dutch Shell, and the BankGiro Lottery, 2008
SK-A-5003

AMSTERDAM

& SLAVERY

The Town Hall on Dam Square
Gerrit Adriaensz Berckheyde, 1693

The Amsterdam Town Hall (now the Royal Palace) on Dam Square counts as the most important historical and cultural monument of the Dutch Golden Age. The building symbolizes the tremendous growth and development that the city experienced during the 17th century. Gerrit Berckheyde here portrayed the Town Hall in all its glory, while simultaneously conveying the hustle and bustle of the city's main square.

In 1683, the city of Amsterdam became one of three partners comprising the board of the Society of Suriname, which was to manage and govern the colony of Suriname. As a result, the city was jointly responsible for transporting enslaved people to the colony. Consequently, Amsterdam became an active slave trader.¹ The first meetings of the gentlemen of the Society of Suriname took place in the Town Hall, where they determined the fate of people on the other side of the world.²

1 L. Balai, *Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse Slavenhandel. Over de belangen van Amsterdamse regenten bij de trans-Atlantische slavenhandel*, Zutphen 2013, pp. 73–81.

2 K. Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname – 1683–1795. Het bestuur van de kolonie in de achttiende eeuw*, Zutphen 2019.

On loan from the City of Amsterdam
(A. van der Hoop Bequest), 1885
SK-C-101

THE UTRECHTSCH COMPAGNIE & SLAVERY

Portrait of David van Mollem with his Family

Nicolaas Verkolje, 1740

The wealthy Amsterdam silk merchant David van Mollem sits with his descendants in the garden of his country house, Zijdebalen ('Silk Reams'), along the River Vecht near Utrecht. The portraitist, Verkolje, also designed the garden, which featured two large marble vases by the sculptor Jacob Cressant. Van Mollem was an authority on nature and is portrayed passing on his love of plants and science to his grandchildren.

David van Mollem was a member and major shareholder of a speculative investment company in Utrecht, which operated a city lottery and a sugar refinery.¹ In 1736 the company bought a coffee plantation in Suriname, called Utrecht. With this purchase the company also became the 'owner' of 37 men, 20 women and 2 children, who were forced to work for nothing on the plantation.² They were forbidden to use their own names and addressed with new ones, such as Princess, Adonis or Fortuna.³

1 C.H. Slechte, 'De firma list en bedrog. De Provinciale Utrechtsche Geoctroyeerde Compagnie (1720-1752)', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (1998), pp. 179-218, esp. pp. 180, 198.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 179-218, esp. p. 212.

3 National Archive (The Hague), Suriname: Oud Notarieel Archief, 1699-1829, accession no. 1.05.11.14, inv. no. 166, 'Inventarissen en prisaties,' 1734, f. 272-273.

On loan from the Amsterdams
Historisch Museum, 1999
SK-C-1658

STEREOTYPING & SLAVERY

Longcase clock
c. 1715–c. 1725

This exceptional clock case is veneered with bouille-work, a form of marquetry using various metals and tortoise-shell. This technique was rarely practised in the Netherlands. Perhaps the clock was made by a French or German cabinet-maker active for a few years in Amsterdam. It houses a complex clock movement that can play fourteen melodies on seven separate music rolls, all of which survive.

Atlas, surmounting the clock, balances on the terrestrial globe and carries the celestial sphere on his shoulders. The two black figures on either side look up at him. They are stereotypically depicted wearing a skirt of tobacco leaves and golden collars around their necks and wrists.¹ This portrayal was fairly standard in Europe, also in the visual arts and advertisements for tobacco.² In reality, Black men in Europe had to wear metal collars around their necks sometimes, a reference to 'ownership'.³

1 G. SenGupta, 'The Blackamoor as Voyager: Re-Significations in Transit from Old Worlds to Estevanico, Abraham Lincoln, Bayou Ballads, and William Attaway,' in A. Amkpa (ed.), *ReSignifications: European Blackamoors, Africana Readings*, Rome 2016, pp. 74–87, esp. p. 81; A.L. Childs, 'A Blackamoor's Progress: The Ornamental Black Body in European Furniture,' in A. Amkpa (ed.), *ReSignifications: European Blackamoors, Africana Readings*, Rome 2016, p. 121.

2 E. Runia, 'Stereotypes,' in E. Kolfin and E. Runia (eds.), *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Zwolle 2020, pp. 42–43.

3 V. Smeulders and L. Lambrechts, 'Paulus. A 'Moor' in the Dutch Republic,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 122–145.

Purchased 1969
BK-1969-102-A

MARRONAGE

Portrait of Joan Jacob Mauricius,
Governor-General of Suriname
Cornelis Troost, 1741

In this portrait of his friend Mauricius, Troost underscored their mutual love of the theatre. Mauricius sits in an imaginary interior, with shelves filled with plays behind him. On the wall is Troost's painting with a scene from the play *Jan Claesz of de gewaande Dienstmaagt* (Jan Claesz or the Supposed Servant Girl). A drawn self-portrait of Troost hangs over the edge of the table.

& SLAVERY

Because of the inhuman conditions, enslaved men and women have always tried to flee the plantations. Marronage, as this is called, required a great deal of courage and determination. While the Maroons tried to build a free life outside of the colonial system, soldiers organized manhunts on behalf of the plantation owners. Nevertheless, self-emancipated communities arose in growing numbers. Mauricius concluded peace treaties with some Maroon communities on the condition that they would denounce all new runaways.¹

¹ E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, pp. 78–91.

Purchased 1961
SK-A-4060

THE SHIP LEUSDEN & SLAVERY

Portrait of the Inspectors of the Collegium Medicum

Cornelis Troost, 1724

This large group portrait by Troost, his first, won instant admiration. The Collegium Medicum, consisting of physicians and apothecaries, regulated medical practice in Amsterdam. The inspectors' names are known: standing at centre is Dr Daniël van Buuren, pointing to a new list of medicines published in Amsterdam. Seated at right is Dr Casparus Commelin, resting his hand on a catalogue of medicinal plants.

Apothecary Jeronimo ten Bosch, second from the left, supplied the medicine chest to the *Leusden*, a Dutch West India Company (VOC) ship built specifically to move enslaved people.¹ In 1738, the *Leusden* ran aground on a sandbank off the coast of Suriname and slowly capsized. Sailors nailed shut the hatches of the lower deck 'to prevent the slaves from revolting and killing them.'² The 664 West African men, women and children on board were trapped and perished.³

1 L.W. Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden: over de slaventochten en de ondergang van de Leusden, de leefomstandigheden aan boord van slavenschepen en het einde van het slavenhandelsmonopolie van de WIC, 1720-1738*, Zutphen 2011, p. 282.

2 National Archive (The Hague), accession no. 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1141, 'Brieven en papieren uit Suriname,' f.172.

3 L.W. Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden: over de slaventochten en de ondergang van de Leusden, de leefomstandigheden aan boord van slavenschepen en het einde van het slavenhandelsmonopolie van de WIC, 1720-1738*, Zutphen 2011, p. 196.

On loan from the
City of Amsterdam, 2013
SK-C-396

DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY & SLAVERY

Box of the Dutch West India Company
Jean Saint (attributed to), 1749

In 1749, the West India Company presented this gold and tortoise shell box to Stadholder William IV when he was named its governor. How the company made its money in Africa is depicted on the lid: with slave trade (far left), and trade in ivory and gold. The man carries an elephant's tusk, the woman pans for gold. Seated atop the gold nugget in the middle is Mercury, the god of trade, with the company's logo.

To the left of the nugget of gold we see a European man holding a bag of coins in his right hand. He is giving money to another most likely African man, who points at two virtually nude adults and a child. This is one of the few known actual images of the slave trade. The box symbolizes the fortunes that were made with the colonial expansion in which people were used as commodities.¹

¹ G. van der Ham, *Tarnished Gold. Ghana and the Netherlands from 1593*, Nijmegen 2016, pp. 15–17.

Transfer from the Koninklijk Kabinet
van Zeldzaamheden, 1875
NG-NM-824

THE BISDOM VAN VLIET FAMILY & SLAVERY

Portrait of Theodorus Bisdom
van Vliet and his Family
Jan Stolker, 1757

For generations the Bisdom van Vliet family held important positions in and around Haastrecht. Theodorus was mayor of the town and an official of the Krimpenerwaard district water board. He and his wife Maria are in their garden, surrounded by their ten elegantly dressed children. The arms of both parents feature on the sides of the Rococo frame.

Theodorus Bisdom van Vliet bought the coffee and cotton plantation De Herstelling in Demerary, a Dutch colony west of Suriname, in 1771. His eldest son Cornelis, here on the far left, went to Demerary to run the plantation and died there.¹ Two of his brothers inherited the plantation and sold it a few years later for 40,000 guilders (now about 400,000 euros).² The sale also included the 30 men, 26 women and 10 children who lived and worked there in slavery.³

1 M. Bakker, 'Theodorus Bisdom van Vliet,' *Oes Olde Lu*, <https://oesoldelu.nl/bisdomvanvliet/16.html> (accessed 28 July 2020).

2 *Ibid.*, accessed 31 March 2020.

3 Streekarchief Midden-Holland, Notarieel archief Gouda 1593–1842, accession no. 43, Notary Willem van der Wagt, 'Minuutakten 1759–1805,' inv. no. 854, 3 October 1780.

Purchased 1951
SK-A-3830

WILLIAM IV

& SLAVERY

Portrait of William IV

Jacques-André-Joseph Aved, 1751

Stadtholder William IV is shown as Captain-General and Admiral-General of the Dutch Republic. He wears the decorations of the Order of the Garter. Despite all the trappings of power, the French painter Aved did not succeed in depicting him as an impressive ruler. The portrait was finished in the year that the prince died.

In 1749 Stadholder William IV took charge of both the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company thereby receiving a share of their profits. William IV played a more active role in colonial policy than his predecessors.¹ Such a position usually entailed employing Black servants.² One of them was Jean Rabo (1714–1769), who as William IV's *valet de chambre* held one of the highest posts at the court of the stadholder and his wife Anna of Hanover.³

1 K. Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname – 1683–1795. Het bestuur van de kolonie in de achttiende eeuw*, Zutphen 2019, p. 130; H. den Heijer, *De geotrooieerde compagnie: De VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap*, Deventer 2005, p. 116.

2 E. Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron. Twee Moren aan het hof van Oranje*, Amsterdam 2017, pp. 213.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 213.

Purchased 1806
SK-A-6

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE & SLAVERY

Banquet of Distinguished Turkish Women

Jean Baptiste Vanmour, c. 1720–1737

Here we see a group of women surrounded by enslaved female servants and on the sofa near the window a woman nursing her child. Affluent Turkish women visited one another frequently. The guests also often spent the night. It was said that a well-connected woman never had to stay at home, but could be out visiting all the time.

Slavery was legal and widespread in the Ottoman Empire. The enslaved men, women and children came from all of its surrounding countries and were subject to a strict hierarchy: people from the Caucasus cost more than Africans, who in turn were even more expensive than Egyptians. Servants were released after seven years and children of enslaved parents were born in freedom.¹ This stood in contrast to the Dutch system, in which a child born to an enslaved woman was also unfree by law.²

1 C. de Bellaigue, *De Islamitische verlichting: De ontmoeting tussen de Oriënt en het Westen in de Moderne Tijd*, Amsterdam 2017, p. 208.

2 W. Dooling and N. Worden, 'Slavery in South-Africa,' in M. Gosselink, M. Holtrop and R. Ross (eds.), *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2017, pp. 119–130, esp. p. 123.

Transfer from the
Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, 1902
SK-A-2004

PLANTATION

& SLAVERY

Plantation in Suriname

Dirk Valkenburg, 1707

The painter Dirk Valkenburg spent several years in Suriname at the plantations of the Amsterdam merchant Jonas Witsen, who commissioned him to paint this scene of an orange plantation. Several Indians – the original inhabitants of this territory – appear among the palm trees in the foreground, while the plantation owner's residence can be glimpsed in the background.

Glaringly absent in this painting are the 156 enslaved men, women and children who lived and worked on this plantation – probably Palmeneribo. From Amsterdam, the plantation's owner Jonas Witsen imposed stricter rules on them resulting in even less leisure time and freedom of movement. While the painter Valkenburg was staying there, a large number of the enslaved people rose up and fled to the wooded area around the plantation, namely the tranquil forest he depicted here.¹

1 E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Wally. Surviving on a Plantation in Suriname,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 84–105.

Purchased 1962
SK-A-4075

IN EXHIBITION *SLAVERY*,
THEN GALLERY 1.5

JAN PRANGER

& SLAVERY

Portrait of Jan Pranger and an Enslaved Servant

Frans van der Mijl, 1742

Jan Pranger was director-general of the Dutch West India Company on the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in West Africa from 1730 to 1734. Here he is seen standing in his office in the Dutch trading post Fort Elmina. All the details underscore the importance of his position: the enslaved man with a parasol, the commander's baton, and the monogram GWC (of the Chartered West India Company) on the tablecloth.

This scene takes place in Fort Elmina, the headquarters of the Dutch slave trade in West Africa, where Jan Pranger was director. He had this portrait of himself with his servant painted eight years later.¹ Upon terminating his contract, Pranger is known to have sailed from Elmina to Suriname with '170 Slaves, coming from the coast of Guinea' on board.² He then returned to Amsterdam with a servant, most likely this man in livery.³

1 G. van der Ham, *Tarnished Gold. Ghana and the Netherlands from 1593*, Nijmegen 2016, pp. 54, 61, 63.

2 J. Spanjert, 'Amsterdamse courant (29 November 1735), no. 143,' in: I. Mok, 'Slavernij in achttiende-eeuwse kranten. Een impressie,' *Cultuursporen* <https://www.cultuursporen.nl/2016/08/slavernij-in-achttiende-eeuwse-kranten-eeen-impressie> (accessed 15 April 2020).

3 National Archive (The Hague), accession no. 1.05.10.01, inv. no. 2, 'Oud Archief Suriname: Gouvernementssecretarie,' f. 22; I. Mok, 'Slavernij in achttiende-eeuwse kranten. Een impressie,' *Cultuursporen* <https://www.cultuursporen.nl/2016/08/slavernij-in-achttiende-eeuwse-kranten-eeen-impressie> (accessed 15 April 2020).

Purchased 1905
SK-A-2248

THE DUTCH ECONOMY & SLAVERY

Merchant and an Enslaved Servant
c. 1750–1800

This merchant had himself portrayed against a background of merchantmen and barrels, which reference his trading activities. The enslaved servant with a parasol and a decorated loincloth and jewellery also underscores his status. In the 18th century, many Europeans flocked to Suriname and the Guyanas seeking their fortune in trade or on plantations. However, the hard labour was actually done by hundreds of thousands of enslaved men, women and children from Africa.

At the right in the painting are barrels containing goods such as sugar, indigo, coffee and cotton. The sale of these products, cultivated by enslaved people, generated by far the greatest profits.¹ In turn, the Dutch economy also benefitted from selling products to the plantations. A list from 1770 shows where they came from: cheese, bacon and ham were supplied from villages in Friesland, printed cotton came from Nigtevecht, linen from Eindhoven and Borculo, hats for enslaved people were made in Den Bosch and iron pots in Deventer.²

1 P. Brandon and U. Bosma, 'De betekenis van de Atlantische slavernij voor de Nederlandse economie in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw,' *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 16:2 (2019), pp. 5–45, esp. p. 17.

2 E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Dutch colonial slavery,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, p. 48.

On loan from the Stichting
Het Vrouwenhuis, Zwolle, 2015
SK-C-1760

HESTER VAN MAKASSAR & SLAVERY

Box with Joan van Hoorn's coat of arms
c. 1700–c. 1710

Japanese lacquerware was extremely popular in both Asia and Europe. This lacquer box has the coat of arms of Joan van Hoorn on the lid and is decorated with traditional Japanese motifs on the sides.

After a long career in Asia, Governor-General Joan van Hoorn travelled back to the Netherlands in 1709. He took not only a huge load of household goods with him, including this box, but also a number of enslaved servants tasked with taking care of him during the journey.¹ They returned to Batavia upon arrival in the Netherlands.² Among them was Hester van Makassar, who made her life there as a free woman. She corresponded with Van Hoorn's daughter until the day she died.³

1 K. Zandvliet, *De 250 rijksten van de Gouden Eeuw : kapitaal, macht, familie en levensstijl*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 63–64.

2 B. Brommer, *To my dear Pieterneletje: grandfather and granddaughter in VOC time, 1710–1720*, Leiden 2015, p. 130.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 130–132.

Purchased with the support of the Joost Meijers Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds and an anonymous bequest, 2017 BK-2017-65

THE DEPOK COMMUNITY & SLAVERY

Salver (piring)
1714

The family of Cornelis Chastelein, a member of the Council of the Indies, had this silver salver made in his memory. Such trays were used to serve drinks; piring is the Malaysian word for tray or dish.

After Cornelis Chastelein's death, many of the families from Bali, Ambon, Java and South Sulawesi whom he counted as his property were released from slavery.¹ While this in itself was not uncommon in Batavia, in his will Chastelein also stipulated that these people would inherit Depok, his vast estate on Java.² A bitter struggle ensued, and it was not until 1871, after several lawsuits, that Depok became the communal property of the descendants of these families.³

1 N. Peters and G. Snoeijer, *Depok. De droom van Cornelis Castelein*, Volendam 2019, p. 41.

2 S.M.T. de Haan, 'Belanda Depok.' *Dutch Post-Colonial Identity and Collective Memory Practices in Depok Lama, Indonesia* (master's thesis, Utrecht University) 2018, p. 17; K. Zandvliet, *De 500 rijksten van de Republiek: rijkdom, geloof, macht & cultuur*, Zutphen 2018, p. 357.

3 N. Peters and G. Snoeijer, *Depok. De droom van Cornelis Castelein*, Volendam 2019, p. 46.

Purchased 1994
BK-1994-74

JAN ALBERT SICHTERMAN & SLAVERY

Plate

c. 1730–c. 1735

The arms are those of the Sichterman family. This plate belongs to one of many services ordered by Jan Albert Sichterman of Groningen. He worked for the Dutch East India Company from 1716 to 1744 and was very influential in the silk and cloth trade in Bengal. He eventually returned to the Netherlands, where he lived in a splendid house on the Ossenmarkt in Groningen.

Jan Albert Sichterman took a number of enslaved people from Bengal (Northeast India), including Klaasje, Simon and Jacob Uytvlugt, to his home in Groningen.¹ While they were legally free in the Netherlands, they still had to continue working for him as servants.² Every week, Sichterman had himself driven through Groningen with them on the box-seat of his carriage.³ Jacob Uytvlugt married a woman from Groningen and fathered children.⁴

1 M. Fokken and B. Henkes (eds.), *Sporen van het slavernijverleden in Groningen*, Groningen 2016, p. 52; Y. Kuiper, 'What about the Moorish Footman?,' in J. Ilmakunnas and J. Stobart (eds.), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisition and Boundaries*, London 2017, pp. 77–97, esp. p. 89.

2 M. Holtrop, article in N. Jouwe, W. Manuhutu et.al. (eds.), *Slavernij herbezien / Re-visualising Slavery. Visuele bronnen over slavernij in Azië / Visual sources about slavery in Asia*, Edam (forthcoming in 2021).

3 W. Kühne-van Diggelen, *Jan Albert Sichterman: VOC-dienaar en 'koning' van Groningen*, Groningen 1995, p. 88.

4 'Jakob UITVLUGT (± 1730–1807)» Genealogie Middeljans - Uytvlugt» Genealogie Online,' <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/genealogie-middeljans-uytvlugt/12.php> (accessed 1 April 2020).

J.G.A.N. de Vries Bequest,
The Hague, 1925
AK-NM-13380

CONCUBINES

Jacob Mossel (1750–1761), c. 1755
Baron Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff
(1743–1750), c. 1745

The highest-ranking Dutch East India Company (VOC) official in Asia was the Governor-General. He presided in the Castle of Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia), a fort built by the Dutch. The assembly hall in the Castle of Batavia was the centre of Dutch power in Asia. The walls were hung with portraits of all of the governors-general. Most of the 18th-century examples shown here were painted in Asia, often by anonymous artists.

Enslaved women were regularly coerced into sexual relations with their enslavers. Sometimes children were born as a result.¹ For example, Governor-General Jacob Mossel (portrait lower right) sired a daughter with Jasmina van Soembawa. The girl was named Arnolda Schulp (shell in Dutch).² Mossel (mussel in Dutch) acknowledged his paternity with this remarkable reference to his surname.³ In his will, he left Arnolda an estate and a substantial amount of money. In addition, she was granted the same rights as her half-sisters with a Dutch mother.⁴ It is not known what happened to Jasmina van Soembawa.

Transfer from the Ministerie voor Uniezaken en Overzeese Rijksdelen, 1950
SK-A-3781, 3780

& SLAVERY

Governor-General Gustaaf van Imhoff (portrait lower centre) had three children with an enslaved woman from Bali. She was called Helena Pieters after he bought her freedom and had her baptized.⁵ Van Imhoff did not marry her, but he did recognize their children in his will and sent them to the Netherlands for a better future.⁶ Helena stayed behind in Batavia, where she lived from part of Van Imhoff's inheritance and married a lieutenant from the VOC army.⁷

1 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 129–132.

2 J. Gelman Taylor, *Smeltkroes Batavia. Europeanen en Euroziaten in de Nederlandse vestigingen in Azië*, Groningen 1988, p. 91.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

4 P.C. Molhuysen, P.J. Blok, K.H. Kossmann, *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek, deel 7*, Amsterdam 1974, resources. huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/nnbw/ (accessed 5 September 2019), pp. 633–634.

5 K. Zandvliet, *De 500 rijksten van de Republiek: rijkdom, geloof, macht & cultuur*, Zutphen 2018, p. 356.

6 C. van Wamelen, *Family life onder de VOC. Een handelscompagnie in huwelijks- en gezinszaken*, Hilversum 2014, p. 432.

7 P.C. Molhuysen, P.J. Blok, K.H. Kossmann, *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek, deel 7*, Amsterdam 1974, resources. huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/nnbw/ (accessed 5 September 2019), pp. 633–634.

THE MORAVIAN BRETHREN & SLAVERY

Room from an Amsterdam canal house
c. 1745–c. 1748

This room was originally in the house at 187 Keizersgracht in Amsterdam, which was demolished in 1896. The property was inherited in 1744 by the merchant Mathijs Beuning, who built an addition to the rear of the house that included this large reception room. Beuning was a prominent member of the Moravian Brethren, a religious brotherhood. He probably held meetings of the Amsterdam Moravian community in this room. The chimneypiece features a biblical subject: the Conversion and Baptism of the Eunuch. Tropical mahogany was not yet widely used in the Netherlands around 1745, so wall panelling made of this type of wood was a great rarity. The wood is carved in the Rococo style, which is also evident in the marble mantelpiece and the stuccowork on the ceiling. The overdoor, attributed to Jurriaan Andriessen, was added in the later 18th century.

The painting above the mantelpiece depicts the baptism of the eunuch, the biblical story in which an Ethiopian converts to Christianity and is baptized. The Moravian Brethren, a religious brotherhood, was inspired by this story,¹ which for them embodied the idea that the souls of Black people could be saved by Christianity.² The Moravian Brethren travelled to Suriname, among other places, as missionaries to convert enslaved people, whose religions and spirituality they branded as idolatry.³ In 2013, the European section of the Moravian Church apologized for failing to contribute to changing or abolishing the 'degrading system of slavery.'⁴

1 J. de Fouw, 'Rococo and Religion: A Room for Hershutters in an Amsterdam Canal House,' *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 65 (2017) 1, pp. 28-41, esp. p. 29.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

3 Y. van der Pijl, *Levende-doden: Afrikaans-Surinaamse percepties, praktijken en rituelen rondom dood en rouw*, Amsterdam 2007, p. 122.

4 Declaration of the Provincial Council of the Evangelical Brotherhood (European Continental Province), Bad Boll, Herrnhut and Zeist, June 2013, https://www.ebgu.nl/cms/_data/Verklaring_van_het_Provinciaal_Bestuur.pdf (accessed 3 July 2019).

On loan from the
Amsterdam Museum, 2006
BK-C-2007-1

TULA

Twig from a liberty tree
1795

With help from the French, the Dutch Patriots assumed power in January 1795 and founded the Batavian Republic. This was cause for celebration in countless cities; liberty trees were established in many places and people danced around them. This twig was cut from the liberty tree erected on Dam Square in Amsterdam on 21 January and preserved as a memento of the festivities.

& SLAVERY

The ideals of the French Revolution – freedom, equality and fraternity – were central in the new Batavian Republic, and they inspired Tula, an enslaved man on Curaçao. In 1795 he advocated equal treatment for himself and his fellow sufferers. His position was that since ‘the Netherlands has been taken by the French, we should be free here too.’ Tula’s appeal led to the greatest slave revolt in the Netherlands Antilles. Every year on 17 August this uprising is commemorated and the struggle for freedom celebrated on Curaçao.¹

1 V. Smeulders, ‘Tula. Liberty, equality and fraternity,’ in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 220–239.

On loan from the Koninklijk
Oudheidkundig Genootschap, 1885
NG-KOG-1204-1

SCIENTISTS

& SLAVERY

Self-portrait of Petrus Camper

Petrus Camper, 1777

Petrus Camper was an internationally renowned physician with a profound interest in the theory and practice of art. He published on a broad range of subjects, including orangutans, inguinal hernias, megaliths, the cattle plague and the croaking of frogs. After holding a professorship at Franeker (in Friesland), he settled in Amsterdam, where he became a patron of the Drawing Academy and lectured at the Felix Meritis Society.

Petrus Camper researched the physical characteristics of different groups of people. His facial angle theory actually stressed the similarities between them.¹ Later, however, scientists misused his work to classify people into 'races' in order to emphasize the supposed superiority of white people and thus justify racism and slavery.² Contrary to this, in 1772 Camper wrote: 'we are white Moors, or rather we are people similar to the Blacks in every way.'³

1 G. Oostindie and K. Fatah-Black, *Sporen van de slavernij in Leiden*, Leiden 2017, p. 55.

2 Ibid.

3 P. Camper, 'Redevoering over de Oorsprong en de kleur der Zwarten,' in *De Rhapsodist II*, Amsterdam 1772, p. 379.

Transfer from the Nederlandsch Museum
voor Geschiedenis en Kunst, 1883
BK-NM-5166

ABOLITIONISTS

& SLAVERY

Lectern of the Felix Meritis Society
c. 1778–c. 1779

This lectern was made shortly after the Felix Meritis Society was founded in Amsterdam in 1777. It was a kind of secular pulpit for speakers lecturing on the arts and sciences. The carved reliefs refer to the society's five departments: commerce, natural science, music, literature and drawing.

The jurist Hendrik Constantijn Cras stood at this lectern when he delivered his 'Treatise on Slavery and the African Slave Trade' in 1793.¹ Cras based himself on English and French abolitionists, opponents of the slavery system.² He predicted there would be dire consequences if the system was not swiftly abolished: 'Shouldn't such abuses ignite an eternal hatred between White and Black people?'³ And yet this did not happen quickly at all. The Netherlands only abolished slavery some 70 years later (in 1860 in the Dutch East Indies, in 1863 in the Atlantic region).

1 L.A. Claessens, R. Vinkeles, *Historische beschrijving van het gebouw der Maatschappij van verdiensten, ter spreuke voerende: Felix Meritis [te Amsterdam]*, Amsterdam 1800, pp. 105–116, esp. p. 93.

2 A.N. Paasman, *Reinhart: Nederlandse literatuur en slavernij ten tijde van de Verlichting*, Leiden 1984, pp. 125–126.

3 H.C. Cras, 'Verhandeling over de slavernij en Afrikaanschen slavenhandel,' in H.C. Cras. *Nagelatene verhandelingen en redevoeringen*. [...], 2 vols. Amsterdam 1822, vol. 2, p. 221.

Gift of the Maatschappij
Felix Meritis, 1889
BK-NM-8868

WILLIAM V

& SLAVERY

Portraits of the stadtholder's family

Johann Friedrich August Tischbein, 1789

Under pressure from fierce opposition to his rule, Stadtholder William V and his family fled The Hague in 1785. They returned two years later and the stadtholder's authority was restored. This provided the occasion to commission a series of portraits of the members of his family from the portraitist Tischbein. The artist produced a fashionable group of oval portraits in pastel. The giltwood frames were made by the Hague framemaker Hendrik Ebbens.

William V (portrait top row, second from left) was the highest director of the Dutch West India Company, a ceremonial function that earned him 100,000 guilders a year.¹ In addition, the Company presented him with two children, named Willem Frederik Cupido and Guan Anthony Sideron, as a 'gift'.² Willem Frederik came from the coast of African Guinea, Guan Anthony from Curaçao. Ripped from their families, they were part of William V's royal household from the age of eight.³ To this day, Willem Frederik Cupido's descendants live in the Netherlands.⁴

1 H. den Heijer, *De geotrooieerde compagnie: De VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap*, Amsterdam/Deventer 2005, p. 200.

2 E. Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron. Twee Moren aan het hof van Oranje*, Amsterdam 2017, p. 25.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–56.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 192–205.

SK-A-408

FRANS GREENWOOD & SLAVERY

Portrait of Frans Greenwood,
Miniaturist, Glass Engraver
and Poet in Dordrecht
Aert Schouman, 1732–1771

The Amsterdam spice merchant Arnoud van Halen began assembling the Panpoëticon Batavum, a collection of portraits of Dutch poets, in 1719. This initiative typifies the 18th-century preoccupation with national cultural identity and classification. Van Halen managed to collect 346 portraits, round 80 are in the Rijksmuseum. Two series are shown here. At first the portraits were copied after prints, but later they were painted after life.

The poet Frans Greenwood (second row, centre) inherited the Blackkreek sugar plantation from his father in 1731.¹ He himself never travelled to Suriname to visit it and never met the 200 enslaved people forced to work for him.² This form of ownership is called absenteeism and it became more common in the course of the 18th century. It fostered even more cruelty, because enslavers did not establish a personal bond with the men, women and children who were forced to work for them.³

1 R. Leentvaar, 'Frans Greenwood', <https://www.regionaalarchiefdordrecht.nl/biografisch-woordenboek/frans-greenwood/> (accessed 24 April 2019).

2 Ibid.

3 E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 99.

Purchased 1902
SK-A-1968

RUTGER JAN SCHIMMELPENNINCK & SLAVERY

Portrait of Rutger Jan
Schimmelpenninck and his Family
Pierre Prud'hon, 1801–1802

Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck was a Patriot from the very beginning and occupied important political offices in the Batavian Republic. He was president of the National Assembly in 1796, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary in Paris from 1798 to 1800 and the Batavian ambassador to France and to the United Kingdom in the following years. This portrait was painted in Paris.

In April 1797, the new Dutch constitution was debated in the National Assembly, in which Schimmelpenninck also took part. One of the parliamentarians was surprised that not a word was uttered about the freedom and equality of enslaved people.¹ 'Are the black inhabitants of Africa human beings, or are they not?'² However, fearing unrest Schimmelpenninck was reluctant to make a hasty decision.³ With a large majority of votes, the National Assembly ultimately decided against incorporating the abolition of the slave trade and slavery into the constitution.

1 S. Vuyk, "'Wat is dit anders dan met onze eigen hand deze gruwelen te plegen?' Remonstrantse en doopsgezinde protesten tegen slavenhandel en slavernij in het laatste decennium van de achttiende eeuw,' *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 32 (2006), pp. 171–206, esp. p. 199.

2 P. van Sasse van Ysselt, '1863. Slavernij en slavenhandel: Afschaft, verboden, maar niet voorbij,' in D.P. van den Bosch (ed.), *De jaren van het Koninkrijk, Tien knooppunten*, The Hague 2014, pp. 13–26, esp. p. 16.

3 E. Hagen, *President van Nederland. Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761–1825)*, Amsterdam 2012, pp. 97–98.

Gift of Mr and Mrs Drucker-Fraser,
Montreux, 1929
SK-A-3097

ISAAC GOGEL

& SLAVERY

Portrait of Isaac Jan Alexander Gogel

Mattheus Ignatius van Bree,
c. 1811–c. 1813

Gogel was one of the architects of the 1798 constitution of the Batavian Republic. As minister of finance, he introduced a new tax system in 1805. He also initiated the founding of the Nationale Konstgallerij, the precursor of the Rijksmuseum, in 1798.

Through his trading house, Isaac Gogel extended loans to the owners of the plantations *Nooitgedacht*, *Vrede en Vriendschap* and *De Goudmijn* in Berbice (present day Guyana), a private Dutch colony on the north coast of South America.¹ The owner of *Nooitgedacht* kept Gogel abreast of the ins and outs of the plantation.² His associate had one of the enslaved people killed and ‘mistreated others to such an extent that they cannot work!’³ This information did not prevent Gogel from continuing to invest in this plantation.

1 J. Postma, *Alexander Gogel (1765–1821): grondlegger van de Nederlandse staat*, (doctoral dissertation), Hilversum 2017, p. 177.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

3 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 227.

W.S. Burger Bequest,
Antwerp, 1933
SK-A-3136

ISAAC VAN BENGALEN

& SLAVERY

The Nieuwe Kerk and the Town Hall
on the Dam in Amsterdam

Isaac Ouwater, c. 1780–c. 1790

This painting was made as the pendant to *The Sint-Antoniuswaag in Amsterdam*. In both, Ouwater plays with contrasts of light and shade in a similar fashion. The cloudy skies set the tone. The imposing town hall in the foreground is in shadow, while the Nieuwe Kerk somewhat further back is bathed in sunlight.

On 22 February 1736, the newborn Clara, Elsje and Dorothee were baptized in the Nieuwe Kerk, as was Isaac van Bengalen. According to the church's baptism register, Isaac was not an infant, but an 'elderly black person.'¹ He was most likely enslaved in Bengal (Northeast India), bought by a VOC employee, and transported to Batavia. Ultimately, he was taken to Amsterdam as a servant. This fate befell thousands of Asians and Africans, whose names can be found in the baptism, marriage and burial registers of churches throughout the Netherlands.²

1 Amsterdam City Archives, DTB Baptism, archive no. 5001, inv. no. 52, p. 75 (folio 38), no.13, deed no. DTB 52.

2 M. Holtrop, 'Van Bengalen. Shipped to Batavia, Banda, Cape Town and Dokkum,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 147–175; M. Holtrop, article in N. Jouwe, W. Manuhutu et al. (eds.), *Slavernij herbezien / Re-visualising Slavery. Visuele bronnen over slavernij in Azië / Visual sources about slavery in Asia*, Edam (forthcoming in 2021).

Purchased 1819
SK-A-305

THE DUTCH ELITE & SLAVERY

The Garden and Coach House of 524
Keizersgracht in Amsterdam
Hendrik Keun, 1772

Nicolaas Doekscheer, who lived at 524 Keizersgracht, built a grand, Rococo coach house on the Kerkstraat, which adjoined the back of his garden. He is here depicted conversing with the gardener, while his wife speaks to a maidservant. The two young men are Doekscheer's nephews and heirs. The painting is still in its original Rococo frame.

The 18th-century Dutch elite benefitted greatly from the slavery-based plantation economy.¹ So did Nicolaas Doekscheer and his associate Hendrik Steenbergen, both depicted here in a garden. They financed no less than fifteen plantations in Berbice, Demerary and Essequibo (all three part of present-day Guyana, South America).² Thanks to these loans, plantation owners were able to set up their coffee, cotton and sugar plantations, while in Amsterdam Doekscheer and Steenbergen made a substantial profit from the interest.³

1 P. Brandon and U. Bosma, 'De betekenis van de Atlantische slavernij voor de Nederlandse economie in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw,' *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 16 (2019) 2, pp. 5–45, esp. p. 9; P. Koulen, 'Slavenhouders en geldschietters. Nederlandse belangen in Berbice, Demerara en Essequibo 1815–1839,' *Gen.magazine* 21 (2015) 1, pp. 46–52, esp. p. 46.

2 P. Koulen, 'Slavenhouders en geldschietters. Nederlandse belangen in Berbice, Demerara en Essequibo 1815–1839,' *Gen.magazine* 21 (2015) 1, pp. 46–52, esp. p. 51.

3 P. Koulen, 'Slavenhouders en Geldschietters - bronpublicatie plantage-eigenaren,' <http://gen-magazine.blogspot.com/2015/03/slavenhouders-en-geldschietters.html> (accessed 8 February 2019).

Purchased with the support of the
Stichting tot Bevordering van de
Belangen van het Rijksmuseum, 1951
SK-A-3831

COFFEE

& SLAVERY

Dutch Girl at Breakfast

Jean-Etienne Liotard, c. 1756

One of Liotard's few paintings in oil and even rarer genre pieces, this work is his most concrete homage to the Dutch masters of the 17th century. Liotard has composed an interior reminiscent of those depicted by Vermeer and De Hooch, but with modern, 18th-century Dutch furniture. It is possible that he was inspired by a stay at Delft, where a cousin was a pastor of the Huguenot church. The painting in the background shows the interior of the Nieuwe Kerk there.

Here we see a young woman sipping coffee, which was a popular drink as early as the 18th century.¹ Coffee beans were usually picked and processed by enslaved people in the colonies.² In 1775, the magazine *De Vaderlander* vainly called for a coffee boycott: 'Unfortunate callused fists had to work the ground for the coffee and sugar that you now hold in your silky soft hands. They were killed to satisfy your need. The liquid in your coffee cup is no longer water but tears.'³

1 M. van der Laan, *Uit verre landen. Koffie, thee en andere koloniale waren*, Eindhoven/s-Hertogenbosch 2015, pp. 45–51.

2 A. van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast, roofbouw en overleven in een caraibische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863*, Leiden 1993, pp. 149–150; J. Breman, *Koloniaal profijt van onvrije arbeid. Het Preanger stelsel van gedwongen koffieteel op Java*, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 73–112.

3 'De oorzaak der slaaverny,' *De Vaderlander*, no. 43 (23 Oct. 1775), pp. 337–345, esp. p. 343.

Purchase made possible by the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association through its 'Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit', Mondriaan Fund, VSBfonds, H.B. van der Ven, The Hague, Fonds De Haseth-Möller/Rijksmuseum Fonds, LOBA Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Nan van Andel Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Marjon Ornstein Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Elles Nansink Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Rijksmuseum International Circle, gifts from bequests and anonymous benefactors, 2016 SK-A-5039

AMSTERDAM

& SLAVERY

The Bookshop and Lottery Agency
of Jan de Groot in the Kalverstraat
in Amsterdam

Isaac Ouwater, 1779

A group of men push and shove to enter the door of the lottery agency – to the astonishment of passersby and the general amusement of the hotel guests on either side. The scene is the start of the lottery ticket sales organized by the States General on 25 October 1779. This was the immediate forerunner of the National Lottery, which still exists, as does the house seen here.

In this painting at the left we see a Black man standing in front of the Graef van Holland lodging and coffee house. At the end of the 18th century more Black people were living in Amsterdam than a century earlier. Formerly enslaved people settled in the Netherlands, studied, worked, married and had children.¹ While portraits of the elite only depict Black people as servants, paintings like this one testify to the presence of black Dutchmen in a greater variety of roles.

1 C. Haarnack, D. Hondius, E. Kolfin, "Swart" in Nederland: Afrikanen en Creolen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden vanaf de middeleeuwen tot de twintigste eeuw, in E. Kolfin and E. Schreuder (eds.), *Black is beautiful: Rubens tot Dumas*, Zwolle 2010, pp. 88–107, esp. pp. 94–99.

Purchased 1960
SK-A-4026

WILLIAM I

& SLAVERY

Portrait of William I, King of the Netherlands

Joseph Paelinck, 1819

In 1812 Napoleon suffered a series of major defeats which allowed William Frederick, Prince of Orange-Nassau, to return to the Netherlands as monarch in 1813. A month after Napoleon's escape from Elba, he proclaimed himself King of the United Netherlands (now the Netherlands and Belgium) and Duke of Luxemburg. After the Battle of Waterloo he was inaugurated in 1815 as King William I.

On 15 June 1814, under pressure from the English, King William I issued the decree to abolish the trade in human beings with Dutch ships.¹ Slavery and exploitation in the Dutch colonies continued for decades, however. In this portrait, King William I points to a map of Java in the former Dutch East Indies. Following William I's approval, the Culture System (a revenue system) was implemented there in 1830. The Javanese people were forced into unpaid labour and had to cultivate crops for the European market.²

1 P. Koulen, 'Slavenhouders en geldschietters. Nederlandse belangen in Berbice, Demerara en Essequibo 1815–1839,' *Gen.magazine* 21 (2015) 1, pp. 46–52, esp. p. 52.

2 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 221–228.

On loan from the Dienst voor 's Rijks
Verspreide Kunstvoorwerpen, 1961
SK-C-1460

NICOLAAS VAN WINTER & SLAVERY

The Shop of the Bookdealer Pieter Meijer Warnars on the Vijgendam in Amsterdam

Johannes Jelgerhuis, 1820

Amsterdam's cultural elite met up in this book and print shop. Warnars, the owner, was a bookdealer, publisher and printer. These activities are reflected in the full bookcases, the hanging banner, new reams of paper and the printing press on the floor. The painter of this scene, Johannes Jelgerhuis, was also a noted actor. The pronounced perspective of the shop interior makes it look like a stage set with a city view as a backdrop.

The grandfather of this bookshop's owner was also a publisher, including of Nicolaas van Winter's play *Monzongo, of de koningklyke slaaf* (Monzongo, or the royal slave) (1774).¹ In *Monzongo*, Van Winter criticized slavery, as one of the few Dutch people to do so.² Thus he wrote in his preface: 'I tried to make them aware of the inappropriateness of slavery; (...) [to listen to] the voice of humanity, and to arouse their sense of compassion.'³ The tragedy was performed throughout the country and attracted a large audience.⁴

1 M. de Vries, 'Pieter Meijer (1718–1781), een uitgever als instituut,' *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 28 (2005), pp. 81–98, esp. pp. 90, 97.

2 G. Oostindie and K. Fatah-Black, *Sporen van de slavernij in Leiden*, Leiden 2017, pp. 53–54.

3 N.S. de Winter, *Monzongo, of De koningklyke slaaf. Treurspel*, Amsterdam 1774.

4 S. Adams, 'Slavernye onder het oog [...] brengen.' *Abolitionistisch theater in de discussie over de afschaffing van de koloniale slavernij in Nederland rond 1800*, (master's thesis, Ghent University), 2015, p. 11.

G. Meijer Warnars Bequest, Zutphen, 1878
SK-A-662

PUBLIC OPINION & SLAVERY

Portrait of William II, King of the Netherlands

Jan Adam Kruseman, 1839

This is a portrait of King William II in military uniform, but with a decidedly informal air. Accompanied by his hound, he poses casually in the dunes, which in the Romantic era was considered the quintessentially Dutch landscape. In 1848 – when revolutions were raging throughout Europe – William II renounced royal autocracy and the Netherlands became a parliamentary democracy.

King William II received petitions from citizens calling on him to abolish slavery.¹ For example, in 1842 a Rotterdam women's committee wrote the following to him: 'Since we ourselves enjoy freedom, (...) we can no longer be indifferent to the calls of people deprived of this privilege.'² The women were told by the Minister of Colonial Affairs, in the name of the King, that abolition was not yet possible because it would impede the growth of the Dutch economy.³

1 M. Gulmans and L. Vasquez, 'Borduren tegen de slavernij,' *Lees het NA magazine* 3 (2011), pp. 4–7, esp. p. 7.

2 L. Vasquez and M. Gulmans, 'Vrouwen tegen de slavernij. Dames-Comité ter bevordering van de Evangelie-verkondiging en de Afschaffing der Slavernij in Suriname,' *Ijzeren Eeuw* <http://ijzereneeuw.nl/sekse/vrouwen-tegen-de-slavernij> (geraadpleegd 4 juli 2019).

3 Minister of Colonial Affairs J.C. Baud, 26 July 1842, in M. Gulmans and L. Vasquez, 'Borduren tegen de slavernij,' *Lees het NA magazine* 3 (2011), pp. 4–7, esp. p. 7.

On loan from the City of Amsterdam
(A. van der Hoop Bequest)
SK-C-170

AFRICAN SOLDIERS & SLAVERY

Portrait of a Wounded KNIL Soldier
Isaac Israels, 1882

This Ghanaian was named Kees Pop when he joined the Dutch colonial army in the former slave fort Elmina located in present-day Ghana. His African name is unknown: he was the son of Kwamena and Ekoerva. 'Pop' signed on in 1869 for a twelve-year tour and fought in the Aceh War in Indonesia. Israels portrayed him – with his medals – in the Netherlands shortly before he returned to Africa.

Even after the abolition of slavery, workers were still being conscripted at Fort Elmina (in present-day Ghana). Dubbed 'Kees Pop', the sitter was one of the 3000 Africans who enlisted there in the KNIL (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, or Dutch colonial army). African soldiers were said to be more resistant to the tropical climate than Europeans and, moreover, to have a courageous and reliable character. The Javanese called them *Wollanda hitam*, Black Dutchmen. African soldiers returning to Elmina often settled in a district still known as Java Hill.¹

1 E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Een Afrikaan in dienst van het KNIL: Een zoektocht naar de naam bij het gezicht,' *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 48 (2000) 4, pp. 294–303.

Purchased 2000
SK-A-4954

UNTIL 28 SEPTEMBER 2021
IN GALLERY 1.17

THE GROTE POSTWEG & SLAVERY

The Great Postal Route
near Rejapolah

Auguste Antoine Joseph Payen, 1828

As a commission from the Dutch king, Payen painted the landscape of the Dutch East Indies. Here we see the Great Postal Route (Grote Postweg). The 1000-kilometer road between West and East Java was built in one year (1808). Governor-General Daendels earned much respect for this prestigious project, but it came at a cost: thousands of Indonesian workers died during its construction. Nothing of that is seen in this romanticized painting.

It is plausible that enslaved people were also among the thousands of Indonesians who worked on the construction of the Grote Postweg (*Jalan Raya Pos*).¹ This road was commissioned by Dutch Governor-General Daendels, who made extensive use of enslaved people under his regime. He stimulated the slave trade and used enslaved men for his army.²

1 H. Stevens, *Bitter Spice. Indonesia and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2015, p. 133; Th. Stevens, 'De Postweg en Daendels; een vraagstuk,' in F. van Anrooy et al., *Herman Willem Daendels 1762–1818*, The Hague 1991, p. 75.

2 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 170–172; L.W.G. de Roo, *Documenten omtrent Herman Willem Daendels, gouverneur-generaal van Ned. Oost-Indië*, The Hague 1909, p. 333.

On loan from the Rijksmuseum
Volkenkunde, 2013
SK-C-1718

FREEDOM

& SLAVERY

Cup and Saucer with an Abolitionist Scene

Etruria Works, England, c. 1850–1900

This cup and saucer were probably made for a Dutch anti-slavery committee. Such women's groups sold embroidery, jewellery and china-ware for the benefit of enslaved people in Suriname and other colonies. The decoration is after a design by the English porcelain manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood, a leading supporter of the anti-slavery movement. The English abolished slavery in 1833. In Suriname and the Dutch Antilles this took place only in 1863.

This cup features a kneeling, chained man begging for his freedom.¹ This image, used by the European anti-slavery movement, disregards the fierce struggle for freedom and the abolition of slavery enslaved people themselves endured; for instance, as on St Maarten, where they fled the plantations in large numbers. They then joined groups of self-emancipated people or left for the surrounding islands.² After years of resistance, in 1848 the plantation owners had to agree to the freedom of all inhabitants of the island.³

1 E. Kolfin, 'Becoming Human: The Iconography of Black Slavery in French, British and Dutch Book Illustrations c. 1600–c. 1800,' in E. McGrath and J.M. Massing (eds.), *The Slave in European Art: From Renaissance Trophy to Abolitionist Emblem*, London 2012, pp. 253–296, esp. p. 278.

2 V. Smeulders, 'Lohkay. Beads versus Laws,' in E. Sint Nicolaas and V. Smeulders (eds.), *Slavery*, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 264–289.

3 Ibid.

Purchased 1994
NG-1994-53-A

PLANTATIONS

& SLAVERY

Diorama of the Zeezigt Coffee and Cotton Plantation

Gerrit Schouten, c. 1815–1821

In the mid-19th century, almost 800 men, women and children held in slavery worked on the Zeezigt coffee and cotton plantation. Yet only a few of them are to be seen in the diorama. They sweep the coffee-drying floor, spread the cotton in the sun and work in the carpentry workshop. Schouten also depicted an overseer on horseback taking a fugitive man back to the plantation.

Many people on the plantations tried to escape from slavery. Horrific punishments awaited them if they were caught. They then had to return to picking coffee cherries and cotton from sunrise to sunset. If they failed to meet the quota, they were punished harshly. The song 'epi na bon' (The coffee is ripe for harvesting) is about the fear of these mistreatments. It went: 'Tobo no furu! A da mi o' (The tub is not full! Woe to me!).¹

¹ F. Ferdinand, *Toontaal. Sprekende Surinaamse liedjes van 1650 tot 1950*, Volendam 2019, pp. 207–209.

Purchased 1983
NG-1983-1

WOMEN

Diorama of Government Square in Paramaribo

Gerrit Schouten, 1812

This is how Paramaribo's Government Square (now Onafhankelijkheidsplein, or Independence Square) looked in the years when Suriname was under British rule, from 1804 to 1816. The British flag flies above Fort Zeelandia. Behind it, two British merchantmen sail on the Suriname River. On the left, the governor, Sir Pinson Bonham, in a red uniform, stands before the door of his residence. His wife is just coming out, holding their young daughter by the hand.

& SLAVERY

Two women walk on the right side of the path, one holding a child in her arms. Many enslaved women had to give up caring for their own families to feed and raise their slave holder's children. As adults, these children in turn became the enslavers of their former caretakers.

Purchased 1959
NG-412

FRIMANGRON

& SLAVERY

Model of the Memorial of J.F. de Friderici

Gerrit Schouten, 1812

Jurriaan François de Friderici, former soldier and Governor-General of Suriname from 1790 to 1802, died in 1812. Alongside his military career, he was also a planter and owned thirteen plantations. After his death, a memorial for him – most likely after this design by Gerrit Schouten – was placed in the Dutch Reformed Koepelkerk. The monument was lost in the fire that destroyed the city in 1821.

During the harvest, former enslaved men would sing ‘Granman Friderici, wan bun granman!’ (Governor Friderici, a good governor!).¹ Previously, they had fought against those who had fled from the plantations. In exchange, at the end of the 18th century, Di Friderici granted them their freedom and gave them a plot of land on the outskirts of Paramaribo, which they could cultivate and inhabit. The area was called Frimangron, literally land of the free man.² The community had grown into a group of some 15,000 people by 1863, when slavery was abolished.³

1 F. Ferdinand, *Toontaal. Sprekende Surinaamse liedjes van 1650 tot 1950*, Volendam 2019, pp. 196, 197.

2 K. Fatah-Black, *Eigendomsstrijd. De geschiedenis van slavernij en emancipatie in Suriname*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 17.

3 *Ibid.* p. 18.

Gift of Jonkheer F.W.A. Beelaerts
van Blokland, Bloemendaal, 2006
NG-2006-109

SHOES

& SLAVERY

Diorama of the Waterfront of Paramaribo

Gerrit Schouten, 1820

The waterfront along the Suriname River was the vital hub of Surinamese trade. At left a merchantman sails out. The boat next to it – a pondo covered with leaves of the pina (a kind of palm) – carries goods to the plantations. Europeans used the green boat with the Dutch flag for their own transport. The person who commissioned this diorama, British merchant William Leckie, lived in the green house. It went up in flames during a fire that ravaged this part of Paramaribo in 1821.

Surinamese society consisted of people with different backgrounds. Those seen here walking barefoot are enslaved. The government, namely, wished to differentiate between the free and unfree. Formerly, Black people had not been free. However, when increasing numbers of individuals bought their freedom or were born into it, the distinction between their status became blurred. And so, from 1769 onwards, enslaved people were legally prohibited from wearing shoes.¹

¹ E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 119.

Purchased with the support of the Johan Huizinga Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, the Mondriaan Stichting, the Scato Gockinga Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds and the Stichting Dr Hendrik Muller's Vaderlandsch Fonds, 2007 NG-2007-50

DU DANCES

& SLAVERY

Diorama of a *Du*, Dance Celebration on the Plantation

Gerrit Schouten, 1830

In the tent we see a *du*, a type of role play with music and dance that was held on plantations. Both the performers and the audience were people held in slavery. The lead role was reserved for the *afrankeri*, the narrator (the woman on the far left). The man in the red outfit on the right represents the colonial authority. During the *du*, the enslaved people could vent criticism of this authority in their own language, *Sranan tongo*.

Enslaved people on the plantations were occasionally allowed to organize a dance party.¹ They used these *du*s to criticize the masters or organize resistance. During a visit by Prince Hendrik in 1835 they sang: 'Yu sori hin da boen, Yu musu sori hin da ogri tu!' (You show him [Prince Hendrik] the beautiful side, show him the ugly side too!).²

1 E. Sint Nicolaas, *Shackles and Bonds. Suriname and the Netherlands from 1600*, Amsterdam 2018, p. 109.

2 M.H.G. van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, Paramaribo 2002, pp. 261–262.

Purchased 2005
NG-2005-24

KARBOEGERS

& SLAVERY

Diorama of a Carib Camp
Gerrit Schouten, 1810

This diorama presents an everyday scene in a Carib settlement along a river. The men are building a hut or returning from hunting, while the women prepare food and care for the children. On the right they are making bread from cassava, a tuberous root. Baskets are being brought ashore from the corial (dugout canoe) along the bank.

The woman under the roof on the right may be a Maroon who had fled from one of the plantations. Maroons settled outside colonial society in areas where the Caribs – one of the population groups of Suriname – also lived. Maroons and the Caribs traded with each other and sometimes formed alliances. At the end of the 17th century, a mixed group of Maroons and Caribs emerged called the Karboegers. They lived on the Coppename River.¹

¹ C. Schult, *Een noodzakelijk bondgenootschap. De rol van de indianen in de kolonies Essequibo en Demerary, 1770–1800*, (master's thesis, Leiden University), 2014, p. 26.

Purchased 2010
NG-2010-4

DESHIMA

& SLAVERY

Model of the island of Deshima
1850–1851

This model shows the Dutch trading post of Deshima on the eve of the opening up of Japan to the West. The island was very small, only 214 by 64 meters. The Dutch ships were loaded and unloaded at the gate on the short end. The bridge on the long side connected Deshima to the city of Nagasaki. The port was strictly guarded to prevent anyone from entering or leaving Deshima without permission of the Japanese authorities.

The Dutch also made use of forced labour on Deshima, Japan.¹ They transported enslaved people from other parts of Asia to the Japanese island. Titia Cock Blomhoff, wife of the most important Dutchman on Deshima, lived there for a few months in 1817. She considered slavery a necessity and in one of her letters complained that: 'Slaves are difficult and costly furniture, but one cannot do without them.'² It was not until 1828 that enslaved people were considered as persons instead of commodities under Dutch law.³

1 J. de Hond and M. Fitski, *A Narrow Bridge. Japan and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2016, p. 83, note 9.

2 J. Hemmes, *Brieven uit Deshima: met het manuscript van Ennius H. Bergsma over de reis, 200 jaar geleden, van Jan Cock Blomhoff en Titia Bergsma, met hun zoontje, naar Japan*, Zierikzee 2017, p. 65.

3 C. van Galen, "'Wat zal er met ons gebeuren als wij geen slaven meer hebben?' De EBG in de Surinaamse slavenregisters, 1830–1863," in J. Egas, M. Gill and J. van Heijst (eds.), *Hernhutters in beweging: 250 jaar grote kerkzaal*, Utrecht 2019, pp. 95–110, esp. p. 98.

Transfer from Koninklijk Kabinet van
Zeldzaamheden, 1885
NG-721

EXPLOITATION

& SLAVERY

Man and Machine

Marinus Johannes Hack, c. 1913

This statue stood at the entrance of the Amsterdam office of a company that exported machines to Dutch businesses in the former Dutch East Indies. The Javanese man, nude and sitting cross-legged, symbolizes the colony. The modern diesel engine in his lap alludes to the company's trading activities, as well as to the progress that the Netherlands hoped to bring to Indonesia.

The notion of European superiority was still prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century.¹ This is baldly expressed in this sculpture: the Indonesian is subservient to the European – at least, that was the thinking. Although slavery had been abolished in the Dutch East Indies since 1860, great inequality and unfree labour continued to exist thereafter. The Dutch state and private companies made extensive use of cheap labour.² As slavery was no longer an option, contract workers were exploited and abused instead.³

1 G. van der Ham, *De geschiedenis van Nederland in 100 voorwerpen*, Amsterdam 2013, p. 395.

2 R. Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 239–245.

3 G. van der Ham, *De geschiedenis van Nederland in 100 voorwerpen*, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 395–396.

Gift of Lindeteves-Jacoberg B.V., 1992
NG-1992-18

ANTON DE KOM

& SLAVERY

Anton de Kom,
Wij slaven van Suriname, 1934
cover photo: Piet Zwart

With *Wij slaven van Suriname* Anton de Kom gave a voice and a face to the people of Suriname, who were oppressed by slavery and Dutch colonialism. The photograph of the author on the cover emphasizes that this book is a personal chronicle. Its innovation lay in the fact that De Kom wrote the history of Suriname from an anticolonial point of view: 'This book endeavours to arouse the self-respect of the Surinamese.'

Anton de Kom fought against injustice and for equality his entire life. He was the first to address the repercussions of slavery in his own time. He also offered practical help to unskilled workers in Suriname and wrote articles for the illegal and communist press during the German occupation of the Netherlands. This struggle proved fatal. He was betrayed and ended up in a German concentration camp where he died on 24 April 1945. De Kom was inscribed in the 2020 Canon of the Netherlands (an overview of Dutch history).

On loan from the Internationaal
Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis,
Amsterdam, 2020
BC-0003872

UNTIL 30 NOVEMBER 2021
IN GALLERY 3.2

AFTERMATH

Dry Dock on Curaçao
Suzanne Perlman, 1959

The industrial scaling up that gripped the post-war Netherlands also took place in the Caribbean Netherlands. The oil refinery of Shell, the British-Dutch company on Curaçao, is the subject of this painting: an industrial landscape with pipelines, cranes and ships. The cactus on the right identifies the landscape as Antillean.

& SLAVERY

On 30 May 1969 the shopping streets of Willemstad were ablaze. What began as dissatisfaction with Shell's excessively low wages ended in a large-scale revolt against the government, fuelled by frustrations with Dutch colonial rule. A century after the abolition of slavery, the inhabitants of Curaçao were still treated as second-class citizens and they no longer accepted it. The uprising was quickly quashed, but it marked the beginning of political, cultural and social changes on Curaçao.¹

¹ S. Archangel, '30 Mei 1969, Willemstad: "Nu nemen wij de touwtjes in handen!"; 18 December 2018, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/digdeeper/30-mei-1969-willemstad>.

SK-A-5058

UNTIL 30 NOVEMBER 2021
IN GALLERY 3.3

advice

Reggie Baay
Steve Green
Jennifer Tosch
Simone Zeefuik

thanks to

Doreen van den Boogaart
Martine Gosselink

translation

Kist & Kilian

design

Irma Boom Office

printing

Zwaan Lenoir

for more see [rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/
rijksmuseum-and-slavery](https://rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/rijksmuseum-and-slavery)

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