

The Economic and Social Impact of Dutch Colonial Slavery

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On June 7, 1751, the enslaved April van Mallabaar stood in the notary's office in Batavia. Also in the room was the Reader of the Church of Batavia Castle, who was there to affirm his sale of April to a barber surgeon for seventy-five guilders. We know little about April. His original name, age, and other background details were not recorded by the notary. However, because the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the colonial administration, required deeds of sale to be drawn up everywhere in its jurisdiction, we know that the same man had been sold in the VOC-ruled southwest Indian city of Cochin just a year earlier, by a messenger of the court to a ship's doctor who worked on the VOC vessel *Schellag*. The buyer and seller had agreed to name him after the month of his sale, and the ship's doctor then brought April along from India to Batavia. Thus, April joined the ranks of the many hundreds of thousands, or in some estimates up to two million, enslaved people who were brought to the Dutch colonies in Asia and the Atlantic world.

While not much information was written down, one detail does stand out in this story: The church reader sold April for much less than the sums paid for him earlier, in Cochin and Batavia. Had something happened to April? Or was there some other reason for this? The church reader conducted a lively private trade in enslaved people and textiles with the plantations in Banda. Did he have pressing debts? April's new owner likely did not care much and clearly saw his cheap purchase as a stroke of financial acumen and good luck, because he gave him the telling new name '*Fortuyn*' (Fortune).¹

In this chapter, I will explore the impact of Dutch colonial slavery on the Dutch Republic and, later, the Netherlands. Dutch imperialism and complicity in slavery and the slave trade were shaped by hard financial interests. Therefore, the academic debate has tended to focus on the economic aspects of the history of slavery and has often only addressed matters such as “wealth” or “profit.” This has been exacerbated by the fact that Dutch historians long regarded colonialism and slavery as an “overseas” phenomenon and viewed it in isolation from national history. Atlantic and Asian slavery was treated as something remote, unrelated to other aspects of Dutch history such as the “miracle” of Dutch prosperity and economic growth in the early modern period. New perspectives clearly show, however, that slavery and colonialism are an integral and formative part of Dutch history.

Shifting Perspectives

Over the past two decades, assessments of the economic significance of colonial slavery have shifted significantly. Two arguments dominated traditional colonial historiography in this respect. The first was that the Atlantic slave trade was irrelevant to the Dutch economy because it had not been profitable enough. The second argument was that the broader, slavery-based Atlantic complex had turned little profit because of the massive losses incurred during moments of crisis, such as the rebellion and fall of Brazil and the financial bankruptcy of Suriname.²

This traditional colonial historiography is sharply criticized because it is based solely on indicators of “profit” and “loss” that fail to provide any insight into the importance and impact of slavery and the slave trade. Upon closer examination of the broader Atlantic economy’s effects, it becomes clear that slavery in the Atlantic world had an enormous influence on the world economy and that Europe played a pivotal role in this.³ The slave trade generated a massive chain of economic activity in the Dutch Republic, for instance, by stimulating shipbuilding, the production of commodities used as currency in the slave trade, the payment of salary to sailors and soldiers, insurances, and commissions. The Atlantic slavery-based plantation economy was also entwined with the supply chain, financing, insurance, processing, and transport industries in the Republic and elsewhere in Europe. To understand the significance of these impacts, it is necessary to look beyond the (incidental) records of profits and losses.

An approach that has been reintroduced in recent years is to research the impact of (parts of) the Atlantic slavery system using the “gross margin.” In 2012, Karwan Fatah-Black and I calculated that the Dutch Atlantic slave trade alone, without including any other slavery-based activities in Asia and the Atlantic world, contributed 0.5 percent to the economy of the entire Dutch Republic. The total contribution it made to the Republic is estimated at 63 to 79 million guilders, or the equivalent of 11 to 14 billion euros.⁴ The Dutch Atlantic slave trade was of essential strategic interest; without the supply of enslaved Africans, the Atlantic slavery system could not have functioned. At the same time, the slave trade was just a small cog in the machinery of Atlantic slavery. This is why we recommended that this method be developed further so it could be applied to the wider Atlantic system and thereby provide new insights into the role of slavery, slavery-related economic activities, and their influence on the development of early modern Europe.

Slavery, Regents, and the Economy of the Republic

Recent historical research into the economy has revealed how extensively and profoundly this Atlantic system influenced the Dutch Republic and the wider European economy. For example, historian Gerhard de Kok showed that port cities like Middelburg and Vlissingen heavily relied on the slave trade: a tenth to a third of their economy consisted of activities directly linked to it. The slave trade also stimulated shipbuilding in places like Rotterdam. In the early seventeenth century, Middelburg and especially Amsterdam saw the rise of glass factories that produced beads used as currency in the Dutch Atlantic and Asian slave trades. Rotterdam slave traders Coopstad and Rochussen, who transported more than 22,000 enslaved Africans in the eighteenth century, bought large amounts of jenever from the thriving Schiedam distilleries as a commodity. The economic engine fueled by Dutch slavery profits was running at full throttle.⁵ It was not only the slave trade, but also the wider Atlantic slavery system that many Dutch sectors grew entangled with. This had consequences for the Netherlands and its colonized societies. The financial sector serves as an important example. It is known that the predecessors of financial institutions such as ABN AMRO, InsingerGilissen, Aon, and ASR bank were active in insurances, loans, and investments in slavery and the slave trade. These activities provided a stimulus to the financial sector and the wealth of the Repub-

lic, while slavery- and slave trade-related insurance policies led to harsher treatment of the enslaved by ships' crews and plantation overseers. The transport of Atlantic slavery-produced goods, as well as the transatlantic slave trade, gave a boost to shipbuilding and lumber industries in cities like Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Zaandam. The VOC used the shipbuilding techniques which these shipyards developed for Atlantic ships to construct its own slave ships in Amsterdam.



De Gouden Bocht ("Golden Bend"), the most prestigious stretch of Amsterdam's Herengracht, painted in 1685 by Gerrit Berckheyde. This was probably where insurer Insinger & Co. (a predecessor of InsingerGilissen) was headquartered.

The import of sugar from plantations in the West Indies turned the Netherlands into a sugar-processing hub in the mid-eighteenth century. Amsterdam alone had ninety sugar refineries, but Rotterdam, Dordrecht, Zwolle, and Utrecht also had sugar industries. Coffee and sugar linked the labor of

enslaved people on the plantations with Dutch consumers and with the country's trade and processing industries.⁶

The extensive supply chains of the Atlantic slavery system had a profound influence on the structure and orientation of the Dutch economy. Historian Tamira Combrink recently demonstrated that the growth of the coffee trade in the second half of the eighteenth century—to almost a tenth of the total value of trade in the Dutch Republic—led to a shift in the Dutch economy's orientation from the Baltic and Mediterranean to transit trade via the Rhine to the German hinterland.⁷

In the same way, tobacco-processing factories sprung up in the mid-seventeenth century that processed tobacco from mainly West Indies and North American plantations. This not only created a considerable number of jobs in cities like Rotterdam, but also caused big changes in rural areas. In the early seventeenth century, merchants with interests in the colonial tobacco trade had already set up a growing tobacco industry around the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and the Veluwe, which enabled them to influence prices. In the eighteenth century, Amsterdam tobacco trader Jan Agges Scholten, a VOC commander and commissioner of the Admiralty, purchased the Asschat estate near Leusden to produce cheaper tobacco there, which he could mix with American plantation tobacco.

This is just one example of the structural changes that were set in motion by the big-city regents who had gotten rich partly from their complicity in colonialism and slavery and who bought estates, manors, and land throughout the Netherlands. Just a stone's throw from Scholte's estate, there were other estates owned by prominent families with colonial interests, who held important regional and national administrative positions, such as the Pauw, Nassau, Bentinck, Van Asch van Wijck, Bors van Waveren, and Van Reede families. The merchant regents' activities earned them not only noble titles, but also tax income, administrative privileges, and room for economic ventures.

The Prosperity of the Netherlands and Europe

Research has shown that active European involvement in Atlantic slavery significantly boosted the regional economies across the continent. The Atlantic slavery complex is estimated to have been good for no less than 11 percent of the British economy in the early nineteenth century. Denmark's three tiny Caribbean colonies, whose enslaved population consisted of less

than 1 percent of all the people in the entire Danish empire, accounted for 5 or 6 percent of total state revenues. Portugal's colonial empire is estimated to have contributed about 20 percent of the country's income per capita. As far as the Netherlands goes, the measure of gross margin discussed earlier has been used to calculate that in 1770, slavery-related economic activity comprised 5.2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the entire Dutch Republic's economy. Calculated solely for the province of Holland, that percentage is nearly twice as high, at 10.36 percent. In today's value, this amounts to nearly 45 billion euros a year (in relation to the Dutch GDP of 861 billion euros in 2021).

The economic significance of the Atlantic slavery system was comparable to that of the port of Rotterdam today, or the entire financial sector of the United Kingdom or the United States prior to the economic crisis of 2013. This fact puts present-day gestures by the Dutch state in a new light, and begs the question what insights underpinned the amount of 200 million euros that the government earmarked for the fund which it announced when apologizing for slavery on December 19, 2022.

Not only the direct Dutch connections are relevant; so is the deep dependence on Atlantic slavery that existed in the hinterlands of European colonial and maritime powers. To name just one example, the vast majority of the overseas imports that passed through the powerful trading city of Hamburg bound for central and northern Germany consisted of sugar and coffee produced by slave labor. And vice versa, commodities that were traded for enslaved people, such as beads from Bohemia, came from the interior of the European continent. One important example of the European hinterland's economic stake in slavery is Silesia—a region that now straddles Polish, German, and Czech territory—where the large-scale production of linen grew increasingly oriented toward the Atlantic slavery complex, through the supply of textiles that were used by Dutch enterprises to buy enslaved people or to clothe them on the plantations. At the end of the eighteenth century, this trade from Silesia represented about 15 percent of the total value of goods produced in Prussia.

It would be interesting to know what role Dutch merchants played in this trade, in Silesian linen manufacturing, and in the expansion of serfdom. Intriguingly, Dutch merchants did this around the same time that the VOC intensified forced labor in similar *corvée* systems in Asia.⁸

The Bigger Picture and Further Research

Slavery and colonialism were important foundations upon which Europe built an economic advantage over the rest of the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is becoming abundantly clear that this also applies to the Netherlands, but how and why this is so needs to be explored in more detail. Coffee, sugar, insurances, and glass are well-known examples, but more research is needed into the structure and origins of the huge economic stakes which the Netherlands and Europe had in Atlantic slavery. Study is also needed into how the hard financial interests of the colonies were pushed through the States General and what consequences this had for the economy and society at large.

Further examination of Atlantic slavery's impact on the Netherlands and Europe is of crucial importance, but that is not all that is needed for a complete picture of colonialism and slavery's influence on the economy and society. We must also systematically study the far-reaching impact of Dutch colonial slavery and slave trading on the many colonized societies worldwide (see the chapters in Section 3 of this book). While the impact of slavery was also huge in a cultural, societal, and administrative sense, from a purely socioeconomic history angle, there are at least four lines of inquiry that should definitely be pursued.

The first of these is to establish that the enormous Dutch economic and social stakes in overseas Atlantic colonial slavery was not a historical coincidence, but the result of a deliberate imperialist policy set in motion in the early seventeenth century by the States General, colonial trading companies, and urban mercantile elites. Prominent merchants such as the Amsterdammer Reinier Pauw, or Dirk Gerritszoon Meerman of Delft, who also held positions in the Dutch government and trading company administrations, played a crucial role in pushing for a more aggressive colonization policy. They saw to the appointment of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, who personally implemented ruthless colonial expansionism in Asia.



This photo, which was taken in 1905, shows forced laborers repairing the railway used by the Aceh tram near Meureudoe. Soldiers armed with rifles can be seen supervising the workers.

Many pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place, but there is as yet no systematic analysis of the origins and effects of this policy, of the ways in which colonial policy in Asia and the Atlantic world were intertwined, and of the role played by the networks of a small number of regent families. The horrific overseas atrocities of a number of sons from these elite families, such as the Delft regent's son Adriaan van der Dussen, who was responsible for several acts of barbarity including the depopulation of the island of Siau in the Indonesian archipelago, illustrates the need for more research into the worldview and supremacist ideology of these regent families and their role in overseas colonial operations.

A second line of research that deserves attention is Atlantic slavery as the most extreme and large-scale outcome of a colonial system that organized worldwide appropriation and extraction by various methods. For too long, Dutch historians adopted a framework that saw Dutch overseas history from the perspective of "commercial relations," and not for the imperialism that it was. The history of slavery, the Netherlands, and the

world would benefit from better research into the workings and impact of the colonial system as a whole. Dutch colonial conquests and even acts of depopulation the world over were all done in the service of a system that ensured the supply and production of key commodities. This is why the Dutch from the very outset tried to conquer areas with fertile soil for growing crops, in favorable military-strategic locations, or strategically placed for the slave trade.

This resulted in multiple systems of colonial exploitation. Colonial slavery was the cornerstone in the colonies of Brazil, Suriname, the Guianas, the Caribbean, North America, Banda, Batavia, and South Africa. The VOC colonization of Taiwan may well have fallen into the same pattern, because in the mid-seventeenth century, Chinese sugar merchants staffed their plantations with large numbers of laborers transported from the mainland who were called “adopted sons,” but in reality were often bought or forced to work to pay off debts.

The European slave trade in the Atlantic world led to the forced displacement of an estimated 12 million Africans. The Dutch alone transported 610,000 enslaved Africans. Between 660,000 and 1.1 million enslaved people were transported to the VOC colonies in Asia, most of whom came from present-day India, Myanmar, Madagascar, Mozambique, and different parts of the Indonesian archipelago. This slave trade has not yet been sufficiently scrutinized. Its detailed reconstruction will require a lot of research in projects like *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* at the IISG.

This chattel slavery coexisted with another colonial system that relied on *corvée* labor, where the colonial authorities forced local population groups to participate in agricultural production and other work. In nearly all cases, the colonized people were forced to help build the colonial infrastructure—roads, canals, bridges, and forts—and clear land for farming. In the Moluccas, Sri Lanka, and Java, the VOC employed this system to force the population into the large-scale production of spices and cinnamon, and later coffee, pepper, and indigo.

Unlike chattel slavery, these *corvée* systems did not lead to long-distance displacement of people, but instead to the confinement of the local population. To prevent evasion of forced labor, the VOC introduced a system of passes, population registers listing individuals’ caste, ethnicity, and origins, strict mobility laws, and draconic punishments. This formed the basis for the better-known Cultivation System introduced in the nineteenth century. This Dutch system in turn served as a model for the forced

labor systems in other European colonies such as the Belgian Congo. This shows how Dutch history is characterized by long successions of colonial warfare, slavery, and different types of forced labor. Their systematic nature, interaction, and certainly their impact and repercussions have yet to be sufficiently researched.

The third line of research needed is the issue of how the Netherlands as a whole profited from Dutch colonialism on a world scale. Because of the entanglement of slavery and colonialism, it is relevant to ask how much wealth the Netherlands as a whole acquired from its colonial past. Research could focus, for instance, on the colonial companies, or on the Cultivation System, whose colonial profits were invested in enterprises such as the railways, the North Sea Canal, and the Nieuwe Waterweg, large-scale engineering works that gave the Netherlands a strategic infrastructure. Much remains to be studied with regard to the Cultivation System. For example, what were the roles of the House of Orange and the Netherlands Trading Society (NHM), a predecessor of ABN AMRO Bank for which the Dutch state once again holds partial responsibility as a major shareholder?

The same questions also apply to the period after the Cultivation System. We know that when *corvée* labor was discontinued, the sentences for light or suspected offenses in the Dutch East Indies were changed from corporal punishment to forced labor. Suddenly, large numbers of colonial subjects were sentenced to forced labor to work on the construction of infrastructure and the clearing of farmland. This newly cleared and accessible land was then granted to private enterprises and investors who therefore profited from this convict labor. The scale, effects, and repercussions of this colonial public-private dynamic are not yet understood.

Finally, one last neglected, yet deeply important context and task for researchers is to explore how the ongoing colonial policies of violence and coercion influenced social relations, both in the Netherlands and in colonial societies. In addition to the structural long-term developments, which require a certain “top-down approach,” it is important to look for the everyday and individual experiences that can shed new light on these histories from “bottom-up” perspectives. These bottom-up perspectives are particularly crucial because of the insights that they can provide into the social effects of colonial policies. Research into the lives of the enslaved, the Black communities in the Republic, and the position of women has begun. More research is needed, however, to attain a better understanding of the daily effect of coercive systems and their consequences.

In general, little is known about the way in which the changes triggered by slavery and colonialism co-shaped the inequalities and social relations in the Netherlands. The same is true of the effects that slavery and colonial exploitation had on the social structures in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The economic underdevelopment of colonized societies went hand in hand with a huge impact on social relations.

Notes

- 1 See also: Matthias van Rossum, "New Perspectives on Early Modern Dutch Atlantic Slavery and Slave Trade," *TSEG / Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 19, no. 2 (2022): 5–16. For a case, see Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Archief Notarissen, 5638; Gerrit Verbeet, "Dagboek van Gerrit Verbeet, Getrouw Dienaar Jesu Christi in Zyne Gemeinte te Banda Neira," in *Litterarische Fantasien en Kritieken*, deel 5, ed. Cd. Busken Huet, (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1882), 80–166.
- 2 Pieter C. Emmer, *The Dutch Slave Trade 1500–1850*, trans. Chris Emery (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 3 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964 [1944]); Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery* (New York: Verso, 1997); Armand Zunder, *Herstelbetalingen: De "Wiedergutmachung" voor de schade die Suriname en haar bevolking hebben geleden onder het Nederlands kolonialisme*. (The Hague: Amrit Consultancy, 2010); Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 185.
- 4 Matthias van Rossum and Karwan Fatah-Black, "Wat is winst? De economische impact van de Nederlandse transAtlantische slavenhandel," *TSEG / Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 9, no. 1 (2012): 3–29. We calculated this from the average salaries, based on 250 guilders per year for the early modern period and an average gross yearly salary of 44,800 euros in 2021; from this we arrived at a factor of 179.2. A calculation based on the average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita would result in virtually the same result; if we use the average of 275 guilders for the period 1700–1800 and compare that to the GDP per capita of 45,800 Euros in 2021, we get a factor of 166.5.
- 5 Gerhard de Kok, "Cursed Capital: The Economic Impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade on Walcheren around 1770," *TSEG / Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 13, no. 3 (2016): 1–27; Felicia Fricke, "Productie en handel van glazen kralen in Amsterdam," in *Slavernij in Oost en West: Het Amsterdam onderzoek*, ed. Pepijn Brandon et al. (Amsterdam: Spectrum, 2020), 257–63; Merel Blok, "Schiedam en het Atlantische slavernijverleden," *Schiedams Historisch Jaarboek 2021* (Nederland: dr. K. Heeringa Stichting, 2022), 16–37.
- 6 Tamira Combrink, "Slave-Based Coffee in the Eighteenth Century and the Role of the Dutch in Global Commodity Chains," *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 1 (2021): 15–42; Karwan Fatah-Black, Lauren Lauret, and Joris van den Tol, *Serving the Chain? De Nederlandsche Bank and the Last Decades of Slavery, 1814–1863* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023); Gerhard de Kok and Pepijn Brandon, "Het slavernijverleden van historische voorlopers van ABN AMRO:

Een onderzoek naar Hope & Co en R. Mees & Zoonen,” (Amsterdam: IISG, 2022); Karin Lurvink, “The Insurance of Mass Murder: The Development of Slave Life Insurance Policies of Dutch Private Slave Ships, 1720–1780,” *Enterprise & Society* 21, no. 1 (2020): 210–38; Gerhard de Kok, “De koloniale impact: Industrie en financiële dienstverlening,” in *Het koloniale verleden van Rotterdam*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020), 91–144.

- 7 Tamira Combrink, “Rhine Trade in Slave-Based Commodities in the Eighteenth Century,” *TSEG / The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History*, 19, no. 2 (2022): 95–120.
- 8 References to underlying literature are included in Tamira Combrink and Matthias van Rossum, “Introduction: The Impact of Slavery on Europe – Reopening a Debate,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1–14.

The Colonial Collections of Stadtholders William IV and William V

From the earliest days of the VOC and WIC, the stadtholders of the Republic collected objects from all over the world, such as silverware from Batavia, Asian porcelain, lacquerware, Asian textiles, and weapons. Stadtholder William IV (1711–1751) and his spouse, Anna van Hannover (1709–1759), were avid collectors of gemstones, minerals, corals, and animals from overseas. They also had a great interest in topographical maps, travel logs, and flora and fauna atlases. They displayed their collection in the Stadhouderskijk Kwartier, their palace in the Binnenhof, the seat of government in The Hague. William V (1748–1806) later greatly expanded the collection in his private museum in the nearby Buitenhof. His menagerie even included live animals from the colonies. The objects and animals, whose origins are not clear, were sometimes purchased but often gifted by merchants and governors-general in the East and West Indies. Some of the objects are known to have been stolen, such as the collection of six lavishly ornamented weapons given to the young Prince William V by Lubbert Jan van Eck, governor of Ceylon. Van Eck confiscated the weapons during the conquest of the king of Kandy's castle in 1765.

When the French army brought down the ancien régime in 1795, the collected items were dispersed. Some of them were taken by William V, the last stadtholder, when he went into exile in England and Germany. Most, however, were taken as spoils of war back to Paris. A small part of the collection stayed behind for the Batavian Republic. Almost everything that remained in the palaces was auctioned off. Objects from the former stadtholders' collections are now in the National Library of the Netherlands (KB), the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities, the Dutch National Archives, the Royal House Archives, Paleis het Loo, Mauritshuis, Wereldmuseum Leiden, Naturalis, Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, and the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

To date, no overarching interdisciplinary research has been conducted into the provenance of the objects in the stadholders' collections and no unambiguous answer given to the question whether these collections were obtained lawfully. However, studies conducted since the 1960s have inventoried the collections of the House of Orange, revealing that several purchases and gifts are in fact colonial objects.¹ Since 2019, several museum collections have been studied to determine the provenance of objects from the colonial era, such as the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPROCE) at the Dutch National Museum of World Cultures and Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, which possess items from the former stadholders' collections. The results will probably only clarify the origins of a small part of the total collection. For a more complete picture, research will have to be carried out in the Royal House Archives, Huis ten Bosch, the National Library of the Netherlands (KB), and the National Archives. Collections outside the Netherlands and objects auctioned off during the Batavian Republic also need further examination. Such research can clarify the relationship between the former and current possessions of the House of Orange and the colonial past.

Notes

- 1 S.W.A. Drossaers and Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmee gelijk te stellen stukken 1567–1795* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974–1976, 3 vols.); Lunsingh Scheurleer, "De Stadhouderlijke verzamelingen," in *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet* (The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij, 1967), 9–50; Jan van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737–1807) en zijn verzameling Chinese voorwerpen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000).

Abstract

This chapter examines how the Dutch royal family, and specifically the Princes of Orange, financially benefited from colonial enterprises in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Newly discovered historical records from private archives show significant earnings from the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the West India Company (WIC), with the princes receiving portions of profits based on fictitious capital investments. The VOC's profit allocations were significant and reveal how the princes' colonial interests were entangled with their formal roles in the state's military and political spheres. This chapter highlights the need for further investigation into private archives to fully map out and understand colonial financial flows and the royal family's colonial interests.

Keywords: colonial profits; Dutch East India Company (VOC); Dutch West India Company (WIC); Princes of Orange; financial flows; jouissance