

Oopjen

Oopjen was an affluent woman in Amsterdam. Like many Dutch people, her life was intertwined with slavery in various ways. To what extent was Oopjen aware of this?

Oopjen and her husband Marten were portrayed by Rembrandt on the occasion of their marriage. These are spectacular portraits radiating their wealth. Oopjen married twice in her life, to Marten Soolmans and to Maerten Daey, and bore them each a son.

The family of Oopjen's first husband, Marten Soolmans, was one of the largest sugar producers in Amsterdam. The raw sugar came from Brazil, where enslaved people grew, harvested and processed the sugar cane. Prior to their marriage, Oopjen's second husband, Maerten Daey, lived for a period in Brazil, where he was personally acquainted with slavery and had enslaved people in his 'possession.' During his stay in Brazil he raped the enslaved Francisca. She became pregnant and managed to flee from Daey.

Portraits of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1634.

Earthenware sugar funnel and collecting jars, archaeological finds. These earthenware vessels were made in specialized potteries that provided employment to large numbers of Amsterdammers, 17th and 18th centuries.

Interior of a sugar refinery in the Netherlands, 1793.

Enslaved people working on a sugar plantation in Dutch Brazil, Frans Post, ca. 1650-1660.

Minutes of the Church Council in Paraiba (Brazil), containing an account of Maerten Daey's maltreatment and rape of Francisca, 1635. QR code with transcription