

The background of the cover features a halftone illustration. On the left, a man in a dark top hat and coat leads a man in chains. In the center, a man in a white shirt and dark pants is being led. On the right, a man in a dark shirt and pants holds a mallet high in his right hand. The entire scene is rendered in a halftone dot pattern.

# Dutch Colonial Slavery and Its Afterlives

2025-2035  
Research Agenda

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“It is not that Europe has denied its colonial history. It is instead that Europe has developed a way of telling the story of its colonial history that ultimately seeks to erase that history. (...) It frees Europe of responsibility, of a significant and traceable connection to the African present and it allows Europe the glow of charity. But the truth is that the past does not merely tell us what happened yesterday. It also illuminates what happens today. If we acknowledge that present-day Europe is shaped by the Renaissance of 600 years ago, by the Enlightenment of 300 years ago, then surely we cannot say that what happened 100 years ago in Africa no longer matters. (...) The history of Africa and Asia and Latin America must matter as well. We cannot pick and choose which histories and which points of view still matter, because to do this would be an exercise of brute power.”

— CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE, *KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE HUMBOLDT FORUM IN BERLIN, 2021*.<sup>1</sup>

1 Keynote speech by Chimamanda Adichie 2021, <https://www.humboldtforum.org/en/programm/digitales-angebot/digital-en/keynote-speech-by-chimamanda-adichie-32892/>.

# Introduction

The 2025-2035 ‘Dutch Colonial Slavery and Its Afterlives’ Research Agenda charts a course for future multiannual research projects in the field of colonial slavery studies and highlights important areas to research in the years ahead. This research agenda builds upon the book *Staat en slavernij: Het Nederlandse koloniale slavernijverleden en zijn doorwerkingen* (State and Slavery: Dutch Colonial Slavery and Its Afterlives), edited by Rose Mary Allen, Esther Captain, Matthias van Rossum and Urwin Vyent.<sup>2</sup> Published in June 2023, this book provides an overview of what we know about Dutch colonial slavery and how this knowledge has taken shape. At the same time, it highlights how much we still do not know. It points us to follow-up questions and research topics that will improve our understanding of Dutch colonial slavery and its afterlives, and deepen our systematic analyses of this history and its continued impact. It is largely thanks to the foundations laid by *Staat en slavernij* that this research agenda can serve as a roadmap for future research.

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In addition to the insights listed and questions raised in *Staat en slavernij*, this research agenda is based on a review of Dutch and international scholarly literature, surveys from the scholarly field, interviews with key figures from younger generations, and symposiums.<sup>3</sup> This research agenda was drawn up at the request of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) in keeping with the Ceder motion.<sup>4</sup> It is intended to provide guidance for the development of knowledge about slavery and its legacy; hence it is not only relevant to government and academic researchers, but is also useful in the contexts of school, university, cultural heritage, and education in the broadest sense.

2 Rose Mary Allen, Esther Captain, Matthias van Rossum, Urwin Vyent (eds), *Staat en slavernij: Het Nederlandse koloniale slavernijverleden en zijn doorwerkingen* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum - Polak & Van Genneep, 2023).

3 For a comprehensive list, see the Acknowledgements & References on page 51 of this document.

4 See Acknowledgements on page 51.

This research agenda maps out the routes taken in recent scholarly and applied research and suggests paths for fruitful exploration in the years to come. It also names topics that have as yet been largely ignored, but are expected – based on current scholarly and public debate – to gain pertinence.

### Structure

In this research agenda, we focus on knowledge and research regarding Dutch colonial slavery and its afterlives. As a result, our approach to a closely related but wider issue – the relationship between slavery and colonialism – is primarily through the lens of colonial slavery. We do, in this sense, provide a framework for researching this broader topic. Clearly, the colonial past in the widest sense also evokes other big questions, but these are beyond the scope of our research agenda.

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‘Colonial slavery’ refers to the forms of slavery resulting from European colonial expansion from the fifteenth until the late nineteenth century: ‘The shape, functioning, and consequences of slavery and the slave trade have always been closely linked to the broader structures of colonialism through which the Dutch government exerted power in various parts of the world.’<sup>5</sup> Research into colonial slavery features three main elements: 1) colonial slavery’s history; 2) its afterlives, i.e. the way colonial slavery influenced people and society, both when it was legally permitted and later; 3) contemporary approaches and attitudes to colonial slavery, its long-term consequences, and ongoing effects.

These three elements are interconnected but each have their own focus. To accommodate these three aspects, this research agenda is divided into two sections: ‘Aspects of Dutch Colonial Slavery Worldwide’, and ‘Colonial Slavery: Afterlives and Contemporary Approaches’. In addition to the main text, readers will find sidebar texts that either: a) elaborate on a topic or rationale, b) give an example of the research questions proposed, or c) highlight a case study of a particular aspect.



The ideas we outline suggest a framework for further research. We have purposefully taken the long view with this research agenda by providing direction for scholarly and applied research for the period 2025-2035. Yet, we are aware that this document is time-bound, reflecting current research and recent societal developments and debates in the Netherlands, the Dutch Caribbean, and beyond. While this research agenda is an attempt to provide guidance for scholarly research, it can also contribute to knowledge production and dissemination outside of academia, in cultural heritage, in wider education, and elsewhere.

The history of slavery and colonialism has great significance for Dutch society and the societies in the former Dutch colonies.<sup>6</sup> In the past few years, public engagement with this history has rapidly increased. The same period has seen the launch of numerous scholarly and applied research projects. This has produced new perspectives on slavery and colonialism and their lasting impact. It has contributed to a better general understanding of this aspect of the past and has shifted the self-perception of stakeholders, enabling them to cast off distortions perpetuated by the colonial past.

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At the same time, there is a danger of backlash, as we learned from the 2013 commemoration of the abolition of Dutch slavery in 1863. The intensified focus – and often project-based funding – allocated to topics like colonial slavery was followed by a significant decline in attention, based on the idea that enough interest had been generated. Moreover, we note that the Dutch election results of November 22, 2023 pose the risk that colonial slavery could be framed as a socially sensitive issue that should be taken off the agenda. One of the major threats we see is the potential loss of knowledge and capacity built up in the Kingdom of the Netherlands during the year-long commemoration of colonial slavery held in 2023-2024 (Slavernijverleden, 1 juli 2023-1 juli 2024). We are similarly concerned by a tendency we see, in the Netherlands and abroad, to resist research

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In our definition, the Netherlands is comprised of the current Kingdom of the Netherlands (The Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten) and the Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba).

into slavery and its legacy. This opposition, coming both from certain domains of academia and from elsewhere in society, has at times become extreme; researchers have been personally threatened and intimidated. We must confront this phenomenon and its consequences for research, academia and wider society, by promoting initiatives such as ‘SafeScience’, a support organization for researchers facing threats, intimidation or hate speech, set up by Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), and the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

### From Exploration to Research Agenda

This research agenda prioritizes topics and research questions that have received scant attention or have yet to be addressed. Therefore, it is useful to begin by highlighting some findings from *Staat en slavernij* that are pertinent to the further development of knowledge about slavery and its afterlives. After all, this book brought to light insights that are key to understanding Dutch colonial slavery.

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One of our first observations is that the amount of research conducted varies widely from one geographical area to another. Thus, some regions (or topics pertinent to those regions) need more attention. There is some catching up to do, particularly where it comes to research into the history of Dutch slavery in the Caribbean – even more so in the smaller Caribbean islands – and in various regions in Asia.

Another observation closely linked to our previous point is that the topics of research vary from region to region within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the societies it once colonized. This may be due to the variation in challenges these colonized societies have faced based on their specific history of slavery and colonization. For example, research in the Caribbean has addressed domestic violence because of its association with violence during slavery. Additionally, the unequal allocation of attention, research, and resources across the former Dutch colonies worldwide has contributed to an uneven development of knowledge about the empire. In pursuit of a more inclusive

historiography and a better understanding of slavery and its afterlives, it is therefore important to look at both the better-researched and less-explored regions.

In terms of the afterlives of colonial slavery, *Staat en slavernij* has shown that – in addition to studying neglected regions – underused methods (oral history and interviews), perspectives (grassroots, small island states), and disciplines can help explain how the impact of colonial slavery is still felt today. Future scholarly and applied research should therefore include these perspectives, disciplines, and methods.

### Substantive Preconditions

This research agenda outlines topics deserving further exploration (in Sections 1 and 2). There are some overarching focal points that apply to many topics and to the field as a whole. These can be seen as substantive preconditions for a thorough and future-proof study of colonial slavery and its afterlives. We are referring to:

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- Interactions, similarities, and differences between and within various regions involved in global Dutch slavery and its legacy. Specifically, this concerns the Netherlands, Europe, the Indian Ocean, the Indonesian archipelago, East Asia, and the Atlantic world.
- Comparisons between regions, while acknowledging that most topics are relevant across all regions;
- Various interconnections:
  - a. the connection between past and present;
  - b. the connection between colonized societies and the Netherlands;
  - c. the connection between local, national, and global contexts and perspectives; this necessitates both the development of local frameworks and their consideration in a wider context.

It is important to embrace new ways of working to build a thematic, organizational/institutional, and practical digital infrastructure that is also sustainable. In this respect:

- different research topics require different levels of work: systematic, ideological, institutional, and individual;
- research into different research topics requires diversity and openness; at the same time, the need to prevent fragmentation necessitates an integral, interdisciplinary, and cross-domain approach;
- combining research on the *history of slavery* with research on its *legacy* is necessary to better understand and explore the connections between the two;
- research outside the Netherlands is needed to build the necessary organizational and institutional infrastructure and capacity.

The last of these points – the need for research outside the Netherlands – requires wider access to university education, scholarships and research institutes in the Caribbean Netherlands and the many formerly colonized societies. For colonized countries facing economic challenges, this can be hard to accomplish. The creation of joint platforms for the central storage and accessibility of research results requires investment in the training of researchers and professionals in these countries. It is important for them to acquire the skills involved in modern data management and archiving techniques. A combination of technological solutions, international collaboration, capacity building, and public participation can strengthen the amalgamation and accessibility of research data in these countries.

There is a general need for further development of digital infrastructure. This includes creating digital archives, digitizing existing archives, and collecting new data and oral sources. There is also a need for new tools to promote research, and for the continued development of emerging

tools and databases.<sup>7</sup> Efforts should be made to consolidate the findings and data from scholarly studies, social research, commissioned reports and research, and the wealth of genealogical and archaeological research that has been conducted. A crucial question is where and how this information can be stored and made accessible. Additionally, it is important that research and data portals and biographical dictionaries of enslaved individuals worldwide are updated and made accessible to colonial actors.

# Section I: Aspects of Dutch Colonial Slavery Worldwide

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What shapes did colonial slavery take, and what kind of impact did it have? Clearly, this is a multifaceted scholarly and social question. To answer it requires studies into the economic, social, cultural and administrative effects and ramifications from colonial slavery in its earliest form, to the abolition of legally sanctioned slave trade and slavery, through to the present day.<sup>8</sup> Histories of colonial slavery have implications for how societies perceive their past, development, and present. It is increasingly clear that slavery has had a significant and enduring impact, and that this is also true of the effects of colonialism, because the two are so entwined. Yet, many aspects of this have barely been researched. This needs rectifying, all the more so because this field is characterized by strong claims, assumptions, and presumptions, which not only have significant scholarly implications but substantial social and political consequences as well.

Section I of this research agenda provides an overview of the various research directions that need further exploration to gain a better understanding of the history of Dutch colonial slavery and its global impact. This pertains to developments during the era of colonial slavery and slave trade, and after their abolition. There is a substantial imbalance in the knowledge developed about various topics. While some have been fairly well researched, others need exploring from new perspectives. And for some topics, the surface has barely been scratched. There is a wide range of historical research methods available to address the mostly new questions, but methods from other disciplines – such

as archaeology, linguistics, literature studies and social and political sciences – can also contribute to a better understanding of this history and its afterlives. It is valuable to develop more interdisciplinary knowledge in response to these historical issues because this goes to the very heart of how academia and society understand what slavery entailed, how it operated in the Dutch colonial empire, and what its consequences were.

### Social and Cultural Histories of Colonial Slavery

Historical research has traditionally been conducted from colonial perspectives, using colonial sources. It tends to focus on the past's political, economic, and institutional aspects. The lived experience of the enslaved and the day-to-day functioning of slavery may have received marginal attention, but have not been systematically explored in most regions of the former Dutch colonial empire. Dutch historiography thus faces the challenge of gaining a better understanding of the human aspects of this history. This will enable us not only to gain greater insight into local, social, and cultural histories but also to identify interconnections, differences and similarities in the histories of Dutch colonial slavery worldwide. The social and cultural realities and consequences of slavery in the Dutch colonies across the world are therefore an important focus in this research agenda. This can help fill the gap in our knowledge about what colonial slavery and the slave trade did to people, societies, social structures, and cultural patterns. Below is a summary of underexplored topics related to the social and cultural histories of colonial slavery that require more research:

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- a) Family formation, gender relations, and social relationships have not been explored systematically or thoroughly enough. The forced displacement of enslaved individuals inherent to colonial slavery and the violence associated with it had a significant impact on how families were formed, relationships were maintained, role patterns were shaped, and a diversity of family structures emerged. Families

could be torn apart by the sale of enslaved individuals, while alternative living arrangements, such as women caring for each other's children, emerged in some areas. The resulting dynamics and their impact are still poorly understood. Questions arise about how enslaved individuals coped with the trauma of family separation and its intergenerational effects, the roles of women and children in slavery, and the formation of gender and LGBTQIA+ identities within the context of colonial slavery. Furthermore, the consequences of forced displacement and slavery on social cohesion, relationships, and domestic violence need further examination.

- b) The influence of slavery on community formation is an important issue that follows from this discussion. Community formation pertains to the formation of everyday social bonds but also to identity formation and (self-)identification in colonial slave societies. The ways in which language, sense-making, religion, and (material) culture evolved in societies characterized by slavery, forced migration, and colonialism remain largely unexplored. Some regions and cases have been the subject of limited research. For example, recent research has begun to document the relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and slavery. The Dutch Reformed Church had a historically privileged position in the Dutch state and Dutch culture in general and this influence also extended to the corners of the Dutch colonial empire. But less is known about the role the Roman Catholic Church played; its role in relation to slavery still needs to be researched and documented.

Internationally, the issue of the impact of slavery and the slave trade on community formation in the Atlantic world is fairly high on the agenda, but this is not true of Dutch colonial slavery. Research into this issue should include questions about how enslaved individuals made the new places they ended up in into a home and how they



formed bonds. But such research could also seek answers to other questions, including: Which organizational forms and rituals played a role in this? Which myths or stories were created in community formation processes? What role did (transnational) contacts and exchanges play?

- c) Another crucial issue is the relationship between racialization and slavery. Why and when was an increasingly explicit hierarchical distinction made between people of different origins, and how did this affect individuals and societies? These questions have predominantly been studied from the viewpoint of the nineteenth and twentieth century history of ideas and visual culture, and have focused on societies colonized by European countries other than the Netherlands. Racialization in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the societies it colonized has not yet been studied thoroughly and critically enough. Research needs to look at how this developed since the earliest days of colonial expansion, and how it was influenced by slavery and other coercive colonial systems. In particular, widening the scope of such research to include different areas in the Indonesian Archipelago, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic can shed new light on shared as well as specifically local developments in the relationship between slavery and racialization, and on the interactions between different parts of the Dutch colonial empire. This requires research that critically analyzes the powerful legacy of perception and the discursive effects of racialization. It also requires research that explores how racialization could creep into (everyday) practices and situations, and into the political and economic structure of colonial domination.

### Slavery as a System and Lived Experiences of Slavery

Dutch historiography has so far mostly ignored how slavery functioned as a system and an everyday practice, and how

enslaved individuals experienced this.<sup>9</sup> Research into the lived experience of colonial slavery, enslavement, and the slave trade can greatly contribute to a better understanding of the reality of slavery. The following topics related to slavery systems and the enslaved's experiences deserve further exploration.

- 18 a) The ways in which people were enslaved varied greatly: from large-scale wars where entire sections of a population were captured, enslaved and taken away, to the abduction of individuals, the sale of convicts, and the enslavement of social outcasts and people with debts. But people were also born into slavery in places where slavery was considered hereditary, as was the practice in the colonies. We know that the various types of enslavement did not occur at the same rate in all areas where people were enslaved and then transported to the Dutch colonies, but we are lacking a sufficiently thorough and systematic exploration of how each type of enslavement worked and how it was influenced by the slave trade. Another topic that has remained underexplored is what the consequences of enslavement were for the societies from which the enslaved individuals were taken and for the enslaved's position in the colonial societies where they ended up.<sup>10</sup> More research is necessary, not only to understand the variety of practices but also to reveal their consequences on individuals and societies.
- b) The patterns and role of the slave trade in Dutch colonial expansion deserve more attention. There is an extensive historiography of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that has quantitatively and qualitatively examined the displacement and trade of enslaved people across the Atlantic Ocean. But within this trans-Atlantic perspective, relatively little is known

9 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, With a New Preface* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

10 Matthias van Rossum, 'Slavery and Its Transformations: Prolegomena for a Global and Comparative Research Agenda', *CSSH 63/3* (2021), 566-598.

about how the slave trade operated within the Americas. Inter-American trade includes the trade in enslaved people within colonies (between plantations, for instance) and the urban slave trade in places like Paramaribo and Willemstad. It also pertains to long-distance trade among the various American colonies, and between colonies and indigenous societies. Research into the long-distance slave trade in Asia is still in its infancy. A few studies have mapped the slave trade from the Bay of Bengal in the early seventeenth century and the slave trade in Madagascar. But little is known about the precise extent, patterns, and functioning of the (Dutch) slave trade in the Indian Ocean, in Southeast Asia and in East Asia. It is high time to reconstruct (colonial) slave trade in Asia in the years to come. Again, we conclude that specific aspects of Dutch-Asian slavery – such as the urban slave trade, or how the enslaved’s origin influenced their experience – have hardly been studied.

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- c) The colonial slave trade’s impact on local societies needs to be assessed. More research is needed into the indirect – and sometimes quite direct – influence colonial slave traders and authorities exerted on local enslavement processes in areas where they obtained enslaved individuals. A crucial question is what effect this colonial slave trade had on local societies. For example, how did the slave trade – due to the growing demand from the Atlantic and VOC colonies – change social and economic relations in the societies where the Dutch bought enslaved people? We need more studies that focus on West Africa and the enslavement of indigenous populations in the Americas, but the lack of research into Asia is far worse. These questions have hardly been asked about places from Bali to Nias, from Madagascar to Mozambique, and from Coromandel to Arakan.
- d) As for various parts of the Dutch colonial empire, we can clearly conclude that colonial slavery has been far more deeply researched in some colonized or

local societies than in others. This is the case in the Atlantic world, for instance in parts of the Caribbean and in present-day Guyana. To some extent the same can be said of North America, Brazil, and West Africa. Even within Suriname, some areas have been studied more extensively than others. The history of Dutch colonial slavery as it developed under the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been even less well described. The only region for which there is a rich social and economic historiography of colonial slavery is South Africa, thanks to historians there. But when it comes to Dutch-Asian slavery, the gaps in historiography are considerable. How did colonial slavery function from day to day in social, economic, and political terms? This question has yet to be answered with regard to the many areas where the Dutch claimed colonial power or operated in a broader sense, such as in the Indian Ocean, and Southeast and East Asia.

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### TESTIMONIES OF ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS

The profound impact of enslavement and slavery is evident in testimonies and autobiographical documents of (former) enslaved individuals. These documents also debunk the commonly held belief that enslavement processes have not been documented and are not available in source material. The same goes for the lived experiences of enslaved individuals: For example, Nai van Leeot (Flores), better known as Wange Hendrik Richard van Bali, wrote about his childhood in his later recorded memories and mentioned how his mother's owner claimed him and sold him to slave traders. As the child of a free father and an enslaved mother, Nai inherited the status of a slave and poverty prevented his parents from buying his freedom.<sup>11</sup> Similar testimonies from enslaved individuals about how they experienced enslavement and colonial slavery can be found in the judicial records of colonial courts, such as those in Batavia, Cape Town, Cochin, Elmina, Paramaribo and Willemstad.

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Titas Chakraborty and Matthias van Rossum, 'Slave Trade and Slavery in Asia: New Perspectives,' *JSH* 54/1 (2020), 1-14. <https://academic.oup.com/jsh/article/54/1/1/5901211>.

## Resistance and Defiance

Resistance to slavery and enslavement has received more attention in recent years. Most attention is focused on revolts, which are often studied in isolation or looked at in light of local or regional contexts and impact. However, neither such revolts nor other forms of resistance have been exhaustively mapped out. In addition, overt resistance was not the only means by which enslaved individuals opposed slavery. The wider local and transnational patterns of defiance by enslaved individuals deserve further exploration.

- a) To better understand resistance and defiance, further research must be done into the entire spectrum of acts ranging from revolt and violent confrontation to protest, sabotage, evasion and escape by enslaved individuals. This range of behaviors includes cultural expressions that manifested defiance, as well as strategies for defying commands and other ways of adapting to circumstances. The enslaved's development and maintenance of their own (counter)culture through songs and stories is part of this phenomenon as well. It is important to study resistance and defiance in the Atlantic world, but even more so in the parts of Asia affected by Dutch slavery.

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## SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

Through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, enslaved Africans brought their powerful spiritual practices and traditions to the Atlantic colonies, where they merged with Christian and indigenous traditional beliefs. In Suriname, this resulted in what is referred to as 'Winti', and in the Caribbean islands, these practices are known as 'Brua'. In the Leeward Islands, this later became known as 'montamentu' and in the Windward Islands as 'Obeah'. The colonial powers went out of their way to systematically eradicate these traditions and practices by demonizing them and labeling them as Pagan, and sometimes even by legally prosecuting the practitioners. Despite these efforts, these spiritual practices and traditions persisted even after the abolition of slavery. More research is required to

Section I understand how these non-Western beliefs and practices managed to endure in times of such oppression. Were there specific rituals and ceremonies which were suppressed or, conversely, practiced by the enslaved individuals and which thus persisted? Are there examples of resilience and the preservation of cultural practices despite suppression? How did this work in enslaved communities in different parts of the Dutch colonial empire and why?

- b) With respect to all regions, it would be interesting to look at the resistance of the enslaved as part of a wider pattern of resistance under colonialism, by colonial (forced) laborers, corvée laborers, contract laborers and convicts. Not only these interrelationships are interesting; so are the interactions between colonial societies and the regions of origin. How were social and cultural repertoires exchanged, transmitted, and renewed?
- c) In addition to focusing on resistance and the damage and potential traumas caused by colonial slavery, it is also important to look at the resilience, joy and solidarity displayed by the enslaved and their communities. We also need to explore the connections and solidarity between the enslaved and their unenslaved allies and brothers-in-arms. How were these collective bonds formed? What role did language, culture and religion play in these connections? Histories of resistance, defiance and resilience, from large-scale uprisings to everyday interactions and interpersonal relationships, are an important focus with the potential to rewrite the history of slavery.

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### TULA'S REHABILITATION: A LENGTHY PROCESS

Tula played a crucial role in the slave revolt of August 17, 1795 on the Knip plantation in the western part of Curaçao. This uprising was the largest of its kind in terms of the number of participants, geographical spread, and duration. On September 19, 1795, Tula was captured, and after gruesome torture, he was executed on October 3. For centuries after his death, the colonial authorities unjustly portrayed him as a villain. Only recently has his contribution to the struggle for freedom and justice gradually

Section I **been recognized and highlighted, particularly by artists, activists and intellectuals from Curaçao and the diaspora in the Netherlands who advocated for his rehabilitation. As a result of these efforts, the Curaçao government decided to recognize Tula and his fellow fighters as heroes on August 17, 2010, which is commemorated as the Day of the Freedom Struggle (Dia di Lucha di Libertat).**

Following the apologies offered by Prime Minister Mark Rutte on behalf of the government on December 19, 2022, the Dutch government reiterated this recognition on October 4, 2023, when Secretary of State Van Huffelen stated that “Tula’s wish was rightful, his struggle just, and the means used were justified. This makes Tula’s execution a crime.” With this rehabilitation, the Netherlands has posthumously granted Tula the honor that he was entitled to as a freedom fighter who fought for freedom and justice on principle, not only for Curaçao but for all of humanity.

### The Role of Violence

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The role violence played in the history of Dutch colonial slavery is a key topic. Studies tend to focus on specific events or limited periods of time, as a recent in-depth study of the struggle for independence in Indonesia (1945-1950) has done. Additionally, a sizeable number of studies have been devoted to the long series of military conflicts and uprisings during early Dutch colonial expansion. However, neither the large-scale patterns of wartime violence nor the role of violence in colonization and slavery have been thoroughly investigated. Consequently, we still lack a detailed and systematic understanding of the relationship between various forms of violence – warfare, depopulation, deportation – and enslavement and the slave trade. This is also true of the violence that pervaded the everyday practice of slavery and colonialism. The following aspects of the role of violence deserve more attention.

- a) Dutch colonial history is steeped in acts of violence against societies worldwide. The examples that have been studied in more detail underscore that this

warfare consisted of more than ‘incidental’ moments of conflict and conquest. This structural violence requires a profound examination of the impact of colonial warfare and the role slavery played in this. This research should include the interplay between ongoing violence in growing colonial slave societies and the way indigenous populations were treated. A broad global perspective is necessary to properly understand the violence underpinning Dutch colonial slavery. It also requires the use of a variety of research methods that can identify and analyze how this structural warfare functioned and what consequences it had. How did military violence function in Dutch colonial acts? Research should focus in particular on interconnected forms of violence, such as depopulation, deportation, enslavement, the slave trade and slavery. What were the consequences of this violence, and how did it shape the meaning of slavery in colonialism and, more broadly, in (colonized) societies worldwide?

## DUTCH ACTS OF VIOLENCE

The genocide on the Banda Islands (Banda Massacre, 1621) is arguably the most well-known Dutch act of violence in Asia, but it is not the only one. For instance, the Dutch captured and deported the inhabitants of Siau Island in 1615 and forced them to work on an island in the Banda archipelago which they subsequently conquered. During their colonization of Taiwan, in 1636, the Dutch depopulated the island of Liuqiu (Lambai), killing the majority of the population and transporting the survivors as enslaved people to Taiwan and Batavia. Another example is the VOC attacks on villages on the South Chinese coast, where the survivors were taken away as enslaved individuals to Batavia and Bantam, as recounted in Bontekoe’s travelogue. In 1643, Dutch settlers in New Netherland (part of present-day New York state), massacred local (indigenous) people encamped nearby, provoking a war with Munsee communities. Similarly, the expansion of the slave society at the Cape of Good Hope was accompanied by



Section I **massacres of local Khoikhoi and San communities. In 1777, the local VOC government even went so far as to explicitly authorize genocide: every colonial subject was given permission to kill any San they encountered without cause.**

- b) The Dutch colonial empire was not only established and expanded through large-scale warfare, but its everyday operation was also characterized by structural violence, control and oppression. Yet, the latter has received little attention, despite the fact that such violence, control and oppression influenced the work and lives of the enslaved. Divide-and-rule strategies were important tools in the daily operation of slavery: enslaved individuals from different areas were mixed, the enslaved were forced to mete out physical punishment to each other, and they were appointed as overseers. In a broader sense, communities were pitted against each other, and former local rulers from the elite/aristocracy were appointed as colonial administrators. In colonial societies, 'pass' systems restricted and controlled the mobility of the enslaved, corvée laborers, and local populations. The extensive role of violence and control in colonial societies needs to be investigated in order to analyze how colonial power structures operated, how colonial authorities (companies, plantations, etc.) designed and used them, and what role overt and everyday violence played. Key questions that need to be addressed include: How were these forms of violence experienced? How did they work in practice? What effects did colonial militarization, control systems and violence have on colonized societies? And, in what ways has this also influenced the Netherlands through the exchange and return of colonial elites, ideas, and practices rooted in colonial violence and exploitation? One aspect deserving attention is the enslaved's experience of pervasive violence: What impact has this had on child rearing and family life for multiple generations? And, how

has structurally pervasive violence led to alienation, coercion, and coping strategies?

### Early Establishment of Slavery and Impact

We do not know enough about the Netherlands' early colonial politics and the active deployment of slavery in its initial global colonial expansion. Historiography extensively covers the earliest history of the Dutch presence in various parts of the world. The histories of the organizations behind this early colonial expansion (such as companies and gentlemen's clubs) have also received ample attention. However, this research has long been shaped by the limiting belief that early colonial expansion was about 'trade' organized in 'expeditions' and from 'behind a desk'. Recent historiography shows that the opposite is a better starting point: colonialism was part and parcel of the Dutch presence from the outset of the earliest expansions, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Colonialism could take various forms, but at its core was the fact that the Dutch state granted rights to companies, gentlemen's clubs, and individuals that extended beyond trade and included the exploitation of the colony's land, means of production, and subjects. This delegated power led almost immediately to the exercise of overseas colonial sovereignty through violence and governance, for example in the Asian principality of Ternate, which in 1607 was presented with a treaty recognizing the States-General as their 'protector' and obliging them to render *corvée* labor and supply spices.<sup>12</sup> This shift in perspective from 'trade' to 'colonialism' has evoked many as yet unanswered questions about the early deployment and politics of colonialism, the central role of slavery in this, and the consequences for the societies involved.

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- a) Very little is known about the beginnings of colonial politics, including the deliberate deployment of slavery, and how this was related to the actions and interests of Dutch economic and political elites and

institutions. Additional research can shed light on questions about the close connections between the Republic's colonial politics in Asia and the Atlantic world, how these were conceived and influenced by a small number of closely intertwined regent families, and the role played by Dutch institutions (from urban, rural and colonial governments to churches and universities). These questions are specifically pertinent to the earliest period of colonial expansion in the late sixteenth century, but in many respects to later periods as well. The purposefulness of the politics of colonial conquest, domination, and investment in the slave trade and slavery has often been noted, but seldom researched in depth. This raises questions not only about the rise of Dutch slavery and colonialism through a deliberate political agenda but also about the economic interests, ideology, and (religious) beliefs and political networks that brought it about. One particularly interesting focus would be on the interplay between private interests and strategies on the one hand, and the local, national, ecclesiastical, and colonial administrations on the other.

- b) Another important topic is the economic, political, and institutional consequences of colonial expansion. From its birth, a small group of elite families in the Dutch Republic benefited most from slavery and colonialism. They held most of the economic and political power because they held many of the administrative positions in urban and rural governments, and they were involved in the colonial economy. Members of these elite families thus shaped colonial politics, benefited from the colonial economy, and also held influential positions in the overseas colonial empire. How these networks operated and shaped colonial slavery has not yet been systematically studied. Conversely, the opportunities the overseas colonial economy offered to Europeans – especially the slave trade and exploitation of the enslaved – also created a space

for new networks and elites to be established. Some of these returned to the Netherlands or the European hinterland as 'nouveaux riches'. How exactly did this new elite acquire their wealth from slavery and colonialism? And how did this new concentration of power and wealth affect economic and social inequality in the Netherlands?

- c) The interconnectedness between the Dutch elite, Dutch institutions, slavery and colonialism raises many important questions. How did colonial interests and experiences shape Dutch institutions and political culture? What did the dynamics between different institutions, and between institutions and governments look like? What role did religious institutions play? What influence did the elite's experiences with colonial governance, inequality, and colonial slavery have on their world views and feelings of superiority? And once they returned to the Netherlands, how did this manifest itself in the way they acted? We lack the information to answer these questions about the impact of the exchanges fostered by colonial expansion.

## INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND INSTITUTIONS

From the early days of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the sons and nephews of many regents and directors departed for Asia and the Atlantic world to play significant roles in conquest, violence, and slavery. For instance, Adriaan van der Dussen, son of a regent, headed the violent deportation of the population of Siau, governed one of the Banda Islands, and later served in the administration of the Dutch colony in Brazil. How did his experiences with these acts of violence and slavery shape a colonial administrator like Van der Dussen, but also, how did it affect his family and the Dutch elite's culture? Dutch politics, economy, and society were intertwined with colonial slavery at many levels: from individuals to families, from institutions to companies, from cities to the military. Political source material about this early intertwining of slavery, colonialism and politics has remained largely

unexplored. For example, the States General's decision-making is well documented in extensive sources and archival materials that have not yet been systematically examined from the angle of Dutch slavery at individual, institutional and ideological levels. The broader involvement of institutions and society at large are also an unexplored question. Universities, for instance, are still actively investigating their own involvement in these issues. This is a far-reaching endeavor. Consider, for example, the Seminarium Indicum established at Leiden University in 1622 with the explicit purpose of training missionaries to help colonize Taiwan and other VOC areas. This also laid an important foundation for the study of Asia, particularly ethnography and languages, which grew to serve Dutch colonial expansion and to this day remains a key focus of Leiden University. Similarly, other universities, from Delft and Wageningen to Utrecht, established or adapted disciplines in response to colonial expansion and slavery. The impact of these institutions' roots and interests in colonial slavery has yet to be adequately explored.

- d) Questions regarding the impact of exchanges that arose from colonial expansion are not only relevant to Dutch society, institutions and the Dutch administrative and economic elite, but also to societies elsewhere that were affected by Dutch colonial slavery. What were the effects of (early) Dutch colonial policies on colonized societies? What was the impact of slavery and colonialism on these societies? And what were the consequences of the colonizers' influence on local state formation, for example through coercive contracts or the involvement of (former) local rulers and aristocracy in colonial governance?

### Colonial Slavery and Worldwide Repercussions

Another important research topic in need of more thorough research is the interaction between the continents impacted by Dutch colonialism and Dutch colonial slavery. Worldwide colonial expansion, and slavery in particular, set in motion social, economic, political, institutional and cultural interactions.

- a) The large-scale forced displacements of enslaved people between regions played a significant role in Dutch and broader European colonial expansion. More than twelve million people were transported from Africa to the Americas through the trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>13</sup> The slave trade in Asia led to the displacement of millions of people over long distances between South Asia, (Southeast) Africa, East Asia and Southeast Asia. What long-term impact did this have on the demographic development of societies in Africa, the Americas, and Asia? How did the displacement through slavery lead to the formation and development of new communities and cultures? What impact did this have on (post)colonial societies? And how did it influence the emergence and perpetuation of social, economic, and racial inequalities?
- b) In many respects, these questions also apply to the Dutch Republic's social and demographic development. We know of a few individual cases of enslaved people from the Americas and Asia who were brought to the Dutch Republic and who lived in Amsterdam. Yet, even after recent contributions from urban and provincial studies, there is still no systematic understanding of the extent, functioning, and consequences of this "black presence" in the Republic. Under what circumstances did the enslaved come here, and how did they live? How did their presence contribute to the urban landscape? What position did (former) enslaved servants have, once they were brought to the Republic and lived in the castles and households of the Dutch elite, and how did they experience this? How did early "non-white" communities in the Republic develop, and what consequences did this have?
- c) The large-scale, forced displacement of people initiated by slavery and colonialism occurred within the broader context of the transplantation of people,

concepts and more from the colonies: (forced) laborers, control mechanisms, military techniques, governance patterns, organized economic extraction, racial ideas, and even plants and animals. In this light, it is particularly interesting to focus on the interaction between Dutch-Asian colonial slavery and the Atlantic world and Europe, precisely because the extensive Dutch involvement in the slave trade and slavery in Asia predated the large-scale Dutch expansion in the Atlantic world, and because of the many individual and institutional interrelationships. What impact did such exchanges, driven by slavery and colonialism, have on the various societies worldwide, but also on the Netherlands itself?

### Transition and Slavery's Continued Impact

An important question is how colonial slavery and the changes instigated by the abolition of the slave trade and slavery have affected colonial relationships and subsequent developments. Particularly the changes that abolition caused in the colonial regime and the colonized societies during this transition period still need to be explored in greater depth.

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- a) In societies colonized by the Netherlands, slavery was replaced by other forms of unfree labor, such as labor under state supervision by the formerly enslaved in Suriname (1863-1873) and contract labor and *corvée* labor in the Atlantic and Asian colonies. In the directly governed Dutch colonies in Asia, slavery had been on the decline since the early nineteenth century, because colonial exploitation of local societies was gradually replaced by *corvée* services and the Cultivation System. The abolition of the slave trade accelerated this process. However, in colonies under indirect rule, slavery sometimes increased significantly while other forms of exploitation and forced labor also grew. The abolition of the slave trade in the Atlantic world led to changes in

the plantation system. Later, the abolition of slavery caused an increase in other forms of forced labor. Therefore, the interrelationship between slavery and other forms of forced labor and colonial exploitation in various parts of the Dutch colonial empire – such as the Cultivation System, contract, *corvée* and prisoner labor – is an important issue that needs to be researched in depth.

- b) The transition of (former) enslaved individuals from “property” to “colonial subjects” went hand in hand with the advent of new instruments of control and paternalism wielded by colonial governments, churches, companies, and other colonial actors. How did this change from slavery to colonial subject lead to racialized citizenship practices, discrimination, disciplinary and coercive cultural policies, or even re-education? These practices and the view of humanity underlying them have continued to have a noticeable impact on society long after abolition and decolonization. Although some aspects of these developments have been cursorily examined with respect to some regions, there are still large gaps in the research. A thorough and comprehensive analysis is lacking as well. Another relevant avenue of inquiry is the implications of slavery’s abolition and the development of new forms of colonial governance for other communities in colonial societies, such as local populations, new (contract) migrants, and communities of the formerly enslaved – individuals who were freed or who escaped, such as the Maroons in Suriname. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of how the changes instigated by the abolition of slavery helped shape new forms of colonial exploitation, discrimination and inequality. And how did colonial slavery, its abolition and the response to this continue to influence later colonial policies and practices?
- c) Slavery and colonialism have, both in formerly colonized societies and in the Netherlands and



Europe, led to structural social, economic, political and ecological transformations that continue to have an impact to this day. These transformations include the economic and ecological organization of societies, which have led to internal inequalities and unequal positions in the world economy; unequal land distribution in (formerly) colonized societies; the marginalization, physical and cultural uprooting and underdevelopment of descendant communities; global ecological devastation caused by the production methods of expanding plantation economies that underpinned colonial slavery and the broader colonial system; elite formation and long-term profiteering in (former) colonies and in Europe. It is evident that this was a layered process, where colonial slavery and colonialism not only increased the private wealth of elite families but also benefited states (and societies) as a whole for example in the development of infrastructure (railways, waterways, ports) with money gained from colonial forced labor. Colonial slavery and colonialism have also had a lasting effect on economic structures, as evidenced by the histories of many companies and banks, from ABN AMRO to Shell and Unilever. The emergence of a colonial extraction economy has had long-term consequences that still resonate in the current capitalist world order, based as it was on both the depletion of the earth (climate change, environmental issues) and the depletion of people (modern slavery, burnouts). Deeper research into these structural changes will provide insight into how the past has shaped the present.

### REST AS RESISTANCE AGAINST CAPITALISM

In her manifesto, Tricia Hersey advocates for the introduction of breaks and moments of rest during daily (academic) work so people will become more aware of the time they need to catch their breath and recharge. She sees this as a form of resistance against the capitalist mode of production which

Section I has lost sight of the human dimension and where people have come to believe that their value depends only on their economic productivity, efficiency, and profits. Hersey sees the deliberate incorporation of moments of rest as a form of resistance against this capitalist system. She sees a link between capitalism, slavery and colonialism, because capitalism has its roots in plantation economies where the enslaved were not seen as humans, but as renewable resources. Additionally, Hersey advocates for recognizing the violence and theft associated with colonial slavery. The legacy of centuries of unfreedom and unpaid labor calls not only for a new approach to work and rest, but also for holding space for the sorrow and mourning inherent in this past.<sup>14</sup>

# Section II: Colonial Slavery: Afterlives and Contemporary Approaches

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During the year-long commemoration of Dutch colonial slavery (Slavernijverleden, 1 juli 2023-1 juli 2024), participants explicitly discussed the relationship between the history of slavery and the present. Interest in this connection grew sharply. Partly thanks to the efforts of diaspora citizens from the former colonies, the ‘rediscovery’ of colonial slavery history and its afterlives in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, including the Dutch Caribbean, was put on the agenda. This link between past and present had previously been considered too abstract. Meanwhile, new perspectives have emerged in academia and knowledge production, providing a better understanding of the connection between the present and the history of slavery.

The continued effects of Dutch colonial slavery are not only evident in the Netherlands but also at the ‘scene of the crime’, the formerly colonized areas where the slave trade and slavery disrupted society for such a long time. Our current approach to the history of slavery and its repercussions is complex and has continued to influence political relations between metropole and colonies, even in the way contemporary politicians deal with it. Slavery not only left deep traces in the past; its long-term effects are still noticeable in various societies today. Therefore, we need to reflect further on the role and influence of slavery in contemporary society. Slavery’s continued impact on culture is also underexplored.

Recognition of the history of slavery and its long-term consequences is often intertwined with the struggle for autonomy and the right to self-determination, both at the individual and the collective level (communities and states).

This may manifest in a quest for and restoration of lost cultural identities, acknowledging historical and economic injustices, demanding legal justice in the form of compensation, restitution payments, or other forms of legal recognition and redress that serve (legal) restoration and healing. It also involves taking a critical look at symbols and monuments associated with slavery, and may lead to the removal of statues portraying historical figures involved in slavery, or renaming them.

Much more research needs to be conducted on the afterlives of colonial slavery. This section of the research agenda therefore focuses on the long-term consequences of slavery, and on how slavery continues to influence the way we grapple with its history and ramifications in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its formerly colonized societies worldwide.

### Disadvantage, Racism and Colorism

In societies that have historically dealt with slavery and colonialism, colonial powers often established hierarchies and privileges based on skin color. During slavery, people of African and Asian descent were judged based on their skin color, which not only influenced their social status but also the treatment they received: lighter skin tones were often considered superior to and more beautiful than darker skin tones. This phenomenon is known as colorism: discrimination or social prejudice based on shades of skin. These beliefs and attitudes about skin color persisted after slavery and continued to influence (post)colonial structures. Even in contemporary societies, people's attitudes and behavior are influenced by differences in skin color. Skin bleaching – the use of chemicals, creams and other methods to lighten the skin – is a direct result of colorism. People try to achieve a lighter complexion, not only as a fashion trend but also to conform to cultural standards of beauty.<sup>15</sup> The relationship

between slavery and modern-day racism, colorism, and social and economic disadvantage deserves more attention.

- a) The descendants of enslaved people in the Dutch kingdom are underrepresented in education, internships, jobs, housing and homeownership, compared to Dutch people without this background. It is crucial to recognize the long-term disadvantaging impact of colonial slavery. It is about the effect of having limited or no access to education and training during the colonial era, but also about the content of today's curriculum (including the development of historiography about slavery and how the topic is dealt with in the classroom) in the Netherlands, the Dutch Caribbean, Suriname, and Indonesia. An imbalance in infrastructure that has grown out of a history of dispossession is visible in many areas, including the housing market and the (non-)ownership of equity and real estate. The enslaved could not build equity from inherited home- or landownership, while slaveholders could pass down their large landholdings to subsequent generations. These inequalities have influenced the participation of descendants of enslaved people in society long after the abolition of slavery. How have these inequalities developed in (former) colonized societies and in the Netherlands, what role did colonial institutions and other actors play, and how did this persist in later generations?

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### THE PARA DISTRICT: ACQUISITION OF LAND

In the Para district of Suriname, Afro-Surinamese descendants of enslaved individuals succeeded in purchasing former plantations. After the abolition of slavery on July 1, 1873, the production and export of coffee and cocoa from Surinamese plantations nearly came to a halt. During this sharp decline of

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Harry Hoetink uses the term 'somatic norm image' particularly in relation to his study of racial and ethnic relations, with a focus on Latin America. He contributed to the understanding of how physical characteristics and racial perceptions were used to create and maintain social norms, especially in the context of colonial and postcolonial societies.

Section II the plantation economy, the free residents of Para collectively bought the plantations from colonial plantation owners, who were forced to cease their “business” and offer their plantations for sale at auction. The underlying idea was community building: rather than dividing agricultural land per family, the aim was to collectively own these commons to prevent them from being resold and so turning descendants into landless citizens. The residents were able to collectively purchase the plantations, including arable land, houses, a cemetery, specific trees, and a bathing area, with the money they had earned from the sale of agricultural and timber products. This collective form of ownership still prevails in the Para district to this day.<sup>16</sup>

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- b) The inequalities sketched above require more insight into the formal and informal obstacles that prevent descendants of enslaved individuals from fully participating in Dutch society. This goes beyond the formal requirements regarding education, income and citizenship imposed on descendants, and includes assumptions about the suitability of individuals in selection and assessment procedures. Comprehensive research is needed to better understand the functioning and consequences of such formal and informal obstacles. For example, experimental field research could be carried out to establish the role of first names, surnames, origin and appearance in internship selection procedures, assessments during job applications and promotions in the workplace.

### DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOR MARKET

Recent experimental field research on the Dutch labor market has revealed that applicants of European, North American, or Asian origin were significantly less discriminated against than applicants of Latin American, African, or Middle Eastern descent. Particularly, ethnic groups that included many descendants of victims of trans-Atlantic slavery or the Dutch colonial regime were put at a sharp disadvantage. Another

Section II **recent study looked at the effect of skin color by darkening or lightening the skin of fictitious applicants in the photo attached to their application. It was found that darker applicants received fewer responses than lighter applicants, regardless of their origin.<sup>17</sup> These patterns of discrimination in the Dutch labor market and their link with skin color, ethnic origin and the afterlives of colonialism have not yet been systematically examined.**

- c) In medicine and healthcare, doctors and nurses often base their treatments on a ‘model patient’ based on light-skinned European men. As a result, individuals from diasporic communities are disadvantaged because diversity tends not to be taken into account in research, guidelines, technologies, medication and medical education.<sup>18</sup> This has resulted in incorrect assumptions, inadequate treatments and snubs towards patients with a different background, as well as patients from various postcolonial communities declining to seek conventional medical treatment. Research is needed into how descendants of the enslaved physically experience and mentally perceive their bodies, health, pain, illness, treatment, care and medication. Additionally, it would be good to research forms of healing and healers that complement conventional medicine (such as herbal baths, Chinese medicine and dukuns).

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## **HEALTH AND THE ENSLAVED**

**During the trans-Atlantic slave trade, ship surgeons, physicians, and other medical professionals played a significant role in caring for the health of both the crew and the enslaved. Infectious diseases were considered a serious threat to the**

17 Lex Thijssen, ‘Werkt het Nederlandse koloniale en trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden door in hedendaagse discriminatie en racisme op de arbeidsmarkt?’ in: *Doorwerkingen van het slavernijverleden: Meervoudige perspectieven op de relatie tussen heden en verleden* (The Hague: Staatscommissie tegen Discriminatie en Racisme, 2023, 63-71.

18 See Alana Helberg-Proctor, ‘De doorwerking van het trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden in de geneeskunde en zorg,’ in: *Doorwerkingen van het slavernijverleden: Meervoudige perspectieven op de relatie tussen heden en verleden* (The Hague: Staatscommissie tegen Discriminatie en Racisme, 2023), 40-46.

Section II **slave trade, plantation economy, and European colonists.** Because enslaved individuals were portrayed as a risk to public health, they were subjected to examinations by doctors upon departure from Africa, Asia, or elsewhere and upon arrival in the colonies. Physicians did not see enslaved individuals as people and patients in need of care but as commodities that needed to remain healthy for sale and labor. In colonial societies, the bodies of enslaved individuals were seen as available for medical experiments, even long after the abolition of slavery. Physicians sometimes assumed that certain 'races' felt no pain or less pain than Europeans, leading to an unethical and inhumane practice in which enslaved individuals underwent surgeries without anesthesia. Sometimes, enslaved individuals with specific conditions were purchased for the purpose of conducting medical experiments on them and producing medical 'knowledge'. Medical science thus became characterized by racial ideologies, which have had a profound influence. Incorrect assumptions about 'race' can sometimes still be found in medicine.

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**The Social Environment of Descendants of the Enslaved**  
Slavery deeply influenced the world of the enslaved: from the social and cultural uprooting caused by enslavement and forced displacement over long distances, to the dehumanization and everyday violence of the colonial slavery system. More research is needed to analyze in detail how this past has continued to impact the contemporary social world of descendants and their communities.

- a) It is important to investigate the family and gender relations of the descendants of enslaved individuals. In what ways has slavery affected the family and gender relations long-term, and how do descendants define and practice these today? For example, what role are fathers expected to play? Can present-day families derive strength from alternative family structures developed in the past?
- b) Descendants of enslaved individuals still have to contend with the consequences of not knowing



where they are from (geographically, ethnically) due to the forced displacements and forced renaming of their ancestors. Recently, increased attention to this has given rise to a growing demand for genealogical research and DNA testing. However, knowledge and resources in this field are unevenly distributed; it is sometimes impossible to adequately answer the practical, yet fundamental questions that descendants pose about their origins, names and family. For example, descendants with ancestors in the Dutch Caribbean or Indonesia, who wish to change their last name because it is related to slavery, currently have great trouble substantiating this relationship because the archives are difficult to navigate or the information about enslaved individuals included in the archives is very selective. This underscores the importance of new forms of research and interdisciplinary approaches (combining historiography, genealogy, archival science, archaeology and DNA research).

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### FROM SURNAMENES TO GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Bearing a surname linked to slavery can evoke pride, but can also be a burden from a societal or psychological perspective. Several Dutch municipalities (including Utrecht and Rotterdam) have made it possible for descendants of enslaved individuals to change their surname free of charge. Research shows that the available slave and name records in Suriname, the Dutch Caribbean and the former Dutch East Indies show a link between surnames and Dutch slavery. The records for Suriname are relatively complete, but this is not the case for the Dutch Caribbean and the Dutch East Indies. This means that there are many more surnames related to Dutch slavery, but those names are not yet known. Historical and genealogical research into these groups should be prioritized.<sup>19</sup>

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See Marian van der Klein et al., *Verkenning basis voor naamswijziging in verband met het Nederlands slavernijverleden* (Utrecht: Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, 2022). <https://repository.wodc.nl/handle/20.500.12832/3227>.

Genealogical and DNA research can also help descendants of enslaved individuals learn more about their ancestors and their origins. However, commercial DNA testing falls short in unraveling the origins of descendants of enslaved individuals. The data obtained from these tests does not indicate the country of origin of a person, but rather where people live with whom they share DNA. These relatives might themselves have either voluntarily or involuntarily migrated from other regions. A DNA test provides only very general information about someone's geographical origins. Furthermore, commercial companies have limited reference data for African and Asian ancestry, which leads to significant variations in test results for African and Asian genetic variants. Much more non-commercial DNA research is needed to distinguish specific countries or tribal, clan and pela affiliations within and between continents. An improved DNA database, for example, could also provide more insight into hereditary diseases such as sickle cell anemia and thalassemia, which are particularly prevalent in families from Mediterranean countries, Asia and Africa, as well as from Southeast Asia, India, China and the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

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- c) Another issue that needs exploring is what it means for individuals today to have ties to a violent and damaging past, such as colonial slavery. We should look at this not only as an academic issue but definitely also as a current social issue. Such ties to the past can apply to many different people: communities of descendants of enslaved individuals, descendants of slaveholders and plantation owners (these two categories may overlap), as well as those whose ties to this past are more indirect. How do we take account of these histories, even if we were not directly involved, but still benefit from, or are burdened by, these histories today?

Section II THE IMPLICATED SUBJECT

The term ‘the implicated subject’ was developed by literary scholar Michael Rothberg and indicates that making an absolute distinction between (white) perpetrators, (black) victims and bystanders in violent histories does not do justice to our implication in past and present injustices. Even if we are not directly involved in causing or inflicting damage or trauma, we might be contributing to the perpetuation of inequalities and violent practices or regimes. Rothberg advocates for internationalism and long-distance solidarity to feel connected and confront our own implication in painful episodes from the past.<sup>21</sup> With ‘the implicated subject’ Rothberg builds on his earlier study on multidirectional memory.<sup>22</sup> He argues that histories of genocide and colonialism, which were previously considered distinctly separate pasts, are actually interconnected through their similarities in exclusion and oppression. This creates space and solidarity in today’s world where histories, based on cultural memories or group identities, can compete for attention.

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- d) Another social dimension is religion, in various respects: as a power relationship, a form of memory culture and an arena of social struggle. We know very little about the dynamics between religious communities, even though these are precisely what descendants of enslaved people deeply care about. We have scant knowledge, for example, of the relationship between African Pentecostal communities and Caribbean communities’ churches. Does racism influence people’s desire to join a church, mosque, temple or synagogue? Furthermore, research on religion and ritual studies could also ask practical-theological and liturgical questions about which rituals or celebrations might contribute to reconciliation and dialogue.

21 See Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

22 See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

- e) The phenomenon that trauma not only affects those who witnessed it firsthand, but may consciously or unconsciously be transmitted to others, has been termed ‘postmemory’ by comparative literature professor Marianne Hirsch, based on her research on Holocaust survivors. We should investigate the hypothesis that colonial slavery may have caused trauma, not only to enslaved people but also to ‘accomplices’ of the system, which has been passed on to subsequent generations in the form of ‘post-memory’. Not everyone believes intergenerational transmission is possible, but even if some reject this, it warrants further research. Possible research topics include the impact of receiving an upbringing or education where violence was not taboo (e.g. command culture, or corporal punishment at home and at school). The possible intergenerational physical and mental consequences of administering or experiencing violence require further study.

### The Persistence of Colonial Dynamics in Postcolonial Times

The legacy of slavery can affect political stability and the development of constitutional relations between former colonies and the metropole, as well as the governance systems in former colonies. It may lead to political unrest, challenges in building stable institutions, disputes about the role of Papiamentu/o, Sranan Tongo or Dutch in governance, or the neglect of poor neighborhoods in the Caribbean Netherlands, the islands that are now Dutch municipalities. The Dutch Caribbean perceives the emphasis that the Dutch government places on good governance and sound financial management as patronizing. There is a particular duality in the perception of governance, whereby different stakeholders or groups have divergent views on what constitutes good governance. These different perceptions may stem from differences in values, expectations, cultural backgrounds and interests. For example, in 2023 Minister Maduro of Aruba suspended discussions with the

Netherlands about the commemorative year because of the colonial attitude Aruba perceived in the parallel debate about refinancing the so-called corona loan under Dutch financial supervision. Another illustrative example stems from 2007, when the Dutch PVV called for the sale of what was then still called the Dutch Antilles to the highest bidder on Marktplaats (the Netherlands' most widely used online marketplace). Clearly, the political, constitutional, and international afterlives of relations steeped in colonial slavery need further exploring.

### Research into Healing

Contemporary research on the history of slavery should not only devote more attention to the stories of the enslaved, but also to the needs of their descendants. Recognition of the continued influence of slavery and the necessity for healing requires new types of research.

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- a) Empirical, clinical and historical research into the potential traumatic impact of colonial slavery on descendants will by necessity be limited, as until recently they had very few opportunities to act as active and writing subjects and to leave behind sources that are not distorted by bias. It is therefore recommended to investigate how slavery and its continued impact are represented in oral history, storytelling, proverbs (odors) and myths. A search could be conducted for lost words, language, names, and visual culture, but also critical fabulation could be used to create new myths and stories.

### CRITICAL FABULATION

The term 'critical fabulation' refers to a methodology that combines historical and archival research with critical theory and fiction. It is a method that literary scholar and author Saidiya Hartman developed in her scholarly practice to meaningfully address the silences in the trans-Atlantic slavery archives, where the voices of enslaved people are absent. Hartman appropriates archival material, reinterprets historical sources,

and fills in the gaps by adding her own voice and biography. She utilizes various cultural sources: myths, proverbs, diaries, memoirs, legal texts, narratives, oral stories of enslaved people, songs, dance, etc. Through informed ‘critical fabulation’, she supplements the ‘non-history’ of enslaved people, as slavery has rendered conventional historiography impossible due to the absence and erasure of traditional (written) sources. In this way, she creates new critical narratives about the past.<sup>23</sup> Sites of Memory theater company uses ‘critical fabulation’ to bring to light hidden and underrepresented stories from the Netherlands and the former colonies. Inspired by similarities in architecture, language, and culture, Sites of Memory translates the shared histories between South Africa and the Netherlands for as broad an audience as possible.<sup>24</sup>

- b) In addition to oral history, storytelling, and critical fabulation, ‘embodied knowledge’ is a new way to approach the legacy of colonial slavery. The premise is that (transmitted) traumatic memories may not always need to be verbalized, as they can be stored in the body as embodied knowledge. Based on recent developments in neuroscience, attachment theory and body awareness, psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk has suggested that our brain will do everything it can to suppress the memory of a traumatic event. However, the body does not forget, and it reacts by increasing stress hormones and muscle tension, even when the threat is no longer present. This is why the ‘talking cures’ of psychologists and psychiatrists are not sufficient: regulating and synchronizing both mind and body are necessary for recovery.<sup>25</sup> Recent research is looking into whether and how dance, theater, performance and music can access the ‘physical storeroom’ in the body of an enslaved person or slaveholder’s descendant. Embodied

23 See Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007).

24 See <https://www.sitesofmemory.nl/>.

25 See Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (London: Penguin Books, 2014).

knowledge is also exploring the possibilities for healing, including through the (re)discovery, use or development of rituals and traditions.

## HEALING AND CONNECTION

Dancers and choreographers Thomas Talawa Presto (Norway) and Farida Nabibaks (Netherlands) explore how memories of descendants from the African and Asian diaspora can literally take shape in their theatrical dance practices, using movement, dance and music from the diaspora to connect with the damaged and damaging past. They also use movement, dance and music to design programs for healing, resilience, and connection. Other individuals who are involved in healing include Richenel Ansano, anthropologist and member of the Global Medicine Education Foundation, and Marian Markelo, Winti priestess and retired nursing instructor. Every year, she performs the libation ceremony on July 1st during the annual commemoration of the abolition of slavery in Amsterdam. Ansano and Markelo's approach is based on restoring the connection with African and indigenous religions, deities, spirituality and healing practices.<sup>26</sup>

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- c) While the conquest and cultivation of land has always been seen as key in a plantation economy and society, Critical Ocean Studies opens a relatively new research field by focusing on coastal areas, water and seafarers. Seafarers are not only those who traveled by sea voluntarily (slave traders and free black seafarers) but also those who were forced to travel by sea (the enslaved). Critical Ocean Studies regards the oceans not only as waterways that people used to get from one place to another, whether voluntarily or under duress, but also as an archive: a location where formative experiences were gained, memories were created and passed down. The oceans are also a mass grave: maritime graves are the final resting place for the bodies of those who

did not survive the journey or the slave transport by sea. Viewing the oceans through this lens offers opportunities not only for new archival formation and study but also for revealing the liquid continent as the world of free black seafarers, thereby contributing to the study of resilience and healing. Many parts of the former Dutch colonial empire have always been focused on the sea. Curaçao could be a unique case study. Its strategic location made it a crucial stopover for slave ships and provides a window into the world of slave traders, enslaved individuals, and free black seafarers. The maritime economy of the island also deserves more research.

### Education, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Expressions

Education, culture, and heritage promote knowledge and awareness. Therefore, it is important to critically examine the ways in which the history of slavery is represented in education, culture and public spaces in both the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, as well as the former colonies.

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- a) It is essential for dealing with the history of colonial slavery to understand not only the past but also the contemporary relations and issues related to this history. Education can help increase awareness, combat prejudices, and promote healthy debate about the history of slavery and its afterlives. Awareness of the history of slavery, its legacy, and the ways in which it is dealt with can be increased through school curricula focused on understanding this history and its impact on today's society. In some cases, this involves revising educational curricula with the aim of providing a more inclusive representation of history.
- b) Strengthening cultural self-awareness and restoring cultural practices are seen as ways to build resilience and honor heritage. In the former colonies, slavery and its impact are found to be crucial components of cultural heritage. The extent to which slavery and colonialism are considered to be part of cultural



heritage varies greatly between the colonies, former colonies, and the former mother country. However, the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands differ sharply in how they integrate slavery and colonialism into debates about nation-building and its practices.<sup>27</sup> It would be good to map the differences in approach among colonies, former colonies, and the former mother country and to investigate how these approaches are translated into official history education programs.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN

Museums provide a platform for the presentation and preservation of slavery-related cultural heritage. However, the former colonies, including the Dutch Caribbean, simply had no museum culture. Whatever collections existed were primarily privately owned and mainly catered to the wealthy white elite. Even when local cultural aspects were included, this tended to be done from the colonizers' perspective. This situation changed only after many Caribbean nations became independent.<sup>28</sup> Even today, Caribbean communities place more value on other forms of cultural heritage than on objects in museums. Singing and dancing are considered more important expressions of culture than paintings or artifacts, which are usually highly valued in Europe. This preference for intangible forms of expression over material objects reflects a deeply rooted cultural tradition in the Caribbean. It is more about living art forms that are directly connected to the community, its history and identity – art forms that determine the dynamics of cultural expressions. This preference not only signifies a different view of what constitutes heritage but also emphasizes the vibrant nature of cultural expression in Caribbean societies. Artists and writers play a crucial role in sparking conversations about the history of slavery, promoting

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27 See Rose Mary Allen, Gert Oostindie and Valika Smeulders, 'Slavery and Debates about National Identity and Nation-Branding,' in: *Caribbean Cultural Heritage and the Nation*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan et al. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023), 67-81.

28 Alex van Stipriaan, 'Representations and Reparations of Slavery in the Caribbean,' in: *Caribbean Cultural Heritage and the Nation*, ed. Alex van Stipriaan et al. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023), 83-101.

Section II **empathy and understanding, and contributing to the construction of a collective memory. Their works help create critical awareness and contribute to the debate on justice and equality. Young artists in particular opt for performance art to make the experiences of slavery more tangible.**

- c) One way in which people engage with the history of slavery is through commemoration days which mark crucial events from the past. Commemoration days are meaningful and dynamic moments for shaping a society's collective memory. They help preserve historical awareness as part of a society's cultural heritage. The construction of a collective identity is also influenced by the way in which commemoration days are designed and experienced. A diversity of commemoration days often reflects a society's diverse history and population. When commemorating slavery, it is important to incorporate different perspectives and experiences, including those of indigenous communities and other ethnic groups. This contributes to a more inclusive approach to history. More research from various angles is needed to establish how these commemorations are organized and what space is created for reflection and community building. This will generate insight into how societies understand and pursue nation-building processes and practices.

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requested insight into the history of slavery and its afterlives, stakeholders, and diverse effects. In response to this request, *Staat en Slavernij* was written, an initial exploration of the history and legacy of Dutch slavery. This work also considers the role of the Dutch state and society and the global consequences of slavery and its continued impact.

Subsequently, this research agenda was compiled on the basis of the broad inventory of insights and questions raised in *Staat en Slavernij*, supplemented by a survey of relevant national and international academic literature, surveys of the scholarly field, and two symposiums organized by the steering group: the workshop ‘Nieuwe perspectieven op slavernij-geschiedenis: lokaal, nationaal en globaal’ (New Perspectives on the History of Slavery: Local, National, and Global) held on October 11, 2023, at the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam, and the symposium ‘Nieuwe inzichten en benaderingen in onderzoek naar en onderwijs van koloniaal slavernijverleden en de doorwerking in de Nederlands Caribische eilanden en Suriname’ (New Insights and Approaches in Research and Education on the History of Colonial Slavery and Its Afterlives in the Dutch Caribbean and Suriname), held on November 10, 2023, at the University of Curaçao in Willemstad. Additionally, in September 2023, six interviews were conducted with young academics and other key individuals who are primarily engaged in the history of colonial slavery through disciplines other than history.

## INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG ACADEMICS AND KEY INDIVIDUALS

- **AMISAH BAKURI (VU)** has a background in history and international relations. Bakuri is now conducting anthropological research on the afterlives of slavery and their influence on the religious identity of people from Suriname and Ghana.
- **DURWIN LYNCH (VU)** has a background in natural sciences and innovation management, with a focus on innovation in healthcare. He is conducting postdoctoral research on healing and the afterlives of colonialism.
- **KIM DARBOUZE (KITLV)** is a psycho-social researcher and counselor. Her work focuses on the body as a method of

- historical memory in the present. In her research, she connects psychological (trauma/memory), sociological, anthropological, economic, geopolitical, technological, political and historical elements of colonialism.
- JONATHAN TJIEN FOOH (VU) has a background in psychology and cultural anthropology. He works as a junior lecturer and researcher at the VU, Athena Institute, where he is involved in the project *Healing the Afterlives of Colonialism*.
  - ELIAS SIMONSE (Keti Koti Table) has a background in sociology and is a (transcultural) systemic coach. He coaches people with Afro-Caribbean backgrounds who want to explore themes such as slavery, migration and collective trauma.
  - ALISON FISCHER (KITLV) has a background in political science and law. Fischer is pursuing a PhD on how concepts of race play a role in Dutch legal education and how legal education fits into ongoing discussions about race and postcolonial community in the Netherlands.

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