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Church Slavery in Dutch Colonial History

Some Explorations and Questions with regard to Suriname

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Abstract

While the interest for the involvement of Dutch churches with colonial slavery has grown over the past years it has not yet been attempted to systematically collect and analyze ecclesiastical ownership for the Dutch colonial empire. This paper hopes to tempt scholars in doing so, by making a first exploration of ecclesial ownership (churches, ecclesiastical institutes and ministers) in one former Dutch colony—Suriname. With respect to Suriname the present paper focuses on two churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk) and the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde/Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk), which was the public church of the Netherlands. On the basis of the material found, it is argued that the investigated Dutch churches were completely and wholeheartedly part of the slavery system. Finally, the article formulates a number of questions for future research on church slavery in the Dutch colonial empire.

Keywords

church slavery – Dutch colonial history – Dutch Reformed Church – Evangelical Lutheran Church – Suriname

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1 Introduction

> It seems that the white church is not God's redemptive agent but, rather, an agent of the old society. […] It is a sad fact that the white church's involvement in slavery and racism in America simply cannot be overstated. It not only failed to preach the kerygmatic word but maliciously contributed to the doctrine of white supremacy. […] The Church has been guilty of the gravest sin of all—"the enshrining of that which is immoral as the highest morality." […] Many ministers even owned slaves.[1]

This quotation from liberation theologian James H. Cone's classic *Black Theology & Black Power*, makes clear that when it comes to the slave-owning practices of the church something "extra" is at stake. In 1969 civil rights activists disrupted a (white) church service in New York to read aloud their "Black Manifesto" in which they demanded "reparations to black people" from white churches. When later asked why they specifically targeted the church, reverend Calvin B. Marshall III said: "Because the church is the only institution claiming to be in the business of salvation, resurrection, and the giving and restoring of life. General Motors has never made that kind of claim."[2]

In light of this "extra" moral responsibility that the church has, its involvement with slavery is a burning question. Although recent research of banks,[3] municipalities,[4] the government[5] and the royal family of the Netherlands[6]

1 James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power. 50th Anniversary Edition with introduction by Cornel West* (Maryknoll, 2021 [1969]), 81–86, with reference to Kyle Haselden, *The Racial Problem in Christian Perspective* (New York, 1959), 48.

2 Thomas A. Johnson, "Black Press Reparations Demands," *New York Times*, 10 June 1970; quoted in Duke L. Known and Gregoy Thompson, *Reparations. A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* (Grand Rapids, 2021), 98.

3 E.g., Karwan Fatah-Black, Lauren Lauret and Joris van den Tol, *Dienstbaar aan de keten? De Nederlandsche Bank en de laatste decennia van de slavernij, 1814–1863* (Leiden, 2022).

4 Some examples: for Amsterdam Pepijn Brandon, Guno Jones, Nancy Jouwe and Matthias van Rossum (eds.), *De slavernij in Oost en West. Het Amsterdam onderzoek* (Amsterdam, 2020); for Utrecht Nancy Jouwe, Mathijs Kuipers and Remco Raben (eds.), *Slavernij en de stad Utrecht* (Zutphen, 2021); for Rotterdam several volumes have appeared e.g., Alex van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij* (Amsterdam, 2020).

5 E.g., Rose Mary Allen, Esther Captain, Matthias van Rossum and Urwin Vyent (eds.), *Staat & Slavernij. Het Nederlands koloniale slavernijverleden en zijn doorwerkingen* (Amsterdam, 2023).

6 See Raymund Schütz, "De koloniale winsten van de prinsen van Oranje," in Rose Mary Allen, Esther Captain, Matthias van Rossum and Urwin Vyent (eds.), *Staat & Slavernij. Het Nederlands koloniale slavernijverleden en zijn doorwerkingen* (Amsterdam, 2023), 407–420. The

has shown their deep and long-term involvement with slavery, it does not stir as much moral outrage as in the case of the (Dutch) church,[7] which is the focus of the present article. While the involvement of the Dutch church with slavery has many faces and aspects, varying from providing theological legitimations of slavery[8] to a second-rate treatment of black Christians in the church,[9] the concrete ownership of enslaved human beings—men, women and children—is often seen as the most concrete, clear and corrupted commitment of the church to the colonial slave society. As an anonymous contributor to *De Dageraad*, a freethinker journal, wrote about Dutch Christianity and the Dutch church (1863):

> Christianity and the church, far from condemning or abolishing slavery, have on the contrary sanctioned and supported it; the church itself has on several occasions taken sides with it, and has opposed the freeing of slaves as much as possible, especially those slaves who were its property.[10]

While slaveownership by Dutch churches, ecclesiastical organizations and individual ministers probably is the most direct form of involvement with the slavery system, it has never been researched before as a separate subject, to the best of my knowledge. Examples are, however, easy to find and originate in all parts of the Dutch colonial empire. To mention a few:

Royal House also issued its own, still in progress, research project, led by Gert Oostindie, see https://www.koninklijkhuis.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/12/06/onafhankelijk-onderzoek-naar-het-huis-oranje-nassau-en-de-koloniale-geschiedenis, last visit 25 August 2023.

7 My personal impression after attending many (church) meetings of different backgrounds and places over the past year.

8 See, e.g., Martijn J. Stoutjesdijk, "'Om dat hunne verw en gedaante van d'onze verscheiden is.' De Vloek van Cham in het Nederlands debat over koloniale slavernij," in Bente de Leede and Martijn Stoutjesdijk (eds.), *Kerk, kolonialisme en slavernij. Verhalen van een vervlochten geschiedenis* (Utrecht, 2023), 134–152.

9 For example, in a letter from Saint Martin (15 February 1739), the enslaved Christian authors of the letter tell how their baptism is called a "dog-baptism" ("honde-doop") and how a "baptized negroe" is called "firewood in hell" by their white fellow-Christians at the island. This letter is printed in Jan Marinus van der Linden, *Het visioen van Herrnhut en het Apostolaat der Moravische Broeders in Suriname 1735–1863* (Paramaribo, 1956), 191.

10 Dutch text: "Het Christendom en de kerk, wel verre van de slavernij te veroordeelen of af te schaffen, hebben haar integendeel bekrachtigd en ondersteund; de kerk zelve heeft er bij verschillende gelegenheden partij van getrokken, en zich zoo veel mogelijk de vrijmaking der slaven verzet, vooral van die slaven, welke haar eigendom waren." Anonymous, "Het christendom en de slavernij," *De Dageraad* 8:16 (1863), 497–511, 510–511.

The painter Fridericus Carolus de Hosson painted around 1780 a Dutch minister, Barak Houwink (1736–1824), together with an anonymous black servant or enslaved man (figure 1).[11] Houwink came from the Groninger village Oude Pekela and was active as minister on the island of Saint Martin, one of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean, from 1760 to 1772. He returned to his hometown in 1774. During his time on Saint Martin Houwink owned enslaved people, but it is not known (yet) whether he took one of them back to the Netherlands.[12] The figural language of the painting is very clear: Houwink is shown in his formal attire as a minister; at the left side a Dutch ship is visible, which makes it easy for the spectator to connect the dots between Houwink and the black servant.

The minister Jan Brandes (1743–1808) was an amateur painter himself. After studying theology in Leiden and Greifswald, he became active as a minister for the Lutheran church in Batavia (Indonesia), and visited Sri Lanka and the Cape Colony as well.[13] In his watercolor paintings (aquarelles) he often painted scenes from daily life, amongst others his own enslaved staff in his house in Batavia.[14] Moreover, he painted enslaved women sitting at the feet of their mistresses in the Lutheran church of Batavia (figure 2).

A third example from yet another part of the—at that time former—Dutch colonial empire is Theodorus Frelinghuysen (1691–1747), who was active as a minister in New Jersey (then a British colony) for the Dutch Reformed Church, after serving as a minister and rector in Loegumer Voorwerk and Enkhuizen, the Netherlands.[15] For 50 pounds he bought in the 1740s James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, who became known as the first African to publish his narrative (auto)biography, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of*

11 See the museum's website: https://www.museum.nl/nl/veenkoloniaal-museum/pronkstuk/onbekende-en-barak-houwink, last visit 25 August 2023.

12 For a short description of his time on Saint Eustatius see Laurentius Knappert, "Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche bovenwindsche eilanden in de 18de eeuw," *De West-Indische Gids* 13 (1931), 545–568, esp. 557–558.

13 E.g., Hans Visser, "Jan Brandes, de Lutherse Predikant-Tekenaar," *Bulletin van Het Rijksmuseum* 34:2 (1986), 67–81; and Max de Bruijn and Remco Raben, *The World of Jan Brandes, 1743–1808. Drawings of a Dutch Traveller in Batavia, Ceylon and Southern Africa* (Amsterdam, 2004).

14 E.g., "Woonkamer met zoon Jantje en Flora, een tot slaaf gemaakte vrouw, bij een spinnewiel," Jan Brandes, 1784; "Slaapkamer met zoon Jantje en Bietja, een tot slaaf gemaakt meisje," Jan Brandes, 1784.

15 See for his biography, e.g., J.H. van de Bank, "Frelinghuysen, Theodorus Jacobus," in J. van den Berg e.a. (eds.), *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme* (Kampen, 1998), 4:139–140.

FIGURE 1 Unknown person and Barak Houwink by Carolus de Hosson, c. 1870
COPYRIGHT COLLECTIE VEENKOLONIAAL MUSEUM VEENDAM

FIGURE 2 Evangelical Lutheran Church within the city of Batavia in the East Indies (detail), Jan Brandes, c. 1785
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James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself (1772).[16] Gronniosaw was manumitted by Frelinghuysen in his testament.

While the examples above are attractive because they have been visibly and tangibly documented by paintings and books, they tell us little about the volume and organization of Dutch ecclesiastical slaveownership at large. With

16 James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself* (Bath: W. Gye, 1772). On Ukawsaw Gronniosaw and his biography, as well as his relation to Christianity, see Ryan Hanley, "Calvinism, proslavery and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw," *Slavery and Abolition*, 36:2 (2015), 360–381.

this paper I hope to tempt scholars to *systematically* collect and analyze ecclesiastical ownership for the Dutch colonial empire. I do so by making a first exploration of ecclesial ownership in one former colony—Suriname—and by using the data found to formulate several questions for future research. With respect to Suriname I focus on two churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk) and the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde/Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk), which was the public church of the Netherlands. I focus on these two churches for a number of reasons: (1) these churches were the earliest churches present in the colony (the Reformed Church even was the first, as in many ways *de facto* "state church" of the Netherlands); (2) both churches have the reputation of being planters' churches and are as known as "white" churches (*bakra kerki* in Sranantongo, the creole language that serves as the *lingua franca* in Suriname[17]); and (3) both churches regularly pooled resources and have one joint heir: the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Protestantse Kerk in Nederland).[18] As we will see below my focus on ecclesiastical slaveownership includes both corporate ownership (the church as an institute) and the individual ownership of enslaved people by the most visible representatives of the church: its ministers.

For this paper I found inspiration in two rather recent monographs: Mary E. Sommar's *The Slaves in the Churches* (2020), which paints the history of the ownership of slaves by Christian churches over circa 1500 years, with a focus on the medieval ages.[19] From her book, we learn how ecclesiastical slaveownership belonged to the standard practices of the ancient and medieval church. The second book is *The 272* by Rachel L. Swarns, about church slaves in the colonial era. Swarns tells the story of the Jesuits in Maryland (US) who decided to sell all their 272 enslaved workers in 1838 in "one of the largest documented slave sales in the nation."[20] The Jesuits did so to raise money for their changing activities, but also because the leadership of the Jesuits hoped to get rid of complaints about the way they took care of their enslaved workers—especially

17 On this designation for both churches see, e.g., Karwan Fatah-Black, *Eigendomsstrijd: De geschiedenis van slavernij en emancipatie in Suriname* (Amsterdam, 2018), 146.

18 I have not looked at the French ("Waalse") protestant church, since this church only existed for a short while (it ceased to exist in 1783; see Alexander W. Marcus, *De geschiedenis van de Ned. Hervormde Gemeente in Suriname* [Paramaribo, 1935], 24). Sometimes ministers from the French church also served in the Reformed church and some ministers, like Petrus IJver, transferred from the French to the Dutch Reformed church.

19 Mary E. Sommar, *The Slaves of the Churches. A History* (Oxford, 2020).

20 Rachel L. Swarns, *The 272. The Families who were Enslaved and Sold to Build the American Catholic Church* (New York, 2023), 123.

in light of growing abolitionism,[21] not to speak about their fear that a possible abolition of slavery would lead to a catastrophic loss of money.[22] Important for our purposes is that the global leadership of the Jesuits set a number of rules for the sale of the 272. Two of those rules were that the enslaved should be sold to a place where the observance of Catholicism was possible and that families should be kept together.[23] Elderly people who could not be sold "should continue to be cared for on the plantations in keeping with 'charity and justice'."[24] Later, Jan Roothaan, the superior-general of the Jesuits at the time, wrote: "it would be better to suffer financial disaster than suffer the loss of our souls with the sale of the slaves."[25]

While, to the best of my knowledge, monographs on ecclesiastical slaveownership by protestant churches do not exist, several scholars have paid attention to the matter. For example, in her book *Institutional Slavery* (2016) Jennifer Oats describes how Anglican, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches owned enslaved people in Virginia (US),[26] while Jon Sensbach has done the same for the Moravian Brethren—a church also active in Suriname—in North Carolina.[27] In the Dutch context, some historical works on particular churches in the colonies devote a few pages to the subject of ecclesiastical slaveownership as well, with Joop Vernooij's overview as the best example.[28] This brings us to the next section.

21 Ibid., 69.

22 Ibid., 96.

23 Ibid., 106–107.

24 Ibid., 108.

25 Ibid., 130.

26 Jennifer Oats, *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680–1860* (Cambridge, 2016), 14 ff. and 87 ff.

27 Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763–1840* (Chapel Hill, 1998).

28 Joop Vernooij, *De regenboog is in ons huis. De kleurrijke geschiedenis van de r.k. kerk in Suriname* (Nijmegen, 2012), 38–54. Cf. Pearl Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten. Een geschiedenis van een kerk* (*On the Way to Greater Heights. A History of a Church*) (Paramaribo, 2019[2]), 36–39; Hanna Hirsch, *"En de zwarte was een schoon blank man." Enkele aspecten van de geschiedenis van de lutherse Kerk in Suriname met het oog op de samenwerking van de kerken in de Nieuwe Stad als multi-etnische gemeenschap* (Amsterdam, 1995), 21–22, 24; Jan Marinus van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk. Plantagekolonie en handelskerk ten tijde van Johannes Basseliers, predikant en planter in Suriname 1667–1689* (Wageningen, 1966), e.g., 74–75. While it sometimes is mentioned in passing, the issue of slavery is not treated explicitly in Johannes W.C. van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal. Vestiging van de Hervormde Kerk in Suriname* (*1667–1800*) (Zutphen, 2000 [1963]).

2 Slaveownership and the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Suriname

The overview below is only explorative, highlighting a few ecclesiastical institutes and individuals from Reformed and Lutheran church history in Suriname pertaining to slaveownership. Whether it is possible to give an accurate and detailed overview of slaveownership in the 17th and 18th centuries at all is questionable, since the keeping of slave registers was only started in 1826, in an attempt to halt the illegal trade of enslaved people after the abolition of the slave trade in 1814 (in the Netherlands; already in 1807 for the British colonies).[29] Before 1826 one has to piece together the lives of the enslaved and their masters oneself, which is often difficult and time-consuming due to scattered data, incomplete archives, and simple things like the lack of uniformity in spelling. For the overview presented below I have relied mostly on secondary literature on the one hand, and two important databases on the other hand. The latter are: (1) Philip Dikland & Rasijem Karyosemito (eds.), "index op plantage-inventarissen 1698–1780" ("index on inventories of plantations 1698–1780," 2002). This database contains summaries with names, plantations, etc. of the inventories of plantations (and sometimes other forms of property) in the colony of Suriname that were regularly ordered by the colonial government and that were registered in the notarial archives of Suriname. By simply searching for the family name of a certain minister one can find out whether he owned a plantation, and often how many enslaved people worked at that plantation at a certain moment in time. In the notarial archives themselves (which can be consulted online through the website of the Dutch National Archive) the complete inventories can be retrieved. (2) The second important tool is the database with the slave registers (1816–1863)[30] and the register with people who were emancipated in 1863.[31] Both registers can be consulted through the website of the Dutch National Archive and are the product of a cooperation of several universities, foundations, and volunteers under the supervision of Coen van Galen (Radboud University). In this database one can find how many enslaved people

29 See https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/zoekhulpen/suriname-slavenregisters-1816-1863#collapse-8673 under the heading "Wat zijn slavenregisters?", last visit 23 August 2023.

30 See https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/zoekhulpen/suriname-slavenregisters-1816-1863, last visit 23 August 2023. Notice that there is a gap between the index on inventories of plantations and the slave registers.

31 https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00341?activeTab=nt, last visit 23 August 2023.

individuals owned, but also what their names were, when (if) they were manumitted, etc.

I have cross-referenced both lists with the lists of Reformed and Lutheran ministers that can be found in the secondary literature, particularly the (flawed) list of Julien Wolbers (1861),[32] which I combined with the list by A.W. Marcus (1935),[33] for the Reformed church, and the list by Pearl Gerding (2019) for the Lutheran church.[34] In this way, it became visible which ministers were plantation- and slaveowners.

This section is divided into two parts: the first part is devoted to individual slaveownership by ministers. For the period before the existence of slave registers (pre-1826), I have focused on the ministers who owned plantations; after 1826 the slave registers made it easy to also include those ministers who did not have plantations, but nevertheless did own substantial numbers of enslaved people. Since the index of the notarial archives does not go further back than 1698, for the first couple of Reformed ministers I have only relied on secondary literature, mostly the pioneering work by Jan Marinus van der Linden.[35] In the second part, I focus on slave-owning by ecclesiastical institutes, in the first place the congregations themselves, but also the church's "diaconate house" ("diakoniehuis") and a plantation that was owned by the Lutheran church.

2.1 *Individual Slaveownership by Ministers*

According to Van der Linde, it was fitting in the structure of the colony Suriname that everyone tried to be a big or small "sugar lord" ("suikerheer").[36] According to him, this was also true for ministers and teachers, and in support of his argument he quotes Willem Usselincx (1567–1647), one of the founders of the WIC (the West Indies Company, which was responsible for the slave trade in the west part of the Dutch colonial empire):

> But here [in the colonies] the Ministers and Teachers can find a very convenient way to make a profit with their money to maintain their families

32 Julien Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam, 1970 [facsimile edition of the first edition, Amsterdam, 1861]), 846–849.

33 Marcus, *De geschiedenis van de Ned. Hervormde Gemeente in Suriname*, esp. 18–23, 36, and 78–82. Even by combining both lists it is possible that I have missed ministers, especially those who died very quickly after arriving in Suriname.

34 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 120 and 109–111.

35 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk*.

36 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk*, 63. Of course, in later times ministers were also owners of plantations that did not produce sugar, but—for example—coffee.

> and to improve their incomes which are much frugal enough, without harming their office.[37]

While the support for ministers having all kinds of side businesses was not always so unequivocal as that of Usselincx's,[38] the overview below shows that ministers did not have any scruples to becoming plantation- and slaveowners.

2.1.1 Ministers as Sugar Lords before 1826

We start this overview with the first official minister of Suriname, Johannes Basseliers (1640–1689). Born in a family of traders and magistrates in Middelburg, Basseliers studied theology in Utrecht and joined the Zeeuwse admiral Abraham Crijnsen on his fleet to Suriname in 1668.[39] Basseliers worked for sixteen years as a minister, which was long in those times. As he did not receive his salary ("traktement") for the first eight years of his appointment (for which he, again and again, asked the States of Zeeland for compensation), he decided to start a plantation, Surimombo, in 1671. Through a tax report from 1681–1682, we know that Basseliers owned fifty humans older than 12 years; a report of the population of his plantation in 1684 records, next to 8 white adults and 2 white children:

- 51 black adults
- 15 black children
- 5 Indian children
- 3 Indian children[40]

As one can see in Figure 3, a sales contract is attested in which Basseliers is mentioned as one of the purchasers of enslaved people, in his case six "pieces" for the sum of 18.000 pounds of sugar.[41]

Although ministers after Basseliers (and his contemporary Adriaan Backer) did receive a salary, Basseliers was not the only minister in Suriname to own a plantation—far from it actually. Before the start of the slave registers (1826)

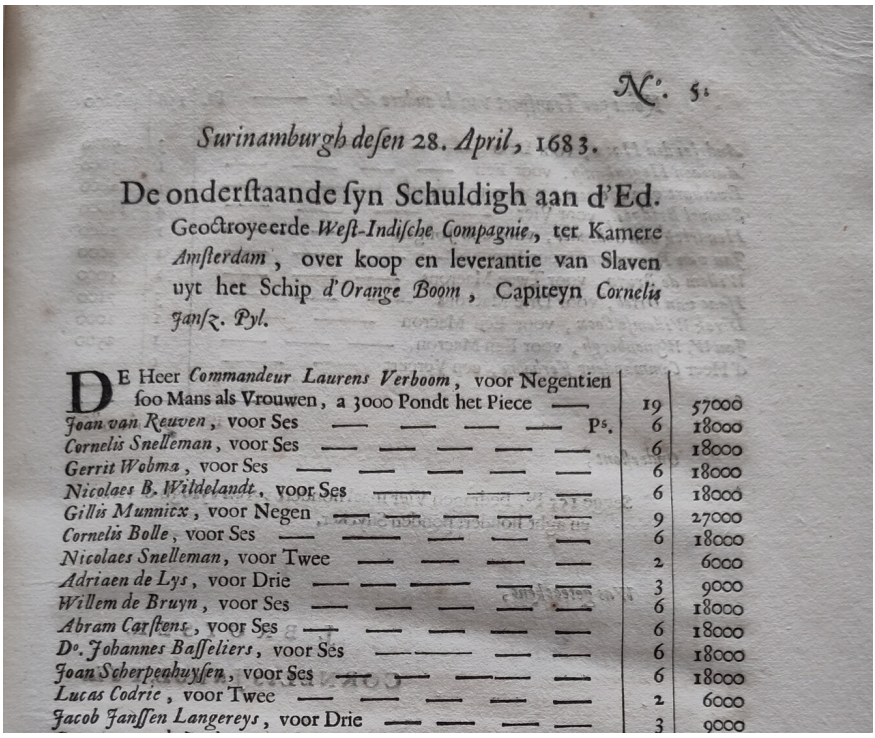
37 Dutch text: "Maer hier konnen de Pastooren en Leeeraers eenen seer gevoeghlijcken middel vinden om sonder quetsinge van haer ampt met hare penningen winst en profijt te doen tot onderhoud van haer huysgessinen en verlichtinge van haer inkommen die veeltijtst sober genoegh sijn." Willem Usselincx, *Octroy ofte Privilege* ('s-Gravenhage: A. Meuris, 1627), 43. Cf. Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk*, 63.

38 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk*, 73–74.

39 Ibid., 22–35.

40 Ibid., 74–75.

41 *Consideratien van Bewinthebberen Der Generale Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie deser Landen over De Directie van de Colonie van Suriname ende het Gouvernement van den Heer van Sommelsdyck aldaar* (1687), no. 5 (no page).



N°. 5.

Surinamburgh deſen 28. April, 1683.

De onderſtaande ſyn Schuldigh aan d'Ed. Geoctroyeerde *Weſt-Indiſche Compagnie*, ter Kamere *Amſterdam*, over koop en leverantie van Slaven uyt het Schip *d'Orange Boom*, Capiteyn *Cornelis Janſz. Pyl.*

DE Heer *Commandeur Laurens Verboom*, voor Negentien ſoo Mans als Vrouwen, a 3000 Pondt het Piece		19	57000
Joan van Reuven, voor Ses	Ps.	6	18000
Cornelis Snelleman, voor Ses		6	18000
Gerrit Wobma, voor Ses		6	18000
Nicolaes B. Wildelandt, voor Ses		6	18000
Gillis Munnicx, voor Negen		9	27000
Cornelis Bolle, voor Ses		6	18000
Nicolaes Snelleman, voor Twee		2	6000
Adriaen de Lys, voor Drie		3	9000
Willem de Bruyn, voor Ses		6	18000
Abram Carſtens, voor Ses		6	18000
Dᵒ. Johannes Baſſeliers, voor Ses		6	18000
Joan Scherpenhuyſen, voor Ses		6	18000
Lucas Codric, voor Twee		2	6000
Jacob Janſſen Langereys, voor Drie		3	9000

FIGURE 3 Consideratien van Bewinthebberen Der Generale Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie, 1687, no. 5
PHOTO BY AUTHOR, WITH THANKS TO CARL HAARNACK

at least 54 ministers served the Reformed Church in Suriname (including Basseliers), of which 19 died or were otherwise incapacitated within two years—which is why I did not include them in my research for this article. Of the remaining 35 ministers, I have been able to find out that at least 10 (more than a quarter of all ministers who were for more than two years active in Suriname) were owners of one or more plantations, which meant—by default—that they also owned slaves. This does not correspond with Van der Linde's statement that Basseliers was "one of few ministers in the history of Dutch colonial churches who was able to maintain a dual status over the years: minister and planter-merchant."[42] While I could not find the other 25 ministers in the index of the notarial archives, they still could have participated, in one way or another, in the production and trade of sugar and the keeping of enslaved

42 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 73.

people. David Estor, for example, who was active from 1712 to 1731 in Suriname, regularly sent his wife, who was still living in Groningen (the Netherlands), sugar to sell for additional income.[43]

The following nine Reformed ministers owned one or more plantations or a substantial number of enslaved people without a plantation according to the notarial archives and other sources:

- Adriaan (Adriaen) Backer (served the church from 1679 to 1682/83): Backer was a colleague of Basseliers and struggled with similar issues: as he was not paid the salary that he was promised, he started a plantation (Curacabo), but—unlike Basseliers—he could not make a living out of his plantation.[44]
- Abraham Aegidius Engel (1713–1734) owned a parcel on the Paramaricakreek.[45] Because he died a year later, I doubt that he had the time to start a full-fledged plantation on his land.
- Emanuel Vieira (sometimes spelled Vieijra, 1729–1760): owner of the plantation Waterwyk or Waterwijk. According to the notarial archives he owned in 1746 135 slaves (1753: 104).[46] The yearly harvest numbers were used by his widow when she tried to sell the plantation in 1765.[47]
- Petrus (Pierre) IJver (or Yver) (1732–1763) was the owner of Langerhoop/IJverhoop and owned for that plantation 63 slaves in 1756.[48]
- Jan Martinus Kleijn (1732–1747): according to the notarial archives[49] Kleijn

43 See for her request to sell sugar "Requestboeken, uittreksels uit ingekomen verzoekschriften, met de daarop door burgemeesters en raad genomen beschikkingen, 1672–1805," Monday 2 September 1715, 346–347; Groninger Archive 1605.587. The Groninger Archive published a blog about the correspondence between the minister and his wife: Jeltsje van der Mark, "E van (Vrouw) Estor—suiker uit Suriname," https://www.groningerarchieven.nl/actueel/blog/528-e-van-vrouw-estor, last visit 23 August 2023.

44 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 130. See also Backer's letter to the classis Amsterdam, 30 Augustus 1681, reprinted in ibidem, 225–228.

45 Jan Freuytenier, "Kaart van kavel van Abraham Egidius Engel" (1733), Nationaal Archief ("National Archive," henceforth NA) VEL1977. See https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/nl/page/10185/kaart-van-kavel-van-abraham-egidius-engel, last visit 23 August 2023.

46 Notariële archieven van Suriname 1699–1828 ("Notarial archives of Suriname 1699–1828," henceforth: Not. Arch.), NA 1.05.11.14, invoernummer ("entry number," henceforth: inv. no.) 690, folio 192 and inv. no. 691, f. 731.

47 Stadsarchieven ("City archives") Rotterdam, archive Coopstad & Rochussen 68.108. See https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/archieven/zoekresultaat-archieven/?mivast=184&mizig=210&miadt=184&miaet=1&micode=68&minr=43695994&miview=inv2&milang=nl, last visit 23 August 2023.

48 Not. Arch, inv. no. 199, f. 353.

49 Ineke Mok also mentions 4 plantations, but her list is different from mine: Kleinhausen, Kleinsverwachting, Kleinsvreugd en Kortevreugd. See Ineke Mok, "Jan Frederik

owned, next to 11 enslaved people in the city,[50] 95 slaves for his plantation Korte Vreugd in 1756,[51] 94 slaves for Kleinhausen in 1757,[52] 40 slaves for Kleinshooven in 1757,[53] and 94 slaves for Vriesenburg in 1765.[54]

– Georgius Wilhelmus Montanus (1734–1738): his widow is registered as the owner of the plantation Willemsberg, which—I assume—was acquired by Montanus when alive. In 1743 55 enslaved people labored on this plantation.[55]
– Lambertus Doesburg(h) (1752–1765): owner of (a part of) the plantation Johannesburg, through his wedding with widow Agnetta Maria de Greeff. In 1765 he owned the complete plantation with 110 slaves (1771: 134 slaves),[56] in 1774 he owned only half of the plantation, on which at that moment 151 enslaved workers labored.[57] Next to that Doesburg owned "4 slaves, beasts" in the town of Paramaribo.[58] He took one of his "servants," Jan van Ransdorp, to the Netherlands, where he was baptized on 16 April 1758 in the village of Ransdorp, under the description of "Afrikaansche Moor" ("African Moor").[59]
– Johannes van der Gaegh (1753–1760): owned the plantation Kroonenburg,[60]

Klein. Nakomeling van slavenhouders op Huis Groote Haar te Gorssel," *MijnGelderland*, https://mijngelderland.nl/inhoud/specials/sporen-van-slavernijverleden/jan-frederik-klein, last visit 23 August 2023.

50 Not. Arch., inv. no. 201, f. 305.

51 Not. Arch., inv. no. 201, f. 35.

52 Not. Arch., inv. no. 201, f. 15. Earlier (1749) he owned "only" 57 slaves for this plantation (inv. no. 188, f. 151).

53 Not. Arch., inv. no. 201, f. 49.

54 I did not find an entry in which this plantation is ascribed to the minister, but I did found an entry in which his widow is registered as owner. I assume that Kleijn purchased the plantation before his death. See Not. Arch., inv. no. 219, f. 21.

55 Not. Arch., inv. no. 689, f. 98.

56 Not. Arch., inv. no. 222, f. 674; inv. no. 234, f. 549.

57 Peter Baas, "Cultuuronderneming Johannesburg," *V.V.O.F. Mededelingenblad* 28:2 (maart 2007), 7–8 and 13; Not. Arch., inv. no. 241, f. 757.

58 Not. Arch., inv. no. 203, f. 235.

59 Carl Haarnack and Dienke Hondius, "'Swart' in Nederland—Afrikanen en Creolen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden vanaf de middeleeuwen tot de twintigste eeuw," in Elmer Kolfin and Esther Schreuder (eds.), *Black is beautiful: Rubens tot Dumas* (Amsterdam, 2008), 88–107, 94.

60 See Alexander de Lavaux/Volkert van der Plaats, "Naamlijst der eygenaars van de plantagien," which is attached to the "Nieuwe Kaart van de Colonie van Suriname: met alle derzelver rivieren, kreeken enz." (1770). This is corroborated by a notarial deed (15 April 1734) in the City Archive of Amsterdam, 1402.12706.79–94.

which was—because of its owner—also called "Domini" (Srnanantongo for the Dutch "dominee," reverend or minister).[61]

– Moreover, from the "Hoofdgeldlijsten" (lists with taxes for each person in a household)[62] we learn that minister Hendrik Uden Masman (1815–1826) paid in 1817 "hoofdgeld" for 5 enslaved people, which—we might assume—were his property.[63]

The nine Lutheran ministers who served in this period did not own plantations as far as I could find,[64] apart from their first minister, Johannes Phaff, who I discuss more elaborately below.

2.1.2 Ministers and their Enslaved after 1826

For this section, I have researched all Lutheran and Reformed ministers after the moment the colonial government started to keep recordings of the enslaved inhabitants of Suriname and their owners. This means that, as previously stated, I cannot only include ministers who had a plantation but also ministers who owned enslaved people without having a plantation.

For the Reformed Church, these ministers were (of the eight ministers serving in that period):

– Andries Roelofsz (1827–1851): owned in the period 1838–1852 18 enslaved people for a longer or shorter period.[65] I could not find whether Roelofsz also owned a plantation.
– Cornelis Conradi (1856–1876): after the emancipation in 1863 Conradi

61 Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750–1863*, Caribbean Series 13 (Leiden, 1993), 462.

62 Since the Hoofdgeldlijsten are not searchable they do not belong to my main research tools for this article; moreover, the hoofdgeld-taxes do not necessarily indicate ownership. Henk Muntjewerff has made a database for (only) the year 1817, which made it possible to include Masman. I thank Sophie Rose for this reference.

63 Registered as Do. U.H. Masman in "Kohieren van opgaven van hoofdgelden, winsten en inkomsten," vol. 2 ("Blanken"), 1817; NA 1.05.10.07, inv. no. 276, f. 327.

64 Their names are: Jo(h)annes Henricus Mellinghuis/Mellinghuizen/Mellinguijs/Mellinghuys (1747–1765), Abraham Zegerquist (1765–1768), Hendrik Kemper (1769–1772), Johannes Schi(e)ving (1769–1772), Wilhelm Gottlieb Jutting (1774–1775), Carel Ferdinand Guntzer Ritter (1777–1783), Reinhart Ritter (1764–1791), J.A. Koops (1792–1819), Arend Meijer/Meyer (1820–1822), and Diederich Kanngieser (1824–1826). See for this list Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 120.

65 See Slavenregister ("Slave register") Suriname, query: Roelofsz, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/NT00461?activeTab=nt&qf_nt-rdf_ove_eigenaar=Roelofsz%20Andries,Roelofsz.%20Andries&searchTerm=Roelofsz&sortering=prs_naam&volgorde=asc, last visit 23 August 2023. N.B. one has to manually remove identical persons who appear several times on the list.

received money for 41 enslaved people (for a total sum of 12.300 guilders), of which 33 worked on the plantation Kwatta (which was not the property of Conradi).[66] One of the family names for the freed enslaved was Condari.[67]

For the Lutheran Church, these ministers were (of the four ministers serving in that period):

- Diederich (Diederik) Jansen Eijken Sluijters (1827–1833[68]): Eijken Sluijters was the biggest slaveowner amongst 19th-century ministers. He was the owner of four plantations: Geijersvlijt, Ornamibo, Vredenburg, and La Prosperité as well as a 1/9 share in Livorno.[69] On these plantations hundreds of slaves must have been active; according to the slave registers his estate—after his departure to the Netherlands—included 179 slaves in 1848–1851.[70] When the Surinamese daily paper *Surinaamsche courant: letterkundig dagblad* reported on 16 April 1838 that Eijken Sluijters went back to the Netherlands, it also recorded that two (black) "servants" went with him.[71]
- J. Critée (1834–1839): while I did not find direct evidence of slaves owned by Critée, his widow sold four slaves to his colleague Eijken Sluijters, which implies that he did have a number of slaves.[72]

So, if we look at the complete period of 1668–1863, we have learned that from the 43 investigated Reformed ministers (from a total of 62 ministers) at least 12 (27,9%) were plantation owners and/or owners of substantial numbers of

66 Joop Vernooij, "Godt niet meer Engels maer geheel Zeeuws. Jan Basseliers, kerk en slavernij," *Zeeland* 14:1 (2005), 3–12, 9.

67 See Emancipatieregister ("Emancipation register") Suriname, querie Cornelis Conradi https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00341/3dd72da7-8cb1-489d-8241-8ba66f1a9ec2?searchTerm=conradi, last visit 25 August 2023.

68 Eijken Sluijters did not serve as a Lutheran minister for the whole duration of his stay in Suriname.

69 Notariële archieven gemeente Amsterdam ("Notarial archives municipality of Amsterdam"), archiefnummer ("archive number") 5075, inventarisnummer ("inventory number") 20530, aktenummer ("deed number") 55230. https://archief.amsterdam/indexen/persons?ss=%7B%22q%22:%22Jansen%20Eyken%22%7D, last visit 25 August 2023.

70 See Slavenregister Suriname (Slave register Suriname), query: Eijken Sluijters > Boedel > 1848–1851 https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00461?activeTab=nt&qf_nt-rdf_ove_eigenaar=Sluijters%20Boedel%20Dirk%20Janssen%20Eijken&qf_nt-rdf_ove_serie=1848-1851&searchTerm=Eijken%20Sluijters&sortering=prs_naam&volgorde=asc, last visit 25 August 2023.

71 "Vertrek uit Suriname naar Nederland," *Surinaamsche courant: letterkundig dagblad*, 16 April 1838.

72 See Slavenregister Suriname, query: Critée https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/NT00461?activeTab=nt&searchTerm=Crit%C3%A9e&sortering=prs_naam&volgorde=asc, last visit 25 August 2023.

enslaved people. For the Lutheran church, we have counted 13 ministers in the period 1742–1863 of whom I have ascertained with certainty that two were also plantation owners and a third (Critée) owned several slaves (23,1%). Moreover, I deem it very likely that future research will disclose more ministers who were active as plantation owners and/or owned substantial numbers of enslaved people. Also, while I have excluded in this article for the period before 1826 those Reformed ministers who died within two years from their arrival in Suriname, examples like Kals (see below) show that at least some of these ministers must have acquired slaves in that relatively short time.

2.1.3 A Critic, but A Slaveowner

One could perhaps think that all the ministers mentioned above were fierce defendants of the slavery system. However, even the most outspoken criticist of the Surinamese church and its lack of ambition for mission among the black and indigenous inhabitants of Suriname,[73] Jan Willem Kals (1731–1733), was—in addition to possible slaves he was allowed to use as part of his salary (see below)—a slaveowner of at least one enslaved African, even though he stayed for less than two years in the colony. Kals called his "eygenen Jonge" ("own boy")[74] Duren, presumably after his birthplace in Germany. Kals took Duren with him to the Netherlands, after he was expelled from Suriname. In the Netherlands he had to hand Duren over—due to a lack of funds—to Prince Van Holstein Beek, then governor in 's-Hertogenbosch. Duren was baptized on 5 January 1742 in the Grote Kerk (St. Jan's) in 's-Hertogenbosch by Professor Clemens and received the name Christiaan Steinholt after his baptism. This baptism is mentioned in several sources; in the *Maendelyke Uittreksels*, it is recounted how "among a great influx of people" a "Black from Angola, in the service of his Highness the prince of Holstein" was baptized (with as the sermon text Jes. 56:6–7, that reads, e.g.: "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, […] these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer […] for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," NRSV).[75]

73 See his *Neerlands hooft- en wortel-sonde* (two volumes; Leeuwarden: Pieter Koumans, 1756 and n.y.). The volume without a publication year also has a separate title: *Nuttige en noodige bekeeringe der Heidenen in Suriname en Berbices, enz. enz*.

74 Jan Willem Kals, *Neerlands hooft- en wortel-sonde*, 11:48 (second footnote). See also Jan Marinus van der Linde, *Jan Willem Kals 1700–1781. Leraar der hervormden, advocaat van indiaan en neger* (Kampen, 1987), 15.

75 *Maendelyke Uittreksels, of de Boekzaal der geleerde Waerelt*, January 1742 (54), 86. He is also mentioned in the "Doopboek en Lidmatenregister van de Nederlands Hervormde Kerk te 's-Hertogenbosch." According to this register of church members Steinholt lived at the

2.2 *Institutional Slaveownership*

2.2.1 A Lutheran Minister and His Contract

Until now we have focused on the private ownership of enslaved people by individual ministers. But ministers also were entitled to a small number of enslaved people for their personal service (cooking, washing, etc.). A good example of this phenomenon can be found in the "beroepsbrief" ("letter of appointment"), dated 7 March 1742, of the first "real" Lutheran minister in Suriname, Johannes Phaff. In this contract, the following is outlined (in my translation):

> The proponents [members of the church council] in Suriname will provide him with a freestanding suitable house and next to that two negroes and two female negroes or one negro and three females negroes—according to his preference—to serve him, who will not be newly transferred slaves, but who have already been house slaves, who remain dressed as house slaves according to the custom, but whose further maintenance will be at the expense of the minister.[76]

More or less the same formulation can be found in the "beroepsbrief" of the Lutheran minister Abraham Zegerquist (May 1764).[77]

The Lutheran historian Pearl Gerding writes about these enslaved people that they were the property of the Lutheran congregation and part of the remuneration of the minister: "If slaves ran away or died, the church council had to replace them."[78] In the church minutes these "church slaves" were regularly the subject of discussion. For example, on 14 January 1768 it is discussed that the "timmerneger" ("carpenter negro") who was purchased for the "Kerkgrond" (lit. "Church ground," see below) was not so competent in carpentry as was hoped. It was decided to send the enslaved carpenter back to his previous owner for two years to perfect his craft.[79] Pearl Gerding also mentions in her history of

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Verwers[s]traat in 's-Hertogenbosch, which was the same address as the governor. Cf. Van der Linde, *Jan Willem Kals*, 96–98.

76 Dutch text: "De voorstanders te Suriname zullen hem eene vrije bequame wooning beneffens twe neger en twe negerinnen of een neger en drie negerinnen naar zijn believen tot bediening bezorgen, zullende voor 't tegenwoordige gene nieuwe overgebrachte slaaven wezen, maar reeds huisslaaven geweest zijn, de welke volgens gewoonte als huisslaaven gekleed blijven, doch derzelver verder onderhoud tot last van de Predikant zijn." Letter printed in Hirsch, *"En de zwarte was een schoon blank man,"* 22.

77 Hirsch, *"En de zwarte was een schoon blank man,"* 35.

78 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 79. Cf. Hirsch, *"En de zwarte was een schoon blank man,"* 35.

79 Hirsch, *"En de zwarte was een schoon blank man,"* 37.

the Surinamese Lutheran church how one elder of the church council donated in 1776 a "young male negroe" ("jonge manneneger") to the congregation to remember him by.[80] Reminiscent of the story of the 272—albeit on a smaller scale—it was decided by the church council meeting of 22 December 1839 to sell all church slaves (with the exception of one mother with her daughters) to remedy the financial problems of the church.[81] For the next minister who would be appointed these financial difficulties also meant that a "freestanding house" could not be offered and that the minister could only ("eeniglijk") make use of the slaves that were the property of the congregation—at that moment seven in total.[82]

Although there are no letters of appointment found for the Reformed church yet, the situation seems to be comparable. With respect to the Reformed church, it becomes clear from its minutes (as reported in the so-called "Politieke Notulen"[83]) that their ministers were provided with two slaves per minister before 1756, but that in 1756 it was determined by the government that a third slave would be added as a way to compensate ministers for their modest salary.[84] Moreover, Van Ort reports how in 1762 it was decided to rent enslaved workers for the ministers, instead of purchasing them.[85]

That each minister received slaves from their church did not mean that they could not also be the owners of a (sugar) plantation for personal benefit. For example, the Lutheran minister Johannes Phaff owned through his third and fourth marriage four or even five[86] plantations of which one—Zorgvliet—was also called Domini, after Phaff's profession.[87] And when Governor Heinsius

80 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 80.

81 Hirsch, "*En de zwarte was een schoon blank man*," 39.

82 Ibid., 39. For me it sometimes remains unclear whether the enslaved people that the minister was entitled to use as part of his salary are included in the category of church slaves or not.

83 While the Acta of the Conventus Deputatorum (the "general" church council in Suriname) have not all be saved, their content can be known through the minutes of the colonial government, the Politieke Notulen ("Political Minutes"). See Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 238.

84 Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 260, 313, 315. It is not clear to me whether these slaves formally became the property of the Reformed church or remained property of the colonial government.

85 Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 312 (with reference to the minutes of 24 May 1762).

86 One plantation, Houttuin, was only partially his property.

87 Inge de Vries, "Gecompenseerden uit de Wageningse elite, deel 2: De familie Phaff en de Surinaamse koffieplantage Zorgvliet," *Mijn Gelderland*, no date https://mijngelderland.nl/inhoud/specials/sporen-van-slavernijverleden/gecompenseerden-uit-de-wageningse-elite-deel-2, last visit 25 August 2023. Cf. Fred. Oudeschans Dentz, "De herkomst en de beteekenis van Surinaamsche plantagenamen," *De West-Indische Gids* 25 (1944), 147–180, 179.

once tried not to pay Basseliers his complete salary because he also was a plantation owner, Basseliers replied that being a minister made it impossible for him to govern his plantation properly, that he had recently lost 12 slaves and that even if he would make profits from his plantation he still was entitled to his minister's salary.[88]

Connected to all these issues is the way the churches were financed and ministers received their salary or "traktement." It is important to realize that ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church in Suriname were paid by the WIC or the colonial authorities;[89] the other churches had to find their own funding. For example, the Lutheran church had to pay for its ministers until 1820,[90] which might also be an explanation for its experiment with a church plantation (see below). The missionary work of the Moravian Church was financially supported by the "Maatschappij ter bevordering van het Christendom onder de Heidensche bevolking in de kolonie Suriname" ("Society for the promotion of Christianity among the heathen population in the colony of Suriname").[91] In the neighboring colony of Essequibo, there was even a direct link between slavery and the finances of the Dutch Reformed Church, as its governmental funding was collected by a special tax on the sale of enslaved persons that was intended for the church and the care of the poor.[92] According to Van Ort, the same kind of tax was levied in Suriname for some time as well.[93]

Finally, with regard to the treatment of enslaved people by ministers, it is worthwhile to mention that on 5 January 1751 the enslaved inhabitants of the plantation of Domburg—then the property of minister Phaff—filed a complaint about daily abuse. The Court of Police seriously investigated the complaint, but it remains unknown whether this resulted in an improvement of the situation on the plantation.[94] Phaff was not the only minister to be accused of abuses on his plantation. The Anglican minister Richard Austin (who worked as such under the British rule of Suriname in the period 1804–1816) became the object of a rare procedure: he was removed from the management of his plantation by Governor Van Panhuys in 1816 because of irregularities (e.g., torture)

88 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 74.

89 E.g., Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 62; and Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 307–316.

90 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 47–48.

91 See Karel A. Zeefuik, *Hernhutter zending en Haagsche maatschappij 1828–1867. Een hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis van zending en emancipatie in Suriname* (Utrecht, 1973).

92 See Bram Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire. Dutch Guiana in the Atlantic World, 1750–1800* (Athens—Georgia, 2020), 164. I thank Eva Seuntjes for this reference.

93 Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 308–309.

94 See, e.g., Frank Dragtenstein, *"De ondraaglijke stoutheid der wegloopers": marronage en koloniaal beleid in Suriname, 1667–1768* (Utrecht, 2002), 115.

and frequent desertion. When Austin tried to get the management of his plantation back a special committee investigated his plantation, remarking that it was incomprehensible "how these emaciated slaves can still do any work."[95]

2.2.2 Houses and Plantations

Aside from the churches themselves, I have identified three ecclesiastic slave-owning institutions, that I very briefly describe:

Diaconiehuis: the diaconate house was a separate institution run by the deaconry of the Reformed church for the old, sick, and injured. From a report from 1 October 1790, reprinted in Van Ort, we learn that at that moment the Diaconiehuis had 32 clients or patients, which were taken care of by 10 enslaved persons, amongst whom were also two slave girls of 7 and 9 years.[96]

Armenkas: according to the slave registers Hendrik Kamerling, whose profession was that of "procureur" and commissioner of the "Particuliere West-Indische Bank" ("Private West-Indies Bank"), but who served the Reformed church as "Kassier der armenkas" ("treasurer of the poor fund/box"), owned in 1830 two enslaved women (Maccalissa and Medea) on behalf of the poor fund.[97] What this exactly entails is a topic for future research.

Kerkigron: the case of the "Kerkigron" or "Church plantation" is quite rare in Dutch colonial church history as far as I know. It was a plantation completely owned and run by the Lutheran church. In the sixties of the 18th century, the financial situation of the Lutheran church was bad, which is why the church asked the Surinamese government in 1754 to give it a piece of land to cultivate.[98] When this request was denied, Johann F. Knöffel gifted the congregation in 1757 a piece of land suitable for a coffee plantation, that was named Johann

95 Jan Voorhoeve, "De handschriften van mr. Adriaan François Lammens: de Surinamica van het Surinaams Museum," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 40 (1960–1961), 28–49, 45. The terror by Austin is also mentioned in, e.g., Marten Douwes Teenstra's *Bijdrage tot de ware beschouwing van de zoo hoog geroemde uitbreiding des Christendoms onder de heidenen in de kolonie Suriname* (Amsterdam: M.H. Binger, 1844), 8 ff.

96 Van Ort, *Surinaams verhaal*, 303. Cf Vernooij, *De regenboog is in ons huis*, 38.

97 Slavenregisters, query: Kamerling and Kerk https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/NT00461?activeTab=nt&qf_nt-rdf_ove_eigenaar=Kerk%20der%20Hervormde%20Gemeente___%20H.%20Kamerling%20als%20Kassier%20der%20armen%20kas%20der%20Hervormde%20Gemeente%20voor%20de&searchTerm=Kamerling&sortering=prs_naam&volgorde=asc, last visit 25 August 2023. It also seems that sometimes slaves were pawned or pledged to the Armenkas, see https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/NT00461?activeTab=nt&qf_nt-rdf_ove_eigenaar=Batenburg%20Corstiaan%20Aart&searchTerm=Kamerling%20hervormde&sortering=prs_naam&volgorde=asc, last visit 25 August 2023.

98 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 47–48.

and Margaretha (after the donor and the Saint of the day), but that was better known as Kerkigron.[99] In 1771 it was recorded that 86 slaves were working on the plantation.[100] While the plantation was not a financial success, it was church property till 1799. Then the church had to hand the plantation (and the slaves, we assume) over to M. Brouwn (or Broen), who had given the church a mortgage the church could not pay anymore.[101]

It is important to note here that this Lutheran experiment stood not on its own. In the neighboring Dutch (later British) colony of Berbice, the Lutheran church also suffered financial hardships around the same time. It decided in 1763 to buy a coffee plantation that the church gave the name of Augsburg, which made it clear to anyone that it was a Lutheran enterprise (the Augsburg confession is the primary confession of faith of the Lutheran church). In contrast to the Surinamese Lutheran church, the Lutheran church of Berbice was successful in its management of the plantation, which contributed to the prosperity of the church.[102] In a letter from the Surinamese Lutheran church to the Berbice congregation on the matter of voting rights for black church members, it becomes clear that owning a plantation might have consequences for church policies. The historian De Gaay Fortman summarizes the relevant section as follows:

> Furthermore, it was recommended *in view of Augsburg* that absolutely no negroes should be appointed members of the church council and, if not necessary, also no coloreds.[103]
>
> (italics author)

While this is, till now, the only explicit acknowledgment that I found of the relation between ecclesiastical slave-keeping and church policy (in this case membership of the church council, one could also think about church membership in general, baptisms, conversion, education, etc.), I am confident that what is true for this church, will also have been true for many other churches and ministers: the fact that ministers and churches kept slaves themselves, will

99 Dentz, "De herkomst en de beteekenis van Surinaamsche plantagenamen," 179.

100 Not. Arch., inv. no. 231, f. 427.

101 Gerding, *Op weg naar grotere hoogten*, 37–39.

102 B. de Gaay Fortman, "De geschiedenis der Lutersche gemeente in Berbice," *De West-Indische Gids* 24 (1942), 65–89, 81.

103 Dutch text: "Verder werd geraden met het oog op Augsburg volstrekt geen negers tot lid van den kerkeraad te benoemen en buiten noodzaak ook geen kleurlingen." De Gaay Fortman, "De geschiedenis der Lutersche gemeente in Berbice," 83.

have influenced their perspective on slaveowning and their liberty to either question the system in general or criticize certain forms of it.

3 Conclusions, Questions, and Perspectives

The present article and its conclusions have a narrow scope and are explorative in nature. We have researched ecclesiastic slaveownership (by churches, ecclesiastical institutes, and ministers) in only one former Dutch colony (Suriname) for only two churches (Reformed and Lutheran) and only on the basis of existing databases and secondary literature. Nevertheless, this is the first time that an attempt has been made to collect all existing material with respect to ecclesiastic slaveownership in the Dutch colonial empire and to present these data systematically. On the basis of the material found, I feel safe to conclude that the church was completely and wholeheartedly part of the slavery system. The church and its ministers owned enslaved people, sold and bought slaves, and disputed the fates of the slaves they found troublesome. Ministers were directly encapsulated in the slavery system by being provided with a certain number of (church) slaves for personal service (a form of *in natura* payment), but they also were slaveowners privately, sometimes of only a few house slaves, and regularly also of great numbers of field slaves, as a substantial percentage of ministers also were plantation owners (much more often than earlier scholars, like Van der Linde, assumed). One of the first Reformed ministers of Suriname, Henricus Rosinus, complained in 1695, in a letter to the classis of Amsterdam, that his church building was used as a "stable […] where animals and slaves were sold."[104] This seems to be a fitting illustration of the interconnectedness of church and slavery in the colony of Suriname.

However, many of our questions are still unanswered. While in another case of well-researched church slavery—the Jesuit province in Maryland—the clergy wanted to sell its slaves because it did not want to become a target for the (protestant) abolitionist movement,[105] at least one Surinamese Reformed minister kept his slaves until their abolition in 1863 and was compensated for the freedom of his slaves, and I have not come across a growing awareness of abolitionist ideas and motives in the data studied. This might be true for Surinamese churches in general: it was the Moravian world leadership (the Unitäts-Ältesten-Conferenz) that forced the Surinamese Moravians in 1851 to

104 Van der Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 143.
105 Swarns, *The 272*, 98.

free their slaves before slavery would be abolished by law, something the Surinamese Moravians seem to have been unwilling to do of their own accord.[106] Likewise, the paternal care that the Jesuits said to have for their enslaved people, is not a sentiment that I found (yet) with the slave-owning ministers and churches in Suriname.[107] Also, the wishes of the Jesuit leadership in Maryland to guarantee the possibility of spiritual assistance and to keep families together, are not directly visible in the history of ecclesiastical slave-owning in Suriname. To what extent the Lutheran and Reformed churches were bothered by the unmarried state of their slaves is a question yet to be answered. Whether the Reformed and Lutheran churches concerned themselves with the conversion of the enslaved people they owned is a question for future research as well, although the data that we have collected do not point that way. The slave registers show that the majority of enslaved people owned by the Reformed and Lutheran churches and their ministers were not members of their churches. For example: of the 41 slaves owned by Reformed minister Cornelis Conradi that were emancipated in 1863, 29 were registered as Roman Catholic, 10 as Moravian (EBG), 1 did not register a religion, and only 1 (!) was registered as Reformed.[108]

Again, a lot of questions are still unanswered. One of these questions is whether churches and ministers treated their slaves differently (better?) than other slaveowners. Another question is how ecclesiastical slaveownership in this colony compares to that of other Dutch and non-Dutch colonies.[109] A third question, already raised, is to what extent slaveowning influenced the way churches and ministers critically engaged (could engage) with colonial slavery. A final question—perhaps the most important of all—is what the black

106 Coen van Galen, "Wat zal er met ons gebeuren als wij geen slaven meer hebben? De EBG in de Surinaamse slavenregisters, 1830–1863," in Jaap van Heijst and Jan Egas (eds.), *Hernnhutters in beweging. 250 jaar grote kerkzaal* (Utrecht, 2019), 95–110. For more information on Moravian ecclesiastical slaveownership see, e.g., Maria Lenders, *Strijders voor het Lam. Leven en werk van Herrnhutter-broeders en -zusters in Suriname, 1735–1900* (PhD Thesis, Amsterdam, 1994), e.g., 112, 190–192; Vernooij, *De regenboog is in ons huis*, 41–46.

107 A counterexample might be the Reformed minister Cornelis van Schaik (1852–1861), of whom I did not find evidence of enslaved property and who wrote the abolitionist novel *De Manja* (1866).

108 See Emancipatieregister Suriname, query Cornelis Conradi https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00341/3dd72da7-8cb1-489d-8241-8ba66f1a9ec2?searchTerm=conradi, last visit 25 August 2023.

109 A comparison with other protestant colonies—such as the English West-Indies colonies—could be fruitful. As far as I know there are no figures available on church slavery in the West-Indies yet. See for some anecdotal proof Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity. Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Oxford, 2012), 99–100.

perspective on ecclesiastical slaveownership was, both of free blacks and the ecclesiastical slaves themselves. James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw called his former master Theodorus Frelinghuysen "a very gracious, good Minister" and a "dear kind master" and he looked back at his service with Frelinghuysen with gratitude.[110] But he was manumitted by Frelinghuysen, converted to Christianity during his time with the Dutch minister, and his revered language might be part of a stratagem to secure his place among (white) Christians in rural England. How would the enslaved humans on the plantations of Johannes Basseliers, Jan Martinus Kleijn, Diederich Jansen Eijken Sluijters, or on the Kerkigron have felt? I hope that future research will answer at least some of the questions raised above.

110 Gronniosaw, *A Narrative*, 12 and 13.