Durkheim and Marx in the Caribbean: slavery, laws, and marronage in Suriname, 1650-1863


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Abstract

Caribbean plantation societies started out as economic projects that were structurally linked to slavery, with its own mode of production. The legal system during slavery was not a reflection or expression of moral solidarity of its population, but clearly served the interest of the dominant class in a Marxist sense. Between 1684 and 1842 numerous laws against marronage were issued, which underlines the class character of the legal system. The Slave Laws reflected the reality of their time, but became more humane towards Emancipation. Coding of some 1800 laws shows that laws can be treated as social facts in a Durkheimian sense i.e. they reveal important information about the nature of society at the time. Laws could be tied to historic periods. Slave Revolts and Maroon Wars can be interpreted as typical manifestations of the class struggle in plantation societies. Such revolts and wars are highly correlated with the earlier more exploitative period of plantation societies, which was accompanied by a harsher treatment of the slaves. Laws are initially more driven by the elites, and give insights in behavior of the Colonial State. Gradually, and especially after Emancipation, the laws are expected to reflect more of the general public’s interests. Over time plantation society in the Caribbean is shifting from a dichotomized Marxist type of society towards a more Durkheimian society, where the law is not an instrument in the hands of the elites, but serves the whole population.

Keywords: Caribbean, plantation societies, slavery, legal system, marronage, Suriname

Introduction

This article sets out to explore the analysis of legal documents within the context of slavery and marronage. It draws upon insights from both Durkheim and Marx to assess this relationship and its consequences. Marxists seem to have avoided the problematic relationship between capital and labor in a context of slavery, but may thereby have missed important chances to develop further insights into concepts such as class struggle and the Verelendungs theory.

The Caribbean as an economic project

Caribbean plantation societies started out as economic projects or business enterprises and not as states or civil societies, not even as Indigenous societies. These plantation societies thus were not real societies in their initial stages, but just companies with forced labor populations living on the premises of the plantation. I have argued and documented that Caribbean plantation societies followed a different path of development than Western societies (Schalkwijk, 1994, 2004). Most notable is the fact that the State in the Caribbean was absent in the beginning and developed later as a peripheral phenomenon around the economy, whereas in Western societies most often the economy was a by-product of warmaking and state-formation. Tilly (1990) and others saw extraction as a secondary priority in the state-formation process, while it was the primary objective for plantation colonies. Since the plantation was at the center of the economy in the newly established Caribbean colonies it should not be surprising that most other developments in these colonies were instrumental to this economic project. This is clear with respect to slavery, which was intended to provide the plantations with a labor force to produce sugar, cotton, coffee and other staple crops.

In 1627 Abraham van Peere signed a contract
with the Dutch West Indian Company to establish a permanent colony in Essequibo (now part of Guyana). The last article of the contract stated that the company committed itself to provide "as many blacks as possible" (Netscher, 1888). Although the colonists in this case had to wait 25 years before any slaves actually arrived, this clearly and structurally linked slavery to colonization in the Caribbean. The plantation economy, with its own mode of production, is thus a good term to characterize these economies (Mandle, 1973; Mandle, 1982; Beckford, 1983; Schalkwijk, 1990).

Law and order

Every society needs a form of regulation, which often becomes the legal system. Laws are the most common and visible form of societal regulatory principles. Many definitions of law describe it in positive terms as some agreed upon social norm for the common good, an attempt to harmonize claims from different groups, or in less positive terms as an attempt to constrain potential deviant behavior.

Emile Durkheim saw the phenomenon of a growing society with an increasing division of labor, where old forms of solidarity were replaced by new ones. He assumed that every society has a moral base, which in larger societies with more division of labor, can still be observed through an "external index" which symbolized it. "This external symbol was law – i.e. where social life exists, it tends to assume a definite, organized form, and law is simply the most stable and precise expression of this organization. Law reproduces the principle forms of solidarity; and thus we have only to classify the different types of law in order to discover the different types of solidarity corresponding to them." (Jones, 1986, p28).

It should be evident that Durkheim’s description of the law and legal framework can not be applied to Caribbean plantation societies, since these were not societies that developed gradually over time, but were created artificially from the outside, with a small but dominant elite and a large subordinate population of slaves. This was at least true up to Emancipation, when (sometimes minimal) civil rights were granted to all citizens. Thus the law in Caribbean plantation societies before Emancipation cannot be interpreted as a reflection or expression of moral solidarity of its population.

Prior to emancipation, citizenship was granted only to a small part of society and laws therefore should be interpreted as a reflection of the interests and/or concerns of this small group. Thus the law was an instrument in the hands of the elite and human rights, which are often associated with citizenship, were limited to a very small section of society. In fact "justice" of the laws and courts was not served to the population in general, but was pure class justice, while the majority of the population – i.e. the slaves – were not even recognized as subjects but only as objects in court (compare Dodd, 1982). In this sense a more legalistic interpretation of law as "rules established by a governing authority to institute and maintain orderly coexistence" seems more appropriate. The common notion of law and order is present in this definition. Still it does not say who is defining "orderly coexistence", because the perspective of the planter was quite different from that of the slave. We should keep this in mind when we continue with an analysis of laws during the period of slavery.

Historically there have been different notions of the relationship between the law and the economy. Marxists take the position that "the law ultimately serves the interests of the dominant class by, for example, protecting property rights, whereas Max Weber argued that a stable system of abstract, general law was a requirement of capitalism." (Abercrombie et al., 1984, p 404). In view of what has been stated so far about the plantation society it is not difficult to argue that the classical Marxist notion of law seems very applicable to these societies.

Marronage and laws against it

The slaves would sympathize with Quinney’s (1978) radical interpretation of law, when he stated in a completely different and modern context “Law as we experience it today is oppressive. Like all forms of oppression, the existing legal system must be removed.” The slaves, however, could not remove the legal system in the colony, but they found another solution i.e. to remove themselves from this oppressive legal system through marronage. Slaves who fled the plantations without returning became maroons (also known as Bush Negroes in Suriname) and re-established their own societies and tribes. Essed notes that in the early years of the Colony there was only sporadic marronage. He noticed an intensification – “the Regular War” – during the period 1730-1762, followed by a “Total War” in the period 1763-1793. Dragstenstein (2002) counted the number of (registered) expeditions against runaway slaves between 1670 and 1760. He counted 21 expeditions between 1670 and 1705 (or 0.6 per year), while this increased to 82 expeditions in the period 1706-1729 (or 3.6 per year). Between 1730 and 1760 he counted another 81 expeditions (or 2.7 per year). This count moves the intensification of marronage to an earlier period.

In the early period local militias fought the maroons, but this was not sufficient, and we see a build-up of military force in the Colony (Schalkwijk, 1994, pp 146-147). The cost of warfare was very high for both parties and in the end Peace Accords were mutually agreed upon and signed with different tribes in 1760 (Ndjuka or Aukaner), 1762 (Saramaka) and 1767 (Matawai), although in the East the war continued with the Boni. In fact the Boni Wars were more intense than earlier maroon raids on the plantations; Hoogbergen (1985) counted 25 clashes with military in the period 1769-1772 alone. The threat by the maroons was such that Governor Jan Nepveu at one point developed a plan to move the capital Paramaribo to a more strategic location in order to secure the Government and the capital against “the rabble of the runaways… who threaten to completely ruin this precious Colony…”
In spite of the Peace Treaties, marronage (most notably of the Boni) remained a major problem, because the owners of the Colony wrote that “since 1772 the danger of the internal Enemy has not diminished but increased…” They listed what they had done in the past years to stem the tide: they had increased the local militia by 300 persons, postponed the return of the soldiers of the Dutch State, established the Corps of Free Negroes (Korps Vrije Negers) with 300 persons, and authorized the creation of a special physical line of defense (Cordonpad) around the plantations. In fact the war veteran, Governor Nepveu, was of critical importance in creating the new force of Free Negroes and also the Corps of Rangers also called Black Chasseurs (Korps Jagers, consisting of slaves) in 1772, who were more effective in anti-guerrilla warfare. Thus the Governor had found another solution for the threat of the maroons. When the Boni were chased into French Guyane in 1776 the first Boni War ended, while the Aukaner tribe watched them closely. In 1789, however, a new war erupted when the Boni crossed over into Suriname and attacked plantations. The colonial government sent troops and put pressure on the pacified Aukaner to assist in this war, which came to an end in 1792 when Boni and other leaders were killed by the Aukaner. Only in 1860 the Boni tribe was finally recognized as “free people” by the Dutch, while from 1892 on they considered themselves French citizens.

If we look at the laws with respect to marronage and maroons we can read the trend from these laws. In July 1684 (WIP 114) marronage had become a problem to the extent that a curfew was imposed on all slaves, because runaway slaves were active at night in the capital. After the curfew hours – set for half an hour after sunset and half an hour before sunrise – the guards would consider any Negro a potential runaway slave and shoot him. This law was extended a few months later to include slaves who came from the districts (WIP 122).

A year later a law was issued to mark all slaves that did not have a visible mark of their master, while anyone who would catch a runaway slave would be rewarded with 100 lbs. of sugar by the owner. Reluctant runaways could be shot, but not with the intention to kill them, while owners were warned to give slaves enough food and acreage to plant in order to avoid stealing and marronage (WIP 128). Only one month later the reward for capturing a runaway slave was 300 pounds of sugar, although they had to be caught on the rivers and outside of an expedition (WIP 130). These rewards were repeated in 1687 i.e. 100 pounds of sugar for a casually captured slave (in the vicinity of a plantation) and 300 pounds for those hunted down (WIP 140).

By 1698 the problem of marronage had become worrisome, while there was little interest among inhabitants and Indians to capture runaways due to low rewards. Thus the rewards (to be paid by the owner) were increased to 25 guilders for a runaway slave captured in the regions of the Suriname river, the Commewijne river and the Cottica river, and 50 guilders for anyone captured outside these regions (WIP 191). In 1717 a huge amount of 1500 guilders was promised as a reward for those who could locate the village of Claes and Pedro in the Suriname river (WIP 272). In 1718 the death penalty was put on marronage, which was a clear sign that it had become a major problem (WIP 292).

In 1749 “a special fund to restrain and destroy runaway slaves” (Kassa tegen Weglopers) became operational, but the taxes to maintain the fund varied annually. Only in 1750 and 1753 do we see new laws with respect to rewards for captured runaways, while a new problem was mentioned i.e. many owners did not come to pick up their runaway slaves, because they did not want to pay the reward. Most runaways who were captured at that point seemed to be slaves from neighboring plantations who were actually stealing on other premises and thus were not real runaways. The reward was put at 5 Dutch guilders (WIP 488 and 499).

By 1761 most runaway slaves around Paramaribo were not considered real runaways or maroons (weglopers) anymore but temporary runaways (schuylders). In the literature this is known as the difference between grand marronage and petit marronage. These schuylders became petty thieves and a nuisance and they could be captured or shot only with hail and not be killed (WIP 609). It turned out, however, that since the reward for runaways was the same for those captured alive or dead, “that all were shot dead and hardly anyone was captured alive”. For this reason the reward for a dead runaway slave was cut in half in 1763 (WIP 639).

Due to increased marronage on the plantations, the bounty for a captured runaway slave during a plantation raid was increased in 1771 to 100 guilders and for one captured in the jungle to 150 guilders (WIP 715). When the new Corps of Free Negroes was formed, its members who could be considered professional bounty hunters received a reward of 50 guilders for each captured runaway slave (dead or alive) on top of their monthly wage and other privileges (WIP 723). With the end of the first Boni War grand marronage was becoming much less of a problem.

The special tax to pay for state sponsored actions against marronage was discontinued around 1820 (the last law is found in GB 1818, Nr. 6). In 1825 a law on runaway slaves was mentioning only schuylders and any slave who had disappeared for more than three days was considered one (GB 1825, Nr. 2). In 1828 a comprehensive law with “regulations and sanctions on the flight of slaves” was published. In fact different categories of schuylders were listed. Individual slaves, if caught, could get not more than 100 lashes. This law also covered cases where groups of slaves formed a conspiracy to run away, which was deemed a rebellion with much harsher sanctions. The reward for a captured runaway slave was between 3 and 12 guilders, depending on the distance from Paramaribo were the slave was captured. If the military captured a runaway slave (dead or alive) the soldier would get a bounty of 25 guilders. For information about a camp or village of runaways higher rewards were given (GB 1828, Nr. 23). In 1834 the reward for a captured slave was put at
6 guilders, wherever such a slave was captured, while those who assisted a slave to run away would face harsher sanctions than before (GB 1834, Nr 1 and 2). When the Peace Treaties with the different tribes were renewed in 1835 (Saramaka), 1837 (Aukaner) and 1838 (Matawai) it seemed that grand marronage had become something of the past. This in fact was not so, because the abolition of slavery in neighboring British Guyana led to a new phenomenon i.e. slaves in the bordering region of Nickerie now fled to British Guyana. A new law was made with harsh sanctions to discourage such behavior (GB 1838, Nr. 7). Mainly due to this new form of marronage bounties were adjusted, varying from 3 guilders to 100 guilders for each captured slave (GB 1838, Nr. 7). In 1842 the laws for the rural areas were overhauled into a more comprehensive law, including articles on safety. With respect to the Citizens militias it was stated that “the main goal of the armed Citizen militia is to find and destroy camps of runaway Negroes and to capture these...”. The “usual rewards and costs will be paid” by the owners (GB 1842, Nr. 3). The newly adopted Slave Regulations were meant to protect the slaves, while marronage was not mentioned anymore (GB 1851, Nr. 4). In 1856 the maroons were finally allowed to travel freely in the country i.e. without special permits and without restrictions (GB 1856, Nr. 8). The annual gifts, which were given after the Peace Treaties were signed, and were seen by the Government as a token of appreciation for the capture of runaway slaves by the free maroons, also stopped.

**Basic laws and slavery**

There are no overviews of the legal products in the very early stages of Suriname’s foundation as a Plantation Colony i.e. during the initial English colonization period 1650-1667. The colonization was organized from Barbados; land was distributed fast, capital for creation of plantations (mainly sugar) was advanced by Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham, while relations with the Indians were smooth. Efforts were made to avoid the initial mistakes made in Barbados and thus the feudal and communal episode was skipped. Government was set up along the same lines as Barbados, since persons were appointed, who had often served in Government positions in Barbados. Nevertheless at that point Suriname was a rough place and tensions between Cavaliers and Roundheads spilled over from Barbados. In fact for many early years the freeholders had to govern themselves since its owner, Willoughby, was imprisoned in Barbados by Commonwealth adherents. The same happened with William Byam, an early governor. When he was released and resumed his governorship, the freeholders called it unconstitutional and preached revolt. He managed to round up the ringleaders and banished them, while Willoughby finally obtained his proprietary rights “Letters Patent” (Charter or Octrooi) in 1662. According to Ooft (1972, p17) it is remarkable that no mention is made in this Charter of “… slaves, slave trade and all related issues...”. Again not much more is known about this period in terms of laws that were issued, and probably not much was legislated since Willoughby had little time to do so.

When the Dutch captured the Colony in 1667 it already had some 4000 inhabitants and numerous plantations. The Dutch legal practice was also based upon the feudal legal system of its time, just like English law at the time. Thus the Charters that formed the basis of this legal system, until 1815, were actually based on the practices of the late Middle Ages (Ooft, 1972). The legal products of the Dutch period have been compiled in two volumes for the period 1667-1816, and afterwards in official Government Journals (Gouvernementsblad). The basic laws for the Colony, including laws that involved transition to new owners, form an important source of legal activity. In the context of this article I will highlight only those aspects that have to do with the plantation system, slavery, and marronage.

When the Dutch conquered Suriname from Britain in 1667, the documents of capitulation were written in such a manner that the planters were encouraged to stay. They were granted all privileges and guarantees with respect to property, religion, movement, trade, production, and were granted equal civil rights as Dutch citizens, while even the taxes were kept at the same level. The Indians “the Caribbees, our neighbors, shall be used civilly...” while trade with them, who were free people, was to remain the same as well. Marronage was not a problem as yet and is not mentioned, because the inhabitants “shall only keep soe many armes as everyone in his family shall need to keep his negroes in awe and to defend themselves against the Indians, wilde beasts and all other vermines...” Slaves were not mentioned as such, but the term Negro was similar to slave, since at the time there were no free Negroes. The Dutch required 60 slaves from the inhabitants to work at the fort for four months. A year later sergeant-major James Bannister and other inhabitants requested permission to leave the Colony with “…their goods, which consisted of slaves, cattle and other species...”. Thus slaves were still seen as commodities. Commander Abraham Crijnssen tried to re-assure the English planters about their rights and urged them to stay in Suriname, while he made it clear that they could not take their slaves and cattle with them, because the colony needed them badly (WIP 1a-1g).

In June 1682 the ownership of Suriname, which had been in the hands of the States of Zeeland was transferred to the Dutch West Indies Company. This company had financial problems and soon afterwards sold one third of its share to the city of Amsterdam and another third to the Lord of Sommelsdijck, who became governor on their behalf. The new owners were known as the Chartered Society of Suriname (Geoctroyeerde Sociëteit van Suriname). In the meantime the Charter of 1682, issued by the Dutch Parliament to the Dutch Owners of Suriname, was the main law for Suriname until 1816. In its preamble it states clearly the economic goals of colonization and that profit will be made only after many years and after huge investments in the initial period. It also warns the owners not to tax the colonists too heavy in the
beginning, otherwise the Colony “will die during birth”, but instead they should assist new colonists which will attract more. To assure a good beginning there was freedom of taxes, except for ships and export goods, for all colonists during the first ten years. The Dutch West Indies Company was given the monopoly of the slave trade, plus the obligation to deliver slaves, because “the Colony can not continue properly than by means of Black Slaves or Negroes…” The public auction of slaves was ensured in one article, while another article stated that payments for slaves could be made in three parts every six months. Thus economic benefits were central in this Charter, while slaves were treated as a commodity.

The period of the Chartered Society came to an end in 1795 when the Batavian Patriots took power in the Netherlands. After two short periods of English rule (1799-1802 and 1804-1816) Suriname shifted towards Crown Colony Government. The English put an end to the slave trade in their colonies by 1806. The Dutch officially banned this trade from Africa in 1818, but in the period 1816-1848 still some 10,000 slaves were imported into Suriname from other colonies or even smuggled from Africa. In the new Colonial Law (Regerings-reglement) of 1816 the position of the Governor was strengthened, while the judiciary was separated from the legislative and the executive branch of government. Not much was stated about the slaves except that there was still a clear distinction between “Whites, Manumitted and Slaves” (GB 1816, Nr. 2, art. 102). In 1828 this main law was revised and slaves changed status from objects to subjects, although they were labeled as “minors” (onmondigen) in relationship to their owners. The owners were still allowed to discipline them, but not to torture them (GB 1828, Nr. 3, art. 117). Mention was made that working hours, food, and clothing of the slaves should be properly regulated by the Government. The Slave Trade was also explicitly forbidden in this revised Colonial Law. Another revision of this Law in 1832 stated that the “Slaves would get special protection from the Colonial Government”, while their situation and their well being would be improved (GB 1832, Nr. 13, art. 72).

“A foreigner, who did not know that there was slavery in the Colony, could stay for weeks and months, without noticing that there were slaves… free persons and slaves worked as servants of the same boss with the only difference that the free persons wore shoes. In the tent boat of the government eight free rowers were rowing under the supervision of a slave.” (De Gaay Fortman 1930/31, pp 409, 410). This was the account of the abolitionist Mr. Gekfen in the late 1850s in Suriname. From his description it is evident that slavery itself and maroonage were not the same in 1862, on the verge of emancipation, as they were in 1762 or 1662. Although a slave was still a slave from a pure legal point of view, the content of slavery had changed substantially. We have seen some of it in the changing contents of the laws that regulated slavery and in the laws which tried to curb maroonage. In one sense we can say that Suriname became more humane over time. This evidently had to do with the end of the slave trade, the abolition of slavery by Britain in 1833, and by France in 1848. Suriname was wedged between British Guyana and French Guyana and thus felt the heat of emancipation. Its answer was to adopt Regulations on the Treatment of Slaves (Slavenreglement, GB 1851, Nr. 4), which was enforced by the Attorney General. Mr. Jan Willem Gefken was Attorney General and very strict in enforcing the Slave Regulations (De Gaay Fortman, 1930/31). But eventually, in 1863, the Dutch had to grant the slaves in Suriname their freedom as well.

**Laws and historic periods**

It is time to return to Emile Durkheim’s insights. He treated laws as social facts that could reveal something about the nature of a society. Since Caribbean plantation societies up to emancipation were elite societies, it is safe to assume that a study of its laws can be seen as an index of elite interests and policies. Since a small elite ran the Colonial State the laws can also be seen as an indicator of early State Behavior.

To see what was going on in Suriname in terms of State Behavior in the period of slavery I have elsewhere coded some 1800 ‘laws’ which were passed between 1667 and 1862 (Schalkwijk, 1994, pp 77-83). The laws were coded in terms of Tilly’s categories on state functions, which was not an easy task. Tilly (1990) described these functions as follows:

1. **Warmaking** (attacking rivals outside the territory already claimed by the State)
2. **Statemaking** (attacking and checking competitors and challengers within the territory claimed by the State)
3. **Protection** (eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of the clients of the State)
4. **Production** (control of the creation and transformation of goods and services by members of the subject population)
5. **Extraction** (drawing from the subjects the means for functions 1, 2, 3)
6. **Adjudication** (authoritative settlement of disputes among members of the subject population)
7. **Distribution** (intervention in the allocation of goods among members of the subject population)

A quantitative approach to legal activities and state functions has its drawbacks e.g. a new constitution weighs the same as an adjustment of a tariff, but a constitution may trigger many secondary laws and thus could have an impact that will be measured in a different way. Nevertheless it is a starting point to get a very general overview of a long period.

Figure 1 shows a gradual increase in number of laws that were passed, which could be seen as a function of a growing population. There are some periods of increased legislation, however, such as 1760-1780 and 1830-1860, which indicate more than just demographic increase. In 1760 and 1761 all old laws were nullified and those that the government wanted to keep had to be re-issued, which explains the...
peak in that period. Moreover the Amsterdam bourse crisis and the Boni War increased the number of laws in those areas. The other period was just prior to emancipation when the Colony shifted from a very authoritarian rule to a less authoritarian one and had to increase its legislation in a number of areas to prepare for the new episode in its history.

The laws are regrouped in Table 1, which uses a number of different meaningful historical periods. It is of interest to see to what extent the behavior of the State changed over time. The “legal period” is included only to isolate the high number of laws, but is not really a historic period and will be excluded from further analysis.\[^{vi}\]

In the “Start-up period” the owners of the Colony gave a tax holiday to new planters, while two Anglo-Dutch wars were fought. \textit{Warmaking} was high, \textit{Statemaking} was high (new procedures), while \textit{Extraction} was low. The second period of “Growth” coincided with what historians have labeled Suriname’s Golden Age i.e. the boom of the plantation economy. This is illustrated by a very high percentage of \textit{Extraction} and a low percentage for \textit{Distribution}. In the third period increased marronage (high percentage of statemaking) was followed by an economic crisis due to the collapse of the Amsterdam financial markets in 1772-1773, which led to major problems for many plantations (high \textit{Production} signals attempts to stem this crisis).\[^{vii}\] The fourth period had to do with multiple changes of ownership of the Colony, which is illustrated by a high percentage of \textit{warmaking}, while \textit{protection} was at its lowest. Each new ruler tried to get the plantations to produce (\textit{Production} very high). The last two periods leading up to Emancipation of the slaves are somewhat similar, but still distinct enough to separate them. The similarity is that there was little marronage or external struggle (\textit{warmaking} and \textit{statemaking} at their lowest). Policing became more important than military and militia maneuvering (\textit{Protection} at its highest). Elite society became somewhat more equal (\textit{Distribution} increased), while \textit{Production} became less. \textit{Adjudication} was high during Crown Colony Government, but was less of a priority just before emancipation, which probably was the consequence of the increased need for \textit{Protection}.

In my dissertation I have continued with correspondence analysis which confirmed the validity of this type of analysis and quantification of codified legislation. Most notable was the fact that different historical periods clustered neatly with distinct functions of State formation. The first century of Start-up, Growth and Crisis clustered together with special accents respectively on statemaking, production and extraction. The period of Crisis was particularly connected with the latter two functions. Transition period clustered with warming, while the short Legal intermezzo clustered with adjudication. Finally the period of Crown Colony was more related to distribution, and the Pre-emancipation period to protection.

Table 1. Colonial State formation in Suriname during the period of Slavery 1667-1862

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<td>11.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>22.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<td>13.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>17.4 (N=303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>20.9 (N=364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>16.7 (N=292)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjudication</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<table>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>100% (N=185)</th>
<th>100% (N=355)</th>
<th>100% (N=75)</th>
<th>100% (N=380)</th>
<th>100% (N=155)</th>
<th>100% (N=428)</th>
<th>100% (N=203)</th>
<th>100% (N=1743)</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>196</td>
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<td>Laws/year</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Schalkwijk 1994:81

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Marx’ Verelendung’s theory

Grand marronage has been very manifest in Suriname during the 18th century and it coincided with the economic peak period in the Colony. This was a Maroon Wars as part of a clear class struggle. “The logical Marxist sequence is that increased production led to intensified exploitation – i.e. extraction of more surplus labor than usual from the slave – and consequently to more suffering (Verelendung), which caused an uprising of the dominated class who could not bear it any longer i.e. class struggle.” (Schalkwijk, 1994, p 148). The slaves retaliated on the institutions of oppression i.e. the plantations.

The hypothesis can be put forward that early booming plantation colonies will see more slave revolts and wars than colonies which experienced their Golden Age at a later point in history. The main explanation being that slavery in the initial stages was much harsher and exploitative than at the later stages. This was the case in Jamaica, which experienced its boom and its first Maroon War prior to Suriname (Patterson, 1979), while early boomers such as Barbados, Grenada, Antigua and Haiti also experienced major revolts at an early stage. Haiti’s main slave revolt occurred in 1792 and even led to its early independence. What I am saying is that the timing of major slave revolts and Maroon wars in the Caribbean correlated highly with the level of intense capitalist production. Thus rapid plantation growth led to severe exploitation of slave labor, which caused the slaves to strike back at the planters and plantations. Thus these revolts and wars can be interpreted as typical manifestations of the class struggle in plantation societies. Except for Haiti, the Maroons in Suriname and elsewhere, however, did not succeed in overthrowing the Colonial State, but instead established separate Maroon States.

Conclusion

In conclusion the connection between slavery and marronage was not just a result of the human longing for freedom, but was triggered by economic exploitation combined with harsher legal sanctions and coercive strategies by the Colonial Administration. Only when slavery became more humane did marronage decrease in importance. At the same time the Maroons were able to pressure the Colonial Government into Peace Talks and Peace Treaties. Thus the freedom of the Maroons was reluctantly recognized by the plantation elites, while they bought off further hostilities with annual gifts. In fact the price for peace was paid in order to continue further extraction and ultimately to secure the survival of the plantation economy.

In spite of enormous marronage, raids and warfare the Dutch were very late in granting freedom to the slaves, although they had been forced to grant freedom to the Maroons a century before all the slaves were emancipated.

period were slavery was still in a very inhumane stage Society was basically split between a large mass of black slaves and a minority of free whites, with little or no groups in between. This was close to an “ideal” Marxist class division and thus we can interpret the Laws initially are more driven by the elites, and give insights in behavior of the Colonial State. Gradually, and especially after Emancipation, the laws are expected to reflect more of the general public’s interests. Thus we may see a shift over time from a dichotomized Marxist type of Society towards a more Durkheimian society, where the law is not an instrument in the hand of the elites, but for the whole population.

Note: An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the 40th annual conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians in Paramaribo, May, 2008.

References


References

Oudschilds Dentz, F., 1947. Uit de geschiedenis van de hoofdplaats van Suriname, een evacuatieplan in het midden der 18e eeuw dat geen voortgang had. Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap, tweede reeks deel LXIV.


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Endnotes


ii This Marxist view is the classical view, which has been amended in modern times by others e.g. T. Bottomore (ed.): A dictionary of Marxist Thought (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983).

iii Hoogbergen (1985) labeled the latter period the “Boni Wars”, which began in 1757 according to him.

iv According to the Peace Treaties the pacified Maroons had to remain in their own villages, at least 10 hours by boat from the last plantation. They had to capture and send back any runaway slave who would come to them and receive a reward. They should not molest Indians and had to support the Whites when called upon. They were allowed to trade and granted special permission to enter the city in small numbers. They could deposit complaints against unfair treatment by Whites (WIP 577).

v The new location was not mentioned, according to Oudschans Dentz, but he assumed it to be near Potribo on the upper-Commewijne river.

vi Berigt van Directeuren van de Societeit van Suriname dd. 11 oct. 1775 in reaktie op de Missive van de Raaden van Civile Justitie (van 10 mei 1775, door hen ontvangen op 19 september 1775).

vii Hoogbergen (1985, pp 444-449) gives a complete chronological overview of the Boni Wars for the period 1757-1793.

viii These treaties were not published, but mentioned in Benjamins & Snelleman (1981).

ix The full text of this Octroy is printed as an addendum in Wolbers (1861).

x Ooft (1972, p 43) quotes M.D. Teenstra on this issue.

xi I included all laws dealing with general defense and documents related to transition of ownership of the colony or the military.

xii Marronage, relations with the Indians, militia, arms and ammunition sales, police, general security, crime and crime prevention, censorship, and various aspects of law and order were included here, as well as job descriptions of bureaucrats and institution building.

xiii Here I included most of the slave laws and laws dealing with race and labor relations, migration laws, census taking, civil rights and institution building (departments, protocol, etc.).

xiv Property rights, regulation of trade, harbor facilities, infrastructure, licensing, price controls, banking, money, sales of slaves, were included here.

xv This to me meant all taxes and income legislation.