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Title:	To commemorate shared pasts. Legislation related to enslavement and multicultural relations in the Dutch West Indies colonies, c. 1670 – c. 1816
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Abstract:	Summaries or transcripts of ordinances proclaimed in Suriname, Guyana, Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba and half of St. Martin, and related to enslavement and multicultural relations, have been available digitally since 2013-2014, via two completed web applications titled “The Dutch in the Caribbean World, c. 1670- c. 1816” and “Guyana ordinance book, 1670-1816”. https://dutch-caribbean.huygens.knaw.nl/ ; http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/guyana

Short notice

To commemorate shared pasts. Legislation related to enslavement and multicultural relations in the Dutch West Indies colonies, c. 1670 – c. 1816 (*)

From the 1670s onwards, the Dutch possessions in the Caribbean concerned a few islands of the Antilles (Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba, and half of St. Martin) and some of the great estuaries on the Wild Coast, including the rivers nearby (Suriname, Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara). The colonies of Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara were lost to the Dutch by treaty in 1814, to later become British Guiana, nowadays known as Guyana. Within these colonies, a whole social fabric of multicultural relations took shape. The phenomenon of what we would now describe as enslavement, played a central role in this formation. In the remaining Dutch colonies after 1814, enslavement as such was only abolished in 1863. However, in Suriname, the formerly enslaved people still had to carry out, under government supervision, paid work on a plantation of their own choice for a period of ten years.

According to the late Dutch legal historian J. Th. de Smidt, ordinances - or in Dutch: 'plakaten' - formed the framework of the colonial societies. Ordinances influenced the government of the colonies and controlled the activities of people and organisations in many ways. De Smidt started and edited, in cooperation with J.A. Schiltkamp and T. van der Lee, the *West-Indisch Plakaatboek* series. The volumes for Suriname; Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire; and St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, Saba were published in 1973, 1978 and 1979 respectively. By a lack of funds, De Smidt was forced to abandon his preparations for a volume on Guyana.

Summaries or transcripts of ordinances in all these areas have been available digitally since 2013-2014, via two web applications titled "The Dutch in the Caribbean World, c. 1670-c. 1870" and "Guyana ordinance book, 1670-1870" of the Huygens Institute for History and Culture of the Netherlands (KNAW). Henk-Jan van Dapperen collected, selected and edited more than 2,000 regulations relative to the interaction between different sections of the population in the Dutch Caribbean world. The online "Guyana ordinance book, 1670-1870" forms the fourth volume in the series on West Indische Plakaatboeken.

All the records are accessible through facet headings such as 'Geography', 'Subject', 'Group' or 'Person', through keywords such as 'Food supply', 'Health care' or 'Manumission', and via free text search. By using the 'Period' option, the number of results can be increased or reduced. For instance, when one enters 'St Eustatius, slaves, 1705-1750' at "The Dutch in the Caribbean World", one of the four results will be the following :

Legislation

Prohibition of catching horses

wip_c_i 129-130

Dutch title : *Verbod op het vangen van paarden*

Summary of contents : *Amerindians, blacks and mulattos, free or slave, shall neither catch nor brand horses, on penalty of corporal punishment. For the transport of horses and hinnies from the islands (unless to Saba, St Eustatius and St Martin), a recognition shall be paid to the Company, on penalty of confiscation of the animals and the ship.*

Original archival source : *HaNa 1.05.01.02 invnr. 206 f. 542r-v; 207 f. 239r*

Earlier and later publications : *5-12-1715, HaNa 1.05.01.02 invnr. 206 f. 540r and 207 f. 241r [and] 18-4-1722, HaNa 1.05.12.01 A invnr. 168 no. 10*

Relevant dates : *1715-07-15*

Geography : *St Martin, St Eustatius, Saba, Curacao*

Subject : *Law and order, Amerindians, Free blacks, Slaves*

Person : -

When one enters ‘Demerara, slaves, 1750-1800’ at “Guyana ordinance book”, one of the 89 results will be the following :

Verbod op de verkoop van wapens en ammunitie aan zwarte of rode slaven.

Short title English : *Prohibition of selling weapons or ammunition to black or red slaves.*

Colony : *Essequibo; Demerara*

Type of document : *Publicatie*

Date 1 : *1772-07-06*

Legislator : *Directeur-Generaal en Raden van Justitie van Essequibo; Place of issue :* *Fort Zeelandia?*

Archival institutions : *Nationaal Archief; Archief/collectie :* *HaNA 1.05.06 invnr. 140*

Groups : *Amerindians, Slaves, Skippers; Other keywords :* *Trade, Defence, Legislation for slaves, Legal pluralism*

Geography : *Demarara, Essequibo*

Transcription : *... Verbieden bij deezen wel expresselijk aen allen en een eigelijk, 't zij eigenaren van plantagien, hunne bediendens ofwel andre ingesetene in deeze Colony, en wel in 't bijzonder aen de schippers in deeze Colonie reeds leggende of indertijd nog komende mitsgaders aen alle andre daarop zijnde officieren en gemeenen, het verkoopen of veralieneeren van snaphanen ofte andre schietgeweeren, kruyd ofte lood, aen eenige slaven, slavinnen, bokken ofte bokkinnen, op poene van twee duyzend guldens boete, als een derde ten behoeve van den Heer Raad fiscaal, een derde voor den armen deezer Colonie en een derde voor den aenbrenger, wiens naem des begeerende kan worden gesecreteerd, alles ipso facto door gemelden Heer Raad fiscaal te verhalen van de schippers op zoodanige schip of scheepen commandeerende. ...*

To conclude : although they have been proclaimed top down in the rather stratified Caribbean societies of the 17th-19th centuries, ordinances are an essential source as they bear witness to our shared pasts.

Henk-Jan van Dapperen, Marijcke Schillings / Huygens Institute (huygens.knaw.nl) / October 2022

(*)Most of the text is taken from introductions and instructions for use that can be found on the two completed project websites themselves, <https://dutch-caribbean.huygens.knaw.nl/>; <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/guyana>; consulted September-October 2022