Antislavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit

African slaves, American plantations, and their owners were the major actors involved in nineteenth-century abolition of New World slavery. However, the debate on the explanation and analysis of abolition focuses mainly on Europe. Of course, Europe had introduced plantation slavery in the Americas and as the still dominant power was also the one to abolish it. Still, it strikes one as odd that the subjects of abolition only play their part in the debate as peripheral economic factors in overwhelmingly metropolitan developments, and have hardly been given a voice of their own. The debate on the late Dutch abolition is another case in point. However, a focus on the immediate actors may shed new light on the dynamics of abolition. Therefore, in this article I attempt to look at the question of Dutch abolition from a ‘West Indian’ point of view.

The Dutch Antilles

During the eighteenth century, the Dutch Antillean islands, particularly Curacao and St. Eustatius, were flourishing commercial centers. Within the entire Dutch West Indies, however, they never played a dominant role, mainly because they produced no items for the world economy in significant quantities. At the end of the 1840s, salt was the most important export commodity, representing an average total value of only 365,000 Dutch guilders a year. Dutch St. Martin was the only sugar producer of the six islands, but the total output of its eighteen plantations did not even equal that of one average Suriname sugar plantation during the same period. From a colonial point of view, then, Suriname was far more

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1 In particular, the slave trade (101,000 slaves were traded between 1675 and 1775) and semi-legal intra-Caribbean trade (so-called kleine vaart) were moneymakers (Goslinga 1985: 156-231).
2 During the years 1847-1850, Curacao produced an average of 34,820 barrels of salt per annum, Bonaire 57,982, and St. Martin 311,114, while the average price was some f 0.90 per barrel (calculations based on Renkema 1981:61, 356, and Paula 1993:34).
3 The average annual sugar production of these eighteen plantations during the period 1838-1847 was 155,961 kg (calculations based on Paula 1993:37-8 and 133). A sugar plantation in Suriname produced an annual average of 158,058 kg around 1836 and 187,566 kg around 1854 (Van Stipriaan 1993:135).
interesting. The export value of its plantation products varied between an annual average of 6.6 million Dutch guilders during the 1830s, to 4.1 during the 1840s, and 4.8 million during the 1850s (Van Stipriaan 1993:437). Compared to other Caribbean colonies, the Suriname plantation economy was of medium size and never played in the same league as Jamaica, St. Domingue or Cuba (Table 1).

### Table 1. Selected Caribbean Plantation Economies, 1775 and 1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Slaves at Emancipation</th>
<th>Sugar Production (in metrical tons)</th>
<th>Coffee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c 1775</td>
<td>c 1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>199,885</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>246,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>480,000</td>
<td>62,595</td>
<td>30,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>311,070</td>
<td>43,355</td>
<td>26,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>31,150</td>
<td>5,446</td>
<td>14,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>36,484</td>
<td>6,610</td>
<td>26,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>29,121</td>
<td>7,385</td>
<td>8,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>23,638</td>
<td>8,784</td>
<td>4,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
<td>22,266</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>7,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts</td>
<td>8,815</td>
<td>7,934</td>
<td>4,773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1863, about 48,000 slaves were emancipated in the Dutch Caribbean, of whom no more than one-quarter lived in the Antilles. This figure included the almost 1,900 slaves of St. Martin. With the cooperation of their 'owners', but without the formal consent of the Dutch government, they had lived as freedmen since 1848, when slavery on the French part of this island was abolished (Paula 1993:96-135). In Curaçao and the other Dutch islands, the slaves - and their owners - depended on developments connected with emancipation in Suriname, because all public and political attention was focused on that colony. Neither colonial authorities nor slave owners in the Dutch Antilles expected substantial problems to arise out of abolition. They waited patiently for events to take their course in Suriname (Renkema 1981:149-50). Many Dutch Antillean slave owners were even in favor of a prompt abolition with a view to the anticipated financial compensation which many desperately needed to pay off their mortgages (Paula 1993:143-8; Renkema 1981:212-8). Some slave owners had too many mouths to feed with expensive imported foodstuffs, particularly during the frequent droughts and bad harvests. Part of the demanding slave force had become superfluous as its owners increasingly made their money in non-agricultural and less labor-intensive activities like shipping and trade (Renkema 1981:239-43). Emancipation with compensation therefore served their interests well.

Initially, the colonial authorities in the Antilles had worried about the slaves' future because, unlike the situation in Suriname, there was not enough work on the plantations or fertile ground to provide them with after emancipation. This problem was solved by the introduction of a system of share cropping, called paga-tera (Renkema 1981:150-1). From now on, no serious objections to emancipation were raised in the Dutch Antilles.

### The Suriname Plantation Economy by Sector

In Suriname, as in several other Caribbean plantation economies during slavery, sugar was not the only, and sometimes not even the dominant export crop. The oldest plantations invariably produced sugar, but during the second quarter of the eighteenth century coffee proved to be more profitable, and this crop soon came to dominate the economy of Suriname. Most of the coffee planters did not belong to the old plantocracy. Taking advantage of the abundance of metropolitan capital available during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, aspiring new planters 'without a penny in the world' seized the opportunity to obtain generous loans to start and expand plantations of their own (Van Stipriaan 1993:207-15). As coffee was the most promising cash crop and needed less complicated technology than sugar, this sector expanded rapidly and soon outgrew sugar. The importance of sugar production declined even more at the turn of the eighteenth century, when cotton emerged as another booming plantation sector. Suriname became a multi-sector plantation economy, in which each sector was to have its own social and economic dynamics.

### Table 2. Differences in the Suriname Plantation Economy by Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Performance of Slaves</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Coffee</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externally negative</td>
<td>Extremely negative; improving considerably</td>
<td>Negative; improving slowly</td>
<td>Relatively good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Situation and New Capital After 1800</td>
<td>Medium, new opportunities</td>
<td>Coming up</td>
<td>Hopeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Towards Innovation and Reproduction</td>
<td>Generally positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Medium positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences between the plantation sectors were partly due to different kinds of 'production mentality' (Table 2). For example, the management of coffee plantations by the new group of planters was definitely exhaustive, aiming at quick benefits without taking the reproduction of production factors into proper account. Consequently, before the turn of the eighteenth century these planters had exhausted the soil and trees as they used no rotation cycles or fertilizers; they had exhausted their slaves (surplus of deaths over births and no sufficient imports); and they had exhausted their credits without ever being able to pay the interest. No innovation whatsoever, whether labor-saving or aiming at increased productivity, had been introduced. The only way in which these coffee planters tried to counter the deteriorating productivity of their plantations was by planting and harvesting from a maximum number of trees. Obviously, this policy worsened the problem of soil exhaustion.

Before the turn of the eighteenth century the rapid expansion of the coffee estates had reached its limits (Table 3). At the same time, the first substantial pieces of land on those estates had to be abandoned because they had been exploited too long. The slaves working the fields had to work even harder as a result of an increase of coffee-growing land and of the number of trees per worker. Particularly after the 1770s, when planters no longer had the means to buy new slaves and the average death deficit in the coffee sector was 18.7 per 1,000 slaves a year, the number of field slaves — approximately half of the total slave population on a coffee plantation — dropped substantially (Van Stipriaan 1993:128, 318).

Table 3. The Average Coffee Plantation, 1750-1830

| Year | Total area (ha) | Coffee (%) | Abandoned (%) | Field Slaves | One fieldslave works
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca 1750</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1770</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1790</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1810</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1830</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Van Stipriaan 1993:60-1, 129.

One reason why planters urged slaves to increase production was the financial slump in the sector. Since the end of the 1770s, the majority of the coffee sector was heavily burdened with debts; at the same time, the price of coffee on the open Dutch staple market had fallen dramatically. In this context, the Dutch investment structure revealed its fundamental shortcomings. Between 1765 and 1775 some thirty million guilders were pumped into the Suriname plantation economy by Dutch investment funds — so-called negotiates — directed by merchant bankers, who offered easy obtainable plantation mortgages to aspiring planters. Many grabbed the opportunity, dreaming of the easy fortunes they would make. Obviously there were risks. The mortgage maximum was therefore generally limited to five-eighths of the appraised value of the plantation, and the interest rate was five to six per cent, twice as high as in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the planters were obliged to conduct their entire trade via the merchant bankers in Amsterdam or Rotterdam. These merchants were in a very favorable position. Without having to risk their own capital — they only directed a fund paid by others — the merchants charged commission on every commercial transaction performed for the mortgaged plantation. More production meant more commission, irrespective of the eventual financial benefit to the investors. Another shortcoming in the investment structure was that planters could obtain a higher mortgage as soon as the estimated value of their plantation rose, on the (not always correct) assumption that the productive capacity had expanded as well.

As coffee proved to be the most promising cash crop since the 1740s, most of the easily obtainable Dutch credit had been used to lay out and expand coffee plantations. A new plantation sector arose, built by planters without any capital of their own, and often lacking the specific knowledge required to run a coffee plantation. As long as the estimated value of their plantations increased, they were able to obtain more credit to buy slaves and plant more trees, helping them to a substantial income sufficient for the required debt servicing.

As mentioned above, one weakness was that credit was linked to the estimated value of the plantation without taking into account its real productive capacity. Planters regularly had their enterprises revalued, always securing a higher figure which permitted them to obtain more credit. Such increases in value were to some extent the result of the expansion of the coffee acreage and the slave force, but particularly in the investment flurry around 1770 speculation and even fraud were evident too. Either way, part of the credits were spent on conspicuous consumption.

The system started to falter when a growing number of planters were unable to pay their interest. It collapsed completely the moment this new generation of planters had to start paying off their mortgages, which happened to coincide with falling coffee prices. Many went bankrupt; the coffee

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5 Between c 1750 and c 1825, the average number of coffee trees per hectare increased from 966 to 1458 (Van Stipriaan 1993:128).

6 The average price during the years 1765-69 as well as 1770-74 was 92 cents per kg, whereas in the next five years it fell to 62 cents per kg (Van Stipriaan 1993:434-5).
sector now entered a period of decay. Ownership often passed into the hands of the unfortunate suppliers of credit. They could not immediately sell off these plantations as there were no serious buyers. Instead, they opted for trying to get as much as possible out of their properties for as long as possible. New investments were not a serious option any longer.

This arrangement continued to be profitable for the merchant bankers, because their risks were minimal and commission still came in, though less than before. Even for those investors who did not panic and kept their shares in the negotiatie funds, the final outcome was less disastrous than might have been expected; eventually they saw some return on their capital. An earlier emancipation would not have helped them. Free labor would not have stopped the exhaustion process. Perhaps an awareness that emancipation would entail compensation for the owners would have won some support in the negotiations. The final outcome was less disastrous than the unfortunates of the coffee sector, only formed a minority which indeed failed to survive.

The situation in the sugar sector was quite different. When Dutch capital was abundant in the colony, no more than half of the sugar planters mortgaged their plantations to secure the share of the abundant credit pie. Those who did borrow substantial sums generally spent it productively rather than on conspicuous consumption. The sugar sector had a long-standing tradition of innovation, ranging from the polder system and the use of hydraulic energy to the introduction of new cane varieties and steam power (Van Stipriaan 1989:96-103). Again in contrast to the coffee sector, even the first sugar plantations in Suriname had been laid out by experienced planters—particularly Jewish refugees from Brazil in the mid-seventeenth century. Most sugar plantations in Suriname had been laid out by experienced planters, regardless of race or religious persuasion. The largest shift from animal to water traction—a very costly affair—was made precisely during the credit bubble of the 1760s and early 1770s. Therefore, after the turn of the eighteenth century the sugar sector faced a brighter future and was not as burdened with debts as the coffee sector (Table 5). Sugar was even able to attract new capital and new private and governmental initiative.7

A representative sample of forty-three sugar plantations (Table 4) shows that fourteen did not survive until the mid-nineteenth century. Ten of these were operated by an animal traction mill until the very end. On the other hand, of the twenty-nine surviving plantations at least eight had installed a more advanced—and thereby more productive—type of mill during these years. The largest shift from animal to water traction—a very costly affair—was made precisely during the credit bubble of the 1760s and early 1770s. Therefore, after the turn of the eighteenth century the sugar sector faced a brighter future and was not as burdened with debts as the coffee sector (Table 5). Sugar was even able to attract new capital and new private and governmental initiative.7

Table 5. Profitability by Sector, 1775 - 1855

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>period</th>
<th>coffee sector</th>
<th>sugar sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>average profit per slave*</td>
<td>number of plantations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1775</td>
<td>f -51</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1795</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1815</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1835</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1855</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on samples of 4-23 (coffee) and 6-11 (sugar) plantations. As slaves were the most important and most constant 'capital goods', the average yearly profit is related to the number of slaves per plantation. Profits are inclusive of interest payments and redemptions of mortgages and other debts.8


The drop in profitability in the sugar sector during the 1830s (Table 5) was not so much due to the continually falling sugar price,9 as to the conversion of water mills to steam engines and other modern machinery, which entailed heavy investments. However, these innovations apparently did

Table 4. Type of Mill and Viability of Sugar Plantations, 1755-1857*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>period</th>
<th>animal traction</th>
<th>water traction</th>
<th>steam traction</th>
<th>sugar production abandoned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca 1755</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1780</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sample of 43 plantations.

7 For example, in 1827 Inspectoër General Johannes van den Bosch was sent to Suriname to see how the plantation economy could be made more profitable. He strongly advised the authorities to promote the sugar sector combined with steam technology, and to found a private bank to finance those plantations (Van Stipriaan 1993:246-52).
8 These figures should be employed with the utmost care, particularly those of the coffee sector. The reason is that we only have archival material at our disposal for plantations that did not go bankrupt (immediately). These (atypical) plantations are therefore overrepresented in the nineteenth-century samples. For example, the all-time high profits (because of all-time high prices) in the coffee sector around 1815 are in striking contrast to the process of exhaustion of the fact that since the 1770s more than one-fifth of the plantations had stopped producing coffee and many more were to follow.
9 The average price of sugar during the 1820s was 39 cents per kg, during the 1830s 31 cents per kg, and during the 1840s 25 cents per kg (Van Stipriaan 1993:268).
pay off, as despite a further decline in sugar prices, profitability increased once again during the last decade before Emancipation. Clearly, then, under these circumstances 1863 was not the most appropriate moment to abolish slavery.

The cotton sector occupied an intermediate position between the coffee and sugar sectors. Part of the cotton estates were former coffee plantations where a (timely) switch to cotton had been made. The rest of this sector was completely new, including new capital and a new group of planters, both for the major part from Britain. The section of the cotton sector originating in the languishing coffee sector was characterized by exhaustion, while the other, newer section was marked by innovation and reproduction.\(^{10}\) Either way, this sector could not survive in the long run because of ecological problems (ocean flooding, insect plagues), and the fall in prices since the 1830s. There was no indication that free labor would have been advantageous to the survival of this sector. The cotton from the major producer, the United States, was all slave-grown, and Suriname’s neighbor Guiana saw its cotton production decline even faster after slavery was abolished in that colony (Mandle 1973:18).

No more new plantations\(^{11}\) were laid out in Suriname after the early 1820s, and the total number of plantations dropped from 383 in 1810 to 161\(^{12}\) just before Emancipation. Particularly the coffee and cotton sectors of the plantation economy seemed to account for this decline, as the number of sugar plantations remained roughly the same. However, the situation was a bit more complex. From the early 1820s until Emancipation, some thirty-five coffee and cotton plantations switched to sugar production, while during the same period some fifty plantations stopped sugar production. On most plantations the switch to sugar production had been made during the 1820s and 1830s. Even so, eight plantations only switched around 1850, while the first, and for a long time the only central sugar factory was also installed around that time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Plantations</th>
<th>Slaves</th>
<th>Sugar Under Cultivation (ha)</th>
<th>Coffee Production (1,000 Tonnes)</th>
<th>Cotton Production (1,000 Tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>27,660</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3,0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>25,653</td>
<td>21,087</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>19,487</td>
<td>12,187</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>8,766</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10,681</td>
<td>7,026</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6,443</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


After its long eclipse by coffee, sugar entered its second youth during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Between c 1810 and 1862, the slave population of this sector almost doubled, as did production. Profitability rose 1820s and 1830s. The Suriname sugar sector had always ranked among the most productive and technologically most advanced of the Caribbean.\(^{13}\) Suriname sugar planters therefore saw no advantage in duplicating the abolition of slavery announced in the British West Indies. The second phase of expansion, which started around 1850, was aborted by the now impending Emancipation in Suriname. For the Suriname sugar sector, Emancipation came at the worst moment imaginable. The second phase of expansion and innovation started in Suriname at roughly the same time as it did in the

\(^{10}\) Van Stipriaan 1993:140-4, 186-91. On the other hand, eleven of the remaining twenty-six cotton plantations in 1856 were operated with a steam engine, and the introduction of new cotton varieties seems to have been almost common practice (Koloniaal Verslag 1856; Van Stipriaan 1993:187).

\(^{11}\) The word plantation is used only for large-scale agricultural enterprises where cash crops were grown for an international market. I do not include large-scale timber plantations, nor cattle or food crop plantations.

\(^{12}\) This figure includes twenty-three cacao plantations.
free-labor sugar sector of neighboring British Guiana and the slave sugar sector of Cuba, by then the two most advanced sugar producers of the Caribbean. During the 1840s the Guianese planters had abundant capital at their disposal – partly state-financed compensation payments for the loss of their slaves – which were used for the modernization of sugar production (Adamson 1972:173; Green 1976:203). In Cuba, where the abolition of slavery seemed a distant probability, substantial innovation in the sugar sector only got underway in the 1850s, when a new wave of credits was made available to the planters (Watts 1987:489). In Suriname, the overall modernization of the sugar sector failed to gain momentum, because in anticipation of Emancipation, few potential creditors remained seriously interested in the colony.

**Suriname Planters and Abolition, 1800-1848**

Not surprisingly, the Suriname planter class opposed abolition, and made this point repeatedly. For example, a group of planters stated in a note referring to the first official Emancipation proposal that

"...all this artificial emancipation of people with a civilization which has not yet climbed up to the [required] level for freedom is untimely, dangerous, and unfavorable to the state."  

However, this generalization does not help us much in understanding the late timing of emancipation in Suriname. First, the Suriname planters can hardly be considered as a single, homogeneous class. A substantial part had lived in Suriname for generations and did not have many ties with the Netherlands, such as Sephardic and Azkhenazi Jews, or the descendants of French Huguenots. Others had only recently become planters in Suriname and had no ties with the Netherlands either, such as the British group. Next, there was the powerful group of administrators, some of whom merely acted as representatives of absentee owners, while others owned plantations themselves. Finally, there was a small but growing group of planters and administrators of mixed black and white descent, anxious to play their part in colonial society, but held in low esteem by their white colleagues.

There were other lines of division too. The interests of coffee planters differed from those in the sugar sector, which did not parallel cotton interests either. Thus, in the course of the nineteenth century, it became clear that the coffee sector was doomed. Nevertheless, many coffee planters had a direct interest in the continuation of slavery, because the slackening pace of work on their own plantations enabled them to hire out their slaves at a good margin to sugar plantations. On the other hand, not all sugar planters were as fervently opposed to the abolition of slavery as it might seem. Some of their spokesmen used free contract laborers from Madeira and China alongside their slaves almost a decade before Emancipation. The main issue for these planters became that of financial compensation for the loss of their human capital. This money could be employed to expand and modernize their enterprises.

Not surprisingly, the sugar lobby was most outspoken. Between 1848 and 1857, seven influential missives were sent to the Dutch king or the Minister of Colonial Affairs, signed by various groups of owners and/or administrators of Suriname plantations residing in the Netherlands or Suriname. The most influential opinion leaders numbered no more than twelve, even though they spoke on behalf of many more. In 1853 this group of twelve had interests in thirty sugar plantations, ten coffee estates, and five cotton plantations. They represented one-third of the sugar sector, but no more than one-sixth of the other sectors. Their sugar plantations were among the most advanced in Suriname. Quite understandably in view of the decline of these sectors, neither the coffee nor the cotton sector had such influential spokesmen.

In the end, it seems that in colonial Suriname substantial changes in this plantation economy were only implemented when there was no alternative and/or in response to serious external pressure. This phenomenon persisted throughout the nineteenth-century history of slavery. It may first be observed in the formal acceptance of the abolition of the slave trade as one of the conditions under which England returned Suriname to the Dutch.

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14 Around 1860, the output per hectare of total cane acreage was 1,899 kg in Suriname, as against 1,861 kg in Cuba, and 2,931 kg in Guiana (Van Stipriaan 1953:138-40, 181-2).
15 Cited in Siwerssard 1979:184. All quotations in this text are translated from the Dutch original by the author.
king in 1814. As a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, Suriname had been occupied by the British during the years 1799-1802 and again in 1804-1814. When Britain abolished the slave trade in 1808, this measure therefore included Suriname. Some protests were uttered at the time (Van Stipriaan 1993:318; Wolbers 1861:546), but no more planters' protests were voiced after 1808, and upon the return of Suriname to the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1814 the Dutch Crown accepted the fait accompli without significant opposition. The absence of subsequent planters' protests may have been due partly to the continuing illegal slave imports, despite British control; some 1,000 slaves were estimated to be smuggled into Suriname each year.20

Upon the return of Suriname to the Netherlands the Dutch king not only confirmed the abolition of the slave trade with Africa at the special request of the British ambassador in The Hague, but he was also made to accept the installation of a mixed Anglo-Dutch court in Paramaribo to supervise its compliance (Emmer 1974:184). The one exception to this rule may have satisfied the demand of Suriname planters for 'fresh' slaves. A provision was made that intra-Caribbean slave trade between countries that had also abolished the slave trade with Africa was not forbidden. Unintentionally, this provision implied that wherever traders managed to import African slaves illegally, they could proceed by legally selling them to other colonies. In this way, particularly via the French West Indies, Suriname planters were able to import another 12,000 new slaves until 1827, when registration of all the slaves and further British pressure finally put an end to the slave trade (Van Stipriaan 1993:107).

The consequence of the full abolition of the slave trade was that the demise of slavery itself became inevitable. On the one hand, there was the factor of a structural demographic decrease of the slave population. On the other hand, measures to counter this decrease, such as an amelioration policy towards the slaves, would in the long run also make the system disappear, or at least undermine it. Any improvement in the conditions of slavery had a price, financially as well as psychologically. A better-fed slave could work harder, but would also be able to demand more food – which was exactly what happened, as will be demonstrated below.

Even so, when Britain abolished slavery in 1834 there was no need for the Suriname planters – nor the Dutch government – to follow this exceptional example. Irrespective of the outcome of the debate on slavery, the coffee sector was doomed. The cotton sector did not 'know' yet that it had just entered a downward spiral, whereas the sugar sector was innovating and on its way up again. All other interested parties simply aimed at getting as much out of the plantations as they could for as long as they could. In sum, no calculating entrepreneur needed or wanted the change to free labor or the obvious instability that went along with it. There was no point in following the British example, particularly as no other nation joined the United Kingdom.

The dominant attitude towards Emancipation among Suriname planters seems to have been evasive. The plantocracy did not react until it thought itself unjustly attacked by outsiders who pleaded for abolition by depicting or concocting the 'horrors' of slavery.21 In fact, occasionally a planter even spoke out purposely in favor of Emancipation.22 The high colonial officer W.H. Lans drew up several emancipation models during the 1830s and 1840s, but his long-term plans were too far-reaching and/or too costly to convince the Dutch government or the colonial authorities.23 During the early 1840s there was an ongoing (parliamentary) discussion about the introduction of substantially improved slave regulations, which were seen by many as a first step towards Emancipation. Plantation owners who joined the debates sent one memo after another to the metropolitan parliament, advising Dutch policy-makers not to interfere in these colonial matters, redressing their negative image, and arguing that the slaves were not yet civilized enough to benefit from full freedom (Oostindie 1992). The case in favor of amelioration as a prelude to Emancipation was defended by such prominent spokesmen as the Governor of Suriname, B.J. Elias, and the Minister of Colonial Affairs, J.C. Baud. Their support for amelioration, however, was fiercely contested. In 1845, Elias resigned as governor of Suriname.

20 For example, in 1839 J.J. Bueno de Mesquita, the owner of two vast timber estates and one coffee plantation, sent a request to the Dutch king for the creation of a reserve fund to pay for the emancipation of the slaves in Suriname. According to him, abolition was unavoidable now that the British had shown the way (Siewperras 1979:181). Nothing was ever heard of this request.

21 Lains's first Emancipation proposal dates from 1833 and was stimulated by the ad interim Minister of Colonial Affairs, G.G. Clifford. In this proposal he stated that in order to keep the emancipated slaves working, the sugar plantations would have to be converted to the production of less demanding crops such as coconuts and vanilla. His 1844 Emancipation model – which was supported by the Minister of Colonial Affairs, J.C. Baud – suggested that all slaves and plantations should be expropriated by the state and that the former owners should be compensated with bonds worth /24.6 million. All plantations were to be planted with sugar cane and worked by slaves, while the processing of sugar would take place in thirty-seven central factories (costing another f3.5 million). In this scheme, the slaves became free once all bonds had been paid off (Siewperras 1979:6-8, 134-54).
without having obtained acceptance of amelioration policies (Siwpersad 1979:115-23). Perhaps by then amelioration was indeed accepted as wise management, but Emancipation continued to be seen as something for the distant future. Meanwhile, the plantocracy simply begged to be left alone by the colony, where the planters themselves were trying to bring civilization and prosperity to all.24

Despite such petitions and discussions, the public debate on questions of slavery and emancipation was meager up to 1848. The only serious publications in favor of emancipation were those by M.D. Teenstra (1842), J. van Ouwerkerk de Vries (1841), and J. de Neufville (1841); the latter received an anonymous reply by 'a Colonist' (Kolonist 1842). All this changed after 1848, during the fifteen years leading up to Emancipation in 1863, when at least twenty-five book(let)s25 were published in favor of the abolition of slavery, against some fifteen defending the status quo.26

**Planters, Slaves, and Emancipation, 1848-1863**

Until 1848, British Emancipation had been the exception. In 1848, however, as a consequence of revolutionary changes at home, the French suddenly followed the British example. The Suriname planters were shocked, not in the least because they were now surrounded by plantation colonies where slavery was abolished.27 As one planter wrote:

"Now a new and very eminent danger threatens us. I mean the emancipation of the slaves in the French colonies. This information will soon blow over to Suriname from the neighboring colony of Cayenne.28"

After 1848, Suriname planters were not so much concerned with the question of whether Emancipation would come, but how soon and how. The latter in particular became their main concern: how would they be compensated by the Dutch government? All planters agreed that there could be no Emancipation without a ‘fair compensation’.29 This indeed was one of the few causes in Suriname history on which all planters agreed.

Discussions of fair compensation seemed to continue endlessly. Meanwhile, with the new slave regulations of 1851 and 1856, ‘amelioration’ had become the official policy. The 1851 regulations were the immediate result of the events of 1848. The revolutionary government in France proclaimed the abolition of slavery on 27 April 1848. Less than three weeks later, on 15 May the Dutch Minister of Colonial Affairs ad interim, J.C. Rijk, sent a circular to the ‘Suriname interest’ in Amsterdam,30 in which he warned that ‘to stick stubbornly to the principle of slavery in the way it still exists in Suriname [is] highly dangerous’ (cited in Siwpersad 1979:157-8). He continued by summoning the planters ‘to soften the fate of the slaves in order to diminish motives for rebellion and desertion’, for which he gave a long list of practical ameliorations. The answer of G.C. Bosch Reitz and twenty-five other interested persons shows how shocked they were by the 1848 events. Quite timidly they replied that ‘after mature deliberation and having taken into consideration the signs of the times’, they were now willing to submit to the Minister’s recommendations with only a few alterations (Siwpersad 1979:158).

In 1851 these regulations were formalized as a slave law, which prescribed an amelioration in the formal conditions of slavery. However, according to a growing number of politicians and some Christian social movements, the influence of the planters’ interests was still too visible; the law did not provide for Emancipation in the near future. After further parliamentary discussion this criticism was met by the installation of a Staatscommissie in November 1853. The term Emancipation was not mentioned in its instructions. However, the Commission report published in August 1855 not only helped to further improve the slave regulations (1856), but also precipitated the final abolition of slavery (Siwpersad 1979:223-8). That the final decision was postponed until the early 1860s was entirely a financial matter.

For many planters and their representatives in Amsterdam – as well as for some conservative politicians – the enactment of improved slave regulations was reason enough to postpone Emancipation. In the meantime slave owners could try to obtain maximal compensation for the future loss of

24 Indeed, medical care, food, housing, and labor conditions on the plantations were gradually improving during the nineteenth century. As a consequence, birth rates rose from 18.6 per 1,000 plantation slaves around 1800 to 29.9 per 1,000 during the 1850s, and mortality declined during the same period from 40.7 to 34.6 per 1,000 plantation slaves (Van Stipriaan 1993:322, 332).

25 Of twenty pages or more.

26 Counted in Waaldijk 1959:78-128. One-third of the fifteen pro-slavery tracts were anonymous.

27 Except, of course, for Brazil, but the enormous Amazon jungle separating Brazil and Suriname made this country seem farther away than Europe.

28 Letter from the planter Vereul to the Minister of Colonial Affairs (in Algemeen Rijksarchief (ARA) Ministerie van Kolonien (1814-1849) 1853, 6 May 1848); my translation.

29 See, for example, the petitions of G.C. Bosch Reitz et al. (1848) and Van Emden et al. (1852) in Siwpersad 1979:180-7, 212-3.

30 A group of thirty to forty absentee plantation owners or their representatives, mainly resident in Amsterdam. Its spokesmen were G.C. Bosch Reitz (owner and administrator), J.J. Poncelet (merchant, owner, and administrator), and A. Brugmans (a barrister specialized in Suriname cases). In 1853, 57 per cent of the 189 Suriname plantations producing foreign export were absentee owned, mainly by Dutch. This Amsterdam-based interest group was crucial to the Suriname plantation economy.
their slaves, whereas the politicians would have time to think about the cheapest possible way to emancipate the slaves. One factor, however, increasingly put pressure on the timing of Emancipation, a pressure neither planters nor the authorities could ignore: the slaves themselves. Characteristic of these developments was a 1849 letter from Suriname, published in a Dutch newspaper:

The [plantation] director, who used to have moral power over the slaves, is now being treated by the slaves with disdain. The subordination is completely undermined. Now the servants are beginning to scare the masters. Let us hope that the government will soon take measures to proclaim the abolition of slavery here. The negroes live in hopes of soon shaking off their yoke, yet if this would not be realized I am fearful of the consequences.31

These words were true. The slaves were certainly aware of the fact that the planters had become increasingly dependent on them, particularly since the import of new slaves had come to an end. They used this situation to create more room and rights for themselves in everyday plantation life, and gradually began to behave as a relatively independent proto-peasantry.32 To mention just one example, the food supply of the free population came to depend increasingly on what the slaves produced in their own time, on their own subsistence land, for their own profit. An overseer or director who did not respect the slaves' rights to this business was confronted with obstinacy - to say the least - and often had to be fired or transferred to another plantation.

Moreover, the slaves' rights were now actively supported by the colonial authorities. With a view to maintaining law and order and to keeping the slaves from rebelling, they did not want the improved slave regulations of 1851 and 1856 to remain a dead letter. Consequently, from 1853 on an annual average of forty-five plantation managers or owners - ten to twenty per cent of the total - received an official warning about not having (fully) observed the slave regulations. An average of eight were brought to trial every year, mainly for imposing more severe punishments than the law allowed (Van den Boogaart and Emmer 1977:209). Even if the authorities would have preferred to close their eyes to the violations of the slaves' rights, the victims forced them to look. During the years 1848-1863, at least thirty-nine plantations witnessed a combination of rioting and running away. In twenty-four cases the slaves did not run away to hide in the woods but went to Paramaribo to complain to the Attorney General about the violation of their rights, maltreatment, or related grievances (Kool 1993:75). A striking example of this new attitude on the part of slaves and at least some officials alike happened in 1857. A female slave, Sanna, complained to the Attorney


General that her mistress had unjustly beaten her in the face. The only thing that had happened, she claimed, was that when her mistress had reprimanded her for spoiling a basket full of flour, Sanna had told her that freedom was near and that slaves and masters would soon be equals. In former times Sanna would have received a severe punishment for such 'impertinence'; now Sanna's mistress had to pay a fine of twenty guilders (Toes 1992:155-7).

Slave rebelliousness had indeed become a national and chronic phenomenon in Suriname by that time (Table 7).

Table 7. Rebelliousness on Suriname Plantations, 1820-1862*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>period</th>
<th>number of plantations involved</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820-1833</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834-1847</td>
<td>27 (1841: general unrest and rebelliousness because of Emancipation rumors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848-1862</td>
<td>61 (1857: general unrest and rebelliousness because of Emancipation rumors)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (strikes, Marronage and/or riots of at least 10 slaves).


The rebellions and Maroon wars of the eighteenth century have overshadowed nineteenth-century slave resistance in Suriname. Not only was the latter less spectacular or dramatic, but, more importantly, the objectives of the slaves had changed. In the mid-eighteenth century, almost three-quarters of the slave population were still born in Africa, whereas a century later the majority were born in Suriname and some were even third- or fourth-generation Surinamers. This evolution had direct repercussions. When eighteenth-century slaves ran off to the woods to join the Maroon communities, they mostly did so because they had reached the limits of what they could take and because they had little to lose. In the woods, far from colonial society, they had an opportunity to start a new life; though hard, it was free and resembled life back in Africa. Since the end of the eighteenth century, after the major Maroon communities were either formally recognized by the colonial authorities or chased away from the colony, chances for new runaway slaves to join the Maroons were no longer good.33 Nevertheless, nineteenth-century slaves ran away from the plantations on a larger scale than ever before. Paradoxically, it might be claimed that they did so precisely to help them stay on the plantation. The slaves now had more to lose because they had strong roots on the plantations. The

33 For the colonial authorities, the most important part of the peace treaties with the Ndjuka (1760), the Saramaka (1762), and the Matarawi (1767) Maroons was the condition that every newly-arrived runaway had to be handed over immediately.
plantation was the place where they were born, where they had relatives, and where they had built up a common culture, undeniably African-based, but combined with a variety of European elements and adapted to Suriname plantation life. This creolization process, in which a heterogeneous West-African 'crowd' turned into a rather homogeneous Afro-Suriname 'community' (Mintz and Price 1992:18), made the slaves stronger and more independent. This in itself implied a structural threat to the slave system. Moreover, the plantation increasingly became a place where slaves made some money for themselves by way of a variety of small-scale agricultural and craft activities.

To defend this proto-peasant type of life within the slave plantation system, slaves used all kinds of resistance, including running away. However, they no longer marooned desperately to leave colonial society behind. On the contrary, they ran away temporarily as a way to obtain more space within the system, or to show that their rights had been violated; after a while, most runaways returned to their plantation. Sometimes a complete slave population withdrew from its plantation in protest and stayed in the woods until its demands were satisfied, or at least heard. Such actions resemble labor strikes in industrialized Europe later that century. In Suriname, these strikes had become a mighty weapon in the slaves' hands long before 1848. Just like the creolization process, this struggle was not directly aimed at the abolition of slavery, but it severely undermined the system and boosted the emancipation of the slaves.

An example may underline this point. In 1828, one of the absentee owners of the Potribo plantation came to Suriname to visit his estate. Five field slaves used the opportunity to run away after first having spoiled some of the recently produced sugar. No causes were given in the reports on these events, but it is plausible that the plantation director wanted to impress his superior because of the expected visit and pressed the slaves to work harder than usual. The runaway slaves returned to the plantation after some time and were severely punished, together with the black overseer whose 'misbehavior' was held responsible for 'the existing confusion and irregularity'.

After his visit, the owner concluded that the sugar production of Potribo could be expanded considerably. This was immediately put into practice. Between 1828 and 1835, the sugar acreage doubled from 47 to 94 hectares; already in 1830, the administrator reported that he could hardly recognize the plantation.\(^{34}\) The same year, however, the owners in Amsterdam received 'bitter complaints about the recalcitrant and rebellious behavior of the negroes'. Some time afterwards, they received a message that the plantation's complete slave population, with the exception of old women and children, had retreated to the forest hinterland of the plantation. The administrators then investigated the plantation's management, and concluded 'that this man had given the slaves no other cause for discontent and misbehavior than his persistence and pressing for orderly and industrious work'.\(^{35}\) Nevertheless, they saw no solution except to replace this director. At this decision, the entire slave force returned to the plantation. The slaves were apparently not unwilling to lay out more sugar fields; afterwards, with the assistance of newly bought slaves from another plantation, the expansion was realized without any recorded protest. The extra help must have been crucial. In the earlier phase, they may have felt that the obligation to work harder without rewards was a violation of the established routine, because it meant less time and energy for their own activities – an infringement they were not willing to accept. The impact of such strikes – Potribo was no exception (Van Stipriaan 1992) – must have been considerable. News travelled fast among the plantations, and such actions encouraged other slave forces to stand firm in their own struggles.

After 1848, when slavery was abolished in most Caribbean countries, and more particularly in neighboring British and French Guiana, the Suriname slaves became even more restless and were anxious for their own Emancipation. In 1841 and 1857 this led to almost nationwide unrest and rebelliousness on the plantations, when the proclamation of formal ameliorations in slave labor conditions invoked the rumor that Emancipation was imminent.\(^{36}\) The slaves' hopes were strengthened by the fact that their voice was indeed acknowledged now and by the amelioration process itself, which had assumed a rhythm of its own. What they most probably did not know was that, in the country where the decision on the abolition of slavery had to be taken, their rebelliousness as well as complaints on ill-treatment were used as arguments in a sort of press campaign.\(^{37}\) Although this campaign was not a decisive factor in the abolition of slavery, it certainly played a role in The Hague (Van Winter 1953:86-7; Toes 1992:168-76). Without these pressing circumstances, the abolition of slavery in the Dutch West Indies would probably have taken even longer than it did.

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34 Gemeente Archief Amsterdam (GAA): PA-600/544.
35 Gemeente Archief Amsterdam (GAA): PA-600/544.
36 The new slave regulations of 1856 stated that working during the night – which was sometimes necessary during harvest – was only permitted if those nights were compensated with a day off. At first the slaves interpreted this as a prohibition on work after six p.m. In the resulting labor unrest, rumors about an imminent emancipation spread quickly.
37 Toes 1992:168-76. Governor C.P. Schimpf in fact admitted that the fear of further rebelliousness was an argument used in favor of abolition when he spoke about those 'wrong notions, that when a general emancipation is delayed a rebellion of the slaves would have to be feared' (cited in Toes 1992:153).
Conclusion

Why, then, were the Dutch so late in abolishing slavery in Suriname? First of all, at no point in the history of this plantation colony would abolition have been logical from an economic point of view. The Suriname plantation economy was not ruled by king sugar, but consisted of three major sectors, each with its own dynamics. The least unlikely moment might have been around 1780, when the coffee boom was at its zenith, the plantations were burdened with heavy debts, and the dwindling slave imports combined with the structural death deficit resulted in a continually diminishing slave population. Perhaps coffee could have survived as a peasant crop, while sugar could have been produced by free labor on the plantations – even if there is no indication that this would have meant the cheaper production of sugar.

Anyway, around 1780 abolition was not yet on the agenda. When Suriname was returned to the Netherlands after the British interregnum (1799-1816), coffee had already entered a cul-de-sac, and emancipation did not offer a way out. For the cotton sector, a change to free labor was of no importance either. After the flourishing 1820s, this sector slowly deteriorated as a consequence of ecological disasters and the dominance of the market by the cheaper, slave-grown cotton from the USA. Finally, during the 1820s and 1830s, the productivity of slaves in the Suriname sugar sector was higher than in any British Carribean plantation economy, profitability was reasonably good, and a new phase of innovation had started. A switch to free labor might have given these favorable developments an extra stimulus, but it was not exactly required. Moreover, the cloud of the coffee sector disaster was still hanging over the plantation economy and scared away potential creditors; Emancipation would probably have worsened the colony's credibility. When Emancipation was finally enacted, it came at an untimely moment during the second phase of innovation and expansion in the sugar sector.

In sum, for none of the plantation sectors in Suriname was there an economically 'logical' moment to abolish slavery. From this point of view, any date for Emancipation was as bad or good as any another. There was no need to do the same as the UK, particularly not as the British had already forced the Dutch to abolish the slave trade. Why follow the exception of Britain, rather than sticking with France, Spain, Denmark, Brazil, or the USA? Keeping a low profile and avoiding revolutionary changes was probably felt as the best remedy for the recovery of the Suriname plantation economy.

Another factor to explain the late timing of abolition, mentioned by Seymour Drescher too, is the fact that neither Suriname nor the Antilles were specifically Dutch colonies. In 1737, for example, at least half of the plantations were owned by people of non-Dutch origin, mostly Portuguese Jews from Brazil and former Huguenots from France (Van Stipriaan 1993:32). They were later joined by German Jews, while at the beginning of the nineteenth century a group of British planters entered the scene prominently, specifically in the cotton sector. The Suriname planter class and other interested parties had no strong ties with the politico-economic elite in the Netherlands. Moreover, the different 'production mentality' and interests per sector made the planters even less united than they could have been culturally, which again kept them from forming a front in their relations with the mother country. The market side of the relations between Suriname and the Netherlands provoked a lack of mutual commitment as well. Suriname products were never protected on the Dutch market like British West Indian produce. On the contrary, the Dutch market was open to any rival of Suriname, and Suriname sugar or coffee was never in a position to dominate this market.38

Drescher is therefore right in stating that economically, Suriname was never important enough, nor were its ties with the metropolis strong enough, to give birth to a strong abolitionist movement – nor to strong anti-abolitionist feelings, for that matter – in the Netherlands. More importantly, as a consequence of the same circumstances, a powerful Suriname or Dutch West Indian Interest never developed in Amsterdam or The Hague. This may be the crucial issue: perhaps a strong abolitionist movement could only develop if there was an influential planter lobby, such as the British West India interest. As such links between the Suriname plantation economy and Dutch politics never really matured, the Suriname lobby remained weak. Only after the 1840s, when particularly plantation owner G.C. Bosch Reitz and A. Brugmans, a barrister of 'Suriname' cases, became the self-appointed spokesmen of the Amsterdam-based absentee plantation owners or their representatives, could one speak of a more or less organized 'Suriname interest'.39 By then, some successful Suriname administrators had made

38 During the second half of the eighteenth century the Suriname share of sugar on the Dutch market fluctuated between 20 and 34 per cent, and that of coffee between 44 and 50. The rest came mainly from the French West Indies. This competition ended after the Haitian revolution, but then came the rise of Java. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two colonies' exports were almost of the same volume. At mid-century, Suriname produced some 15,000 tons of sugar but hardly any coffee, whereas Java exported 104,000 tons of sugar and 71,500 tons of coffee (Van Stipriaan 1993:263-4).

39 For example, the 1849 official 'Commission of interested parties in Suriname agriculture' headed by Bosch Reitz. He was actually in favor of emancipation – he even designed an emancipation model – but, as a parliamentary commission put it, his protests at least suggested that his only goal was to get maximal compensation (Kuitendrouver 1978-77). Nevertheless, he was respected and, with Brugmans, he was appointed in the Staatscommissie of 1853 to represent the plantation owners. An abolitionist member of this commission resigned in 1854 because of Brugmans's inflexibility in aiming 'at an emancipation which could be
enough capital to retire to the Netherlands and become part of the Dutch elite. They helped to close the gap between the interested parties on both sides of the ocean.\textsuperscript{40}

In the early 1840s the abolition movement finally gained momentum with the start of two petition actions against colonial slavery.\textsuperscript{41} However, its impact was very limited (Van Winter 1953:61; Siwpersad 1979:191-2). It is telling that even this flurry of Dutch abolitionism, a paradoxical coalition of progressive Liberals and Evangelical Christians, was triggered by British abolitionists and Quakers (Van Winter 1953:65-6; Kuitenbrouwer 1978:75-6).

It was only in 1848 that the tide started to change, again as a consequence of outside events. Now Suriname became one of the remaining anomalies in the Caribbean and found itself surrounded by 'emancipated' plantation colonies. The abolition of slavery became inevitable, though the Suriname interest on both sides of the Atlantic, united for once, managed to postpone the final verdict for another fifteen years. It might have taken even longer, had it not been for the slaves who had already undermined the system for a long time. This process was no 'liberation struggle' like the eighteenth-century Maroon wars on the periphery of the plantation economy. It took place in the heart of the system, in the plantations, where creolization and (proto-)peasantization made the slaves claim and win increasingly more room for maneuver and rights. They knew Emancipation was coming, although twice they rejoiced too early. It is not surprising that at first they could not believe the news that on 1 July 1863 their Emancipation had not come, had probably never set foot in Suriname. U. H. Wilkens was born in Suriname, where his father had owned two Plantations and administered twenty-four others. D. Taunay was also born in Suriname, where his father had owned two plantations and administered thirty-eight others in the 1820s. E.G. Veldkijk, who left the colony in the early 1820s when he was about thirty-seven years old, owned one plantation and had administered at least ten plantations there. Finally, C.C. Bosch Reitz had probably never seen Suriname with his own eyes, but his interests in that colony – eight plantations, which he owned, had a share in, or administered – were represented there by a G.J.A. Bosch Reitz (Van Stipriaan 1993:295-9; Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen Amsterdam: Collection Van Breugel; Public Record Office London: CO 278/15).

The greater flexibility of the planters in Suriname is striking. When the abolitionist Attorney General in Suriname wrote to one of the abolitionist politicians in the Netherlands one month before Emancipation, he noted that the planters were rather depressed, but resigned themselves far better to the decision of parliament than the 'Suriname Interest' in Amsterdam, headed by Brugmans, who had never expected that the change to Emancipation could be decided upon without their consent (Van Winter 1953:88).

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\textsuperscript{40} For example, the earlier mentioned reply to the 1848 circular of Minister Rijk to the 'Suriname Interest' in Amsterdam was signed by six people, three of whom had been administrator in Suriname; one was represented in Suriname by a relative. R. Le Chevalier and P.C. Gulcher had inherited some plantations, carried out the Dutch administration of a few others, and had probably never set foot in Suriname. U.H. Wilkens was born in Suriname, not long before coming to the Netherlands he owned two plantations and administered twenty-four others. D. Taunay was also born in Suriname, where his father had owned two plantations and administered thirty-eight others in the 1820s. E.G. Veldkijk, who left the colony in the early 1820s when he was about thirty-seven years old, owned one plantation and had administered at least ten plantations there. Finally, C.C. Bosch Reitz had probably never seen Suriname with his own eyes, but his interests in that colony – eight plantations, which he owned, had a share in, or administered – were represented there by a G.J.A. Bosch Reitz (Van Stipriaan 1993:295-9; Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen Amsterdam: Collection Van Breugel; Public Record Office London: CO 278/15). The greater flexibility of the planters in Suriname is striking. When the abolitionist Attorney General in Suriname wrote to one of the abolitionist politicians in the Netherlands one month before Emancipation, he noted that the planters were rather depressed, but resigned themselves far better to the decision of parliament than the 'Suriname Interest' in Amsterdam, headed by Brugmans, who had never expected that the change to Emancipation could be decided upon without their consent (Van Winter 1953:88).

\textsuperscript{41} See Kuitenbrouwer's article in this volume.

to the plantations to announce it, only then would they believe it.\textsuperscript{42} One cannot blame them: who would not have been cynical after such a long road to abolition?

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Kolonist
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