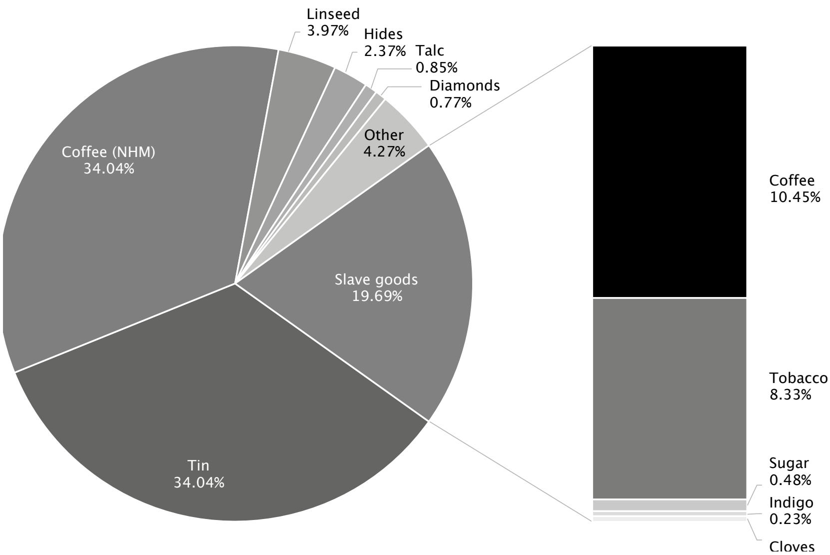
4. Slavery-related services

When William I declared his aim to "revive commerce, as the sinew of this state, from the decline into which previous times and circumstances have brought it", he had a specific role in mind for DNB. According to its charter, the most beneficial means to promote the circulation of money "can be found [...] in the introduction of a national bank established by public authority."[396] DNB had several means at its disposal to fulfil that specific task: discounting of bills of exchange, issuing loans against domestic securities or goods, trading in bullion, and acting as state cashier. After 1852, DNB was also able to accept foreign securities as loan collateral.

This statutory remit did not distinguish between offering services to businesses or governments on the basis of their involvement in slavery, direct or otherwise. For some financial services slave traders relied on other financial institutions. For example, DNB was not a mortgage lender and therefore did not directly finance the purchase of plantations or accept enslaved people as collateral. Nevertheless, within the scope of its charter there were four ways in which DNB could become involved in colonial enslavement: discounting bills of exchange, accepting collateral in the form of securities, collateral in the form of goods, and facilitating payment transactions by the department of Colonies. In 1848, slave-based commodities accounted for about 20 per cent of all gages pledged to the bank (see Figure 2). It was not so much that fewer slave goods were pledged in that year than in any other, but rather that on 2 June the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij, NHM) – active primarily in the Dutch East Indies – secured credit against commodities worth a total of *f* 2.4 million: half consisted of tin, and the other half was coffee. That apart, the largest gage of 1848 came on 4 May from B. H. Schröder & Co: it was granted credit of *f* 320,000 against a consignment of coffee. Part of a European protomultinational, this firm's British arm, J. Henry Schröder, would later bring bonds of the Confederate States of America to the European capital market.[397]

Figure 2. *Goods pledged against DNB loans, 1848/49 financial year.*



Discounting bills of exchange

Until the early twentieth century, bills of exchange were the main instrument for long-distance payments. The most important innovation they brought was to enable financial transactions without having to physically ship large amounts of coinage. Once they became the standard form of payment in international trade, exporters were able to secure payment for their overseas deliveries without incurring excessive risk. Bills usually had a term of three to six months. However, holders who wanted their money earlier could discount them; sell them to a bank or banker with interest deducted to cover their residual term to maturity.

From its very beginning, DNB discounted bills of exchange. On 14 April 1814, the first of such a transaction was completed when a W.F. Hendriks received the sum of *f* 14,000.[398] A summary from one of the early cashbooks illustrates the process, as shown in Table 4. A number of bills were discounted on 27 December, 1814, and several of the parties involved are familiar firms engaged in slavery-related activities: Hope & Co, for example, and Couderc & Brants. This latter firm was also one of the bank's first non-executive directors, although there is nothing to suggest this position explains why it undertook this particular transaction. The DNB archives do not contain sufficient information to establish whether these specific bills had any links with slavery, or to what extent. In none of the daily summaries, either the cash book or the journals, is it noted where a bill was originally drawn. And even if a place were mentioned, such records are not free of errors.[399] To arrive at more definitive answers, the only possibility would have been to count all bills linked to firms and individuals known to have been heavily involved with slavery, such as Hope & Co. Even this method would not be entirely reliable, however, and it would have been hugely labour intensive and impossible to complete within the limited time available for this study. In the specific case of the bill of exchange from Van Offen & Son to Hope & Co in Table 4, that most likely covered intra-European trade as all notarised protests (attestations that a bill has been dishonoured) involving the two firms in the eighteenth century originated in Europe.[400]

Table 4. *Example of a cashbook, 27 December, 1814.*

Bill drawn on	Discounted from	Amount in *f*
Alstorphius & Van Hemert	D'Arripe & Co	1,597.50
Hollenberg & Co	Van Offen & Son	2,500.00
Hope & Co	Van Offen & Son	4,700.00
Van Loon Wijnman & Co	Couderc D. & M.P. Brants	4,708.00
Ploos van Amstel & Ludwig	Couderc D. & M.P. Brants	10,750.00
B.P. & J.J. Hooft	Seeman & Co	5,000.00
Braunsberg & Co	Seeman & Co	1,590.00
J.P. Gildemeester & Linneschmidt	J. Jorissen & Co	11,922.65
D. Couderc & M.P. Brants	J. Jorissen & Co	10,400.00
G. Bosscher & Son	J. Jorissen & Co	3,259.80
H.D. Rahusen	J. Jorissen & Co	10,000.00
F. Brederlak	J. Jorissen & Co	5,000.00
Beman & Co	B.J. de Jongh & Jr	3,000.00
Muhl van Winter & Co	B.J. de Jongh & Jr	2,499.50
Buys te Bordes & Jordan	B.J. de Jongh & Jr	5,000.00

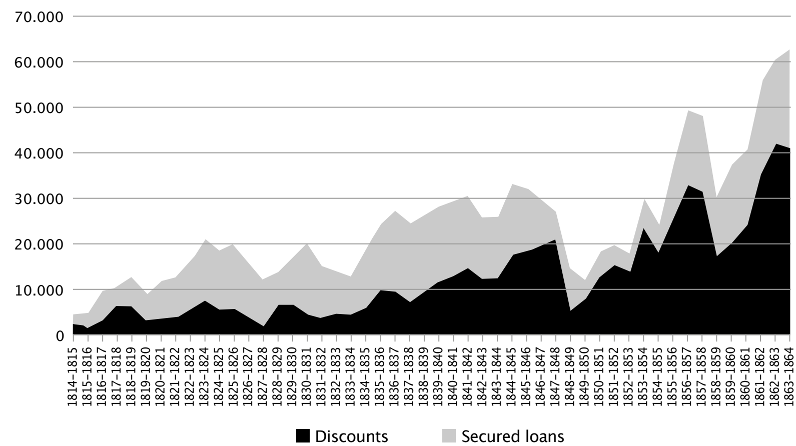
Source: NL-HaNA, 2.25.68, inv. no. 101640, "Kasboek" [Cashbook] 27 December, 1814-31 March, 1815.

A bill of European origin could still cover colonial goods, of course, but this is impossible to establish. It seems highly likely that bills of exchange linked with slavery did pass through DNB; but since the bank discounted at least *f*25 million a year, both their sheer quantity and the nature of the sources available to us make these impossible to identify on an individual basis.

Loans against securities

The second way in which DNB may have been involved in the slavery-based economy is through its acceptance of securities and commodities as collateral for loans. It could be argued that granting credit against specie was also slavery-related, but even more so with bills of exchange it is not possible to determine the exact origin of any pledged silver and gold. This does not alter the fact that enslaved labour was used to extract these metals, and that they were distributed around the world in various forms and along various routes.[401] Even well into the nineteenth century the gold mines of Minas Gerais, Brazil, for example, still had hundreds of enslaved workers.[402] There can be no doubt whatsoever that gold and silver extracted by enslaved workers was circulating in the Netherlands and must therefore have been pledged to the bank, but it is impossible to give even estimated amounts.

Figure 3. *Total operating capital of DNB, 1814-1864 (x f1,000).*



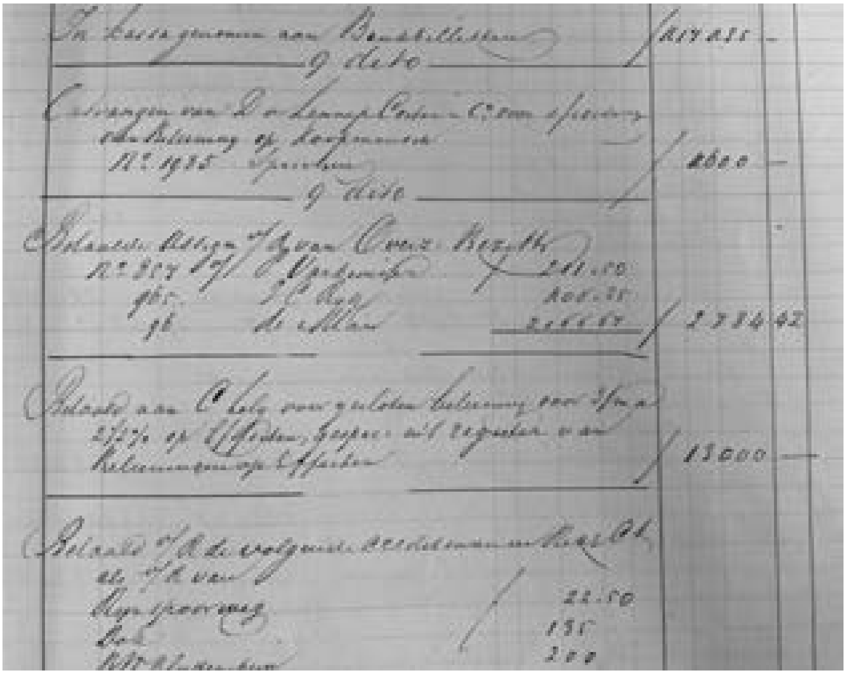
Source: De Jong, Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bank, vol. 1, table 4.

Pledging securities had much the same purpose as discounting of bills of exchange: to release cash. Individuals who were temporarily (or more permanently) short of funds but owned shares could deposit them with DNB as collateral for loans. The rate of interest payable on this credit was set at 5 per cent when the bank was first founded, but varied over time. The lowest rate was 2.5 per cent between March 1850 and October 1853, and on three occasions the rate peaked at 6 per cent. The first secured loan issued by DNB went to the firm Kerkhoven & Co on 13 April, 1814, for a total of *f* 53.000.[403]

DNB's transactions were recorded daily in the daybook. This was then used to compile the journal, where the transactions were classified under a number of headings with a note as to which ledger account they should be recorded in. That ledger offers quite a lot of information about loans, but it has its limitations. On days when only one client came into the bank to pledge securities, the client's name is listed. But when several did so, that day's ledger entry states simply "Sundry". Only in the journal is it possible to see who each of them was. The ledger shows that the largest borrower against securities in the 1852 calendar year, applying for credit on a number of separate occasions, was the firm Wed. Polak & Co. These multiple visits resulted in pledges worth a total of more than *f* 260,000. On 9 October, 1852, one C. Lely came to the bank to put up securities worth *f* 13,000. The journals provide no further details about the exact nature of the collateral, stating only, "Paid to C. Lely for secured loan contracted for 3 [months], 2.5% against securities specified in the register of secured loans: *f* 13,000."[404] Unfortunately, that register has not survived the archiving process and so no further elucidation is possible.

In a more general sense, however, some light can be shed on the securities pledged during the period 1814-1863. In order to extend credit against those, DNB had to determine the value of these securities. Obviously, this would be their market value rather than their nominal worth. The bank then applied a percentage of that (65 per cent, to be exact) as their credit value. Current trading prices were published in a daily list, the *Prijscourant der effecten*, and widely reported in the newspapers. On 9 October, 1852, for instance, the day on which C. Lely put up his securities, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* stated that the 5 per cent Russian government bonds issued by Hope & Co in 1798 and 1816 were trading at 107.88 per cent of their nominal value, whilst shares in a loan to the Society of Humanitarianism

(*Maatschappij der Weldadigheid*) at 4 per cent interest were currently worth 89 per cent of their nominal value.[405]



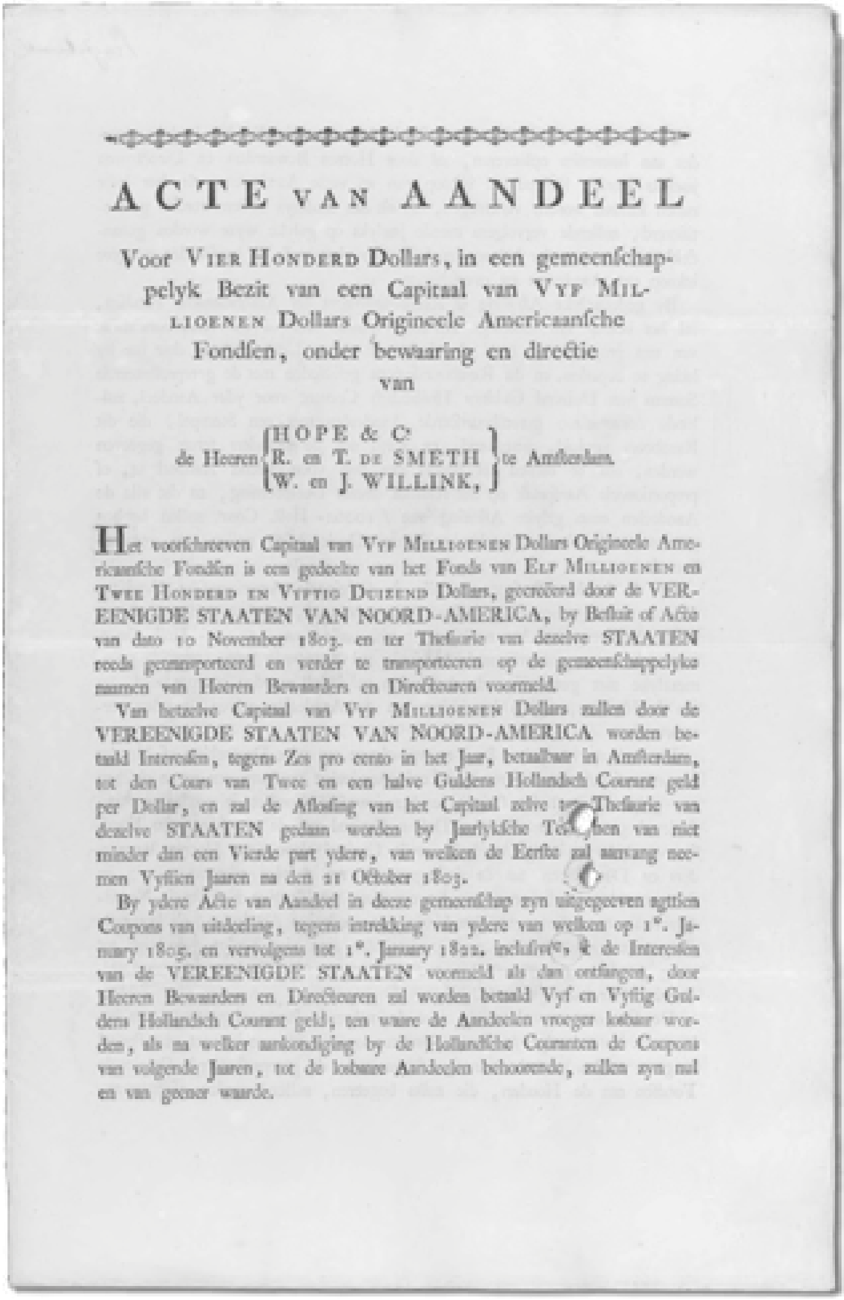
Extract from the DNB journal from 9 October, 1852.
Source: NL-HaNA, 2.25.68, inv. no. 100497, "Journaal oktober 1852-maart 1853" [Journal for October 1852-March 1853], 9 October, 1852.

The securities listed in the *Prijscourant* were mainly government bonds and shares in joint-stock companies such as railways. Others were bought and sold at auction. In the *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 21 October, 1854, for example, we read that shares in the Amsterdamsche Brand Sociëteit (a fire insurance company) had been auctioned for 154 per cent of their original purchase price. But on the same day five shares in the Biesterbos plantation mortgage fund, which had once cost *f* 1,000 each, went under the hammer for a combined total of just *f* 5.[406] That was even less than their worth a few years earlier, in 1847, when *f* 70 was bid for a Biesterbos share at a securities auction.[407] Likewise, in Johanna Borski's financial records her entire portfolio of "colonial securities" is valued at a mere one guilder. Back in 1800 and 1810, by contrast, some plantation funds – such as

Berewout, with estates on the Danish islands – had still been included in a more comprehensive *Prijscourant*, which showed them trading at between 98 and 100 per cent of their nominal value.[408] Berewout was an exception even then, however, because in 1810 Biesterbos was already reduced to 15 per cent of its original value. In fact, the trade in plantation securities had virtually ground to a halt well before the establishment of DNB in 1814. And as the nineteenth century progressed, their value plummeted across the board – Berewout included.[409] Anyone who owned or inherited such assets therefore found them difficult to dispose of. Although the funds still paid out interest with some regularity, their market value was virtually nil. This also made them worthless as loan collateral, so we can safely say that none will have been pledged to DNB.

The manner in which a distribution by the Dedel fund unfolded in 1834 is perhaps telling when it comes to the way some investors viewed their slave coupons. Of 53 holders, 34 came in person to the office of Insinger & Co in February, shortly after it had advertised a dividend of *f* 51.60 per coupon. Within a year, 389 of the 395 coupons had been redeemed. However, the two in the name of Gebroeders Van Wijck were not cashed in until 12 October, 1836 – suggesting that the brothers had either missed the original advertisement or that the coupons had been lying forgotten at the bottom of a drawer.[410]

But there were other securities backed directly or indirectly by enslaved labour that were acceptable to DNB, or securities that financed the upholding of a slave-based society. Government bonds are the most obvious example. In the price lists we regularly find bonds issued by countries with economies reliant in part upon slavery, such as Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. In 1803, the United States had raised a loan through Hope & Co which was traded on the Amsterdam stock exchange for several decades in the form of bonds with a face value of $400 each. The loan's total amount of $5 million covered a third of the cost of the Louisiana Purchase of territory from France, one of the objectives of which was to reduce the likelihood of a slave revolt like that in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) by spreading the enslaved population over a wider geographical area. Moreover, the colonial settlers in Louisiana had warned the US government that they would only accept its authority if slavery and the local slave trade remained legal.[411] The loan "Louisiana at *Hope*" can be found in the published price lists until at least 1864.[412]



ACTE VAN AANDEEL

Voor VIER HONDERD Dollars, in een gemeenschappelyk Bezit van een Capitaal van VYF MILLIOENEN Dollars Origineele Americaansche Fondsen, onder bewaaring en directie van

de Heeren {HOPE & C°, R. en T. DE SMETH, W. en J. WILLINK,} te Amsterdam.

Het voorschreeven Capitaal van VYF MILLIOENEN Dollars Origineele Americaansche Fondsen is een gedeelte van het Fonds van ELF MILLIOENEN en TWEE HONDERD EN VYFTIG DUIZEND Dollars, gecreëerd door de VEREENIGDE STAATEN VAN NOORD-AMERICA, by Besluit of Acte van dato 10 November 1803. en ter Thesaurie van dezelve STAATEN reeds getransporteerd en verder te transporteeren op de gemeenschappelyke naamen van Heeren Bewaarders en Directeuren voormeld.

Van hetzelve Capitaal van VYF MILLIOENEN Dollars zullen door de VEREENIGDE STAATEN VAN NOORD-AMERICA worden betaald Interessen, tegens Zes pro cento in het Jaar, betaalbaar in Amsterdam, tot den Cours van Twee en een halve Guldens Hollandsch Courant geld per Dollar, en zal de Aflossing van het Capitaal zelve ter Thesaurie van dezelve STAATEN gedaan worden by Jaarlyksche Te[illegible]ben van niet minder dan een Vierde part ydere, van welken de Eerste zal aanvang neemen Vyftien Jaaren na den 21 October 1803.

By ydere Acte van Aandeel in deeze gemeenschap zyn uitgegeeven agttien Coupons van uitdeeling, tegens intrekking van ydere van welken op 1°. January 1805. en vervolgens tot 1°. January 1822. inclusive, & de Interessen van de VEREENIGDE STAATEN voormeld als dan ontfangen, door Heeren Bewaarders en Directeuren zal worden betaald Vyf en Vyftig Guldens Hollandsch Courant geld; ten waare de Aandeelen vroeger losbaar worden, als na welker aankondiging by de Hollandsche Couranten de Coupons van volgende Jaaren, tot de losbaare Aandeelen behoorende, zullen zyn nul en van geener waarde.

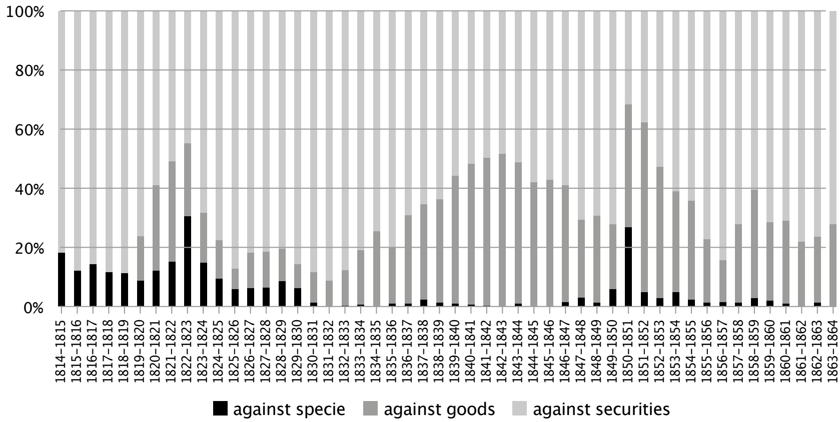
Share in the Louisiana Purchase.

Source: NL-AsdSAA, 735, inv. no. 1913: "Aandelen van een kapitaal van $ 5.000.000 Amerikaanse fondsen" [Shares in a capital of $ 5,000,000 US funds].

Funding a war to preserve slavery is going a step further than financing the sovereign debt of an economy propped up by slavery. The American Civil War (1861-1865) was fought between a southern Confederacy desperate to retain enslavement there and a northern Union determined to abolish it. To finance its struggle, the Confederate government issued two forms of bond on the European financial markets: so-called *cotton bonds* in London and – in July 1863 – *junk bonds* in Amsterdam. Whilst the former were backed by the cotton harvest, the latter were unsecured and the Confederacy could suspend interest payments on them with impunity. The cotton bonds were placed by J. Henry Schröder & Co in London and by Emile Erlanger & Co in Paris and could be subscribed to in London, Liverpool, Paris, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam. In the Dutch capital, their issue was administered by B.H. Schröder & Co.[413] The initial offer was five times oversubscribed and the bonds then traded actively on the stock exchanges in both London and Amsterdam.[414] The cotton bonds seemed to represent a reasonable investment; their opening price in March 1863 was around £ 90 sterling, which soon fell to a stable £ 60 or so in September 1863 and even climbed to almost £ 85 in September 1864. The junk bonds, on the other hand, could only be traded in Amsterdam and never really stabilised in value. The *Amsterdams Effectenblad* listed them at £ 39 in September 1863, compared with a nominal value of £100 each. And from there they continued to fall until May 1865, during the collapse of the Confederacy, when just over £ 1 of their value remained.[415] By the time they were listed in guilders, at the end of December 1868 they had slumped to *f* 11. Up until then the *junk bonds* had been "traded almost daily", but by 1873 transactions were most exceptional.[416]

The pledging of foreign securities as collateral with DNB, which had been possible since the charter renewal and amendment of 1852, accounted for 75 per cent of all security-backed lending in 1857. Austrian government bonds made up the largest item in this portfolio and were accepted with a 20-25 per cent surplus. The equivalent figure for North American funds was 30 per cent, because the risk they entailed was considered slightly higher. It was only in the summer when the Confederate bonds first became available on the Amsterdam market, at the height of the Civil War, that North American funds appeared "in quantities of any significance amongst the securities pledged with the bank."[417] DNB's annual report for the 1863-1864 financial year puts their value at more than *f* 2.1 million, and a year later that had risen to more than *f* 2.9 million. Since *Union* bonds were never very popular in the Netherlands, and at their low point in 1864 retained only 36 per cent of their original value on the Amsterdam stock exchange, it is likely that a substantial proportion of the North American gages accepted by DNB were Confederate cotton bonds.[418] In other words, it is very probable that the bank extended credit against collateral in the form of loans to finance a war for the preservation of slavery.

Figure 4. *Breakdown of secured loans by DNB, 1814-1864 (as a percentage of total loans).*



Source: De Jong, Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bank, vol. 1, table 4.

Loans against goods

Unlike with bills of exchange and securities, it is still possible to identify the nature of gages pledged to DNB in the form of physical goods. The details are recorded in the bank's journals. Given the time needed to peruse all those documents and the limited duration of our research, however, a comprehensive survey covering the entire period under consideration has not been possible. However, based on samples we are able to say something about the commodity gages in general.

The key question here is which commodities were related to slavery? For coffee from a Surinamese plantation, the answer is obvious. But coffee also came from the Dutch East Indies, Brazil, and other sources. The same problem arises with sugar and tobacco as well. Then there are goods that are only vaguely defined, such as "spices", "sundry" or "merchandise", terms which may or may not encompass produce harvested and processed using enslaved labour. Spices, for instance, could include slave-cultivated nutmeg and mace from the Banda islands in the Dutch East Indies. On British plantations on the Malay peninsula, pepper, sugar cane, and cloves were grown using imported enslaved Africans up until abolition there in 1834, but enslavement lasted considerably longer in the neighbouring Dutch-ruled archipelago.[419] In other words whether to count some items as slave goods or not is to some extent an arbitrary decision.

We have chosen to apply uniform interpretations across the entire period covered by this study, 1814-1863. In the case of coffee, for example, this means that it is always counted as the product of slavery except when pledged by the NHM. The coffee harvest in the Dutch East Indies did increase from 1821 onwards, but even in 1830 more was still coming to the Netherlands from Rio de Janeiro than from the Dutch East Indies.[420] Sugar, tobacco, indigo, and cotton are always classified as slave goods. It is true that there was sugar from Java which, strictly speaking, was not produced using enslaved labour, but as Willem Cornelis Mees (s. 1849-1863, p. 1863-1884) noted at the time, it is far from correct to characterise Javanese sugar as slave-free. Nutmeg and mace are treated as slave goods, too, but more general categories such as "spices" or "merchandise" are not. Mined commodities such as copper and tin are also doubtful cases. As most copper came from the British Empire and slavery was abolished there in the 1830s, it is not counted.[421] Some tin came from mines in the Dutch East Indies employing indentured workers brought from China, but by our strict definition this form of coerced labour is not considered slavery.[422] Where a gage comprised multiple goods (coffee and tobacco, coffee and tin, etc.), it was counted as slavery-related only if all the products concerned met that definition. Where "spices" formed part of such a composite gage, though, they were deemed to be slave goods.

It is also important that we take a closer look at cloves, which are particularly prominent in the graph for the 1822/23 financial year (Figure 5). Spice was produced in Asia and east Africa using enslaved labour but there is something odd about this particular entry.[423] On 31 December, 1822 and 11 February, 1823, H. Vollenhoven pledged cloves worth a total of *f* 350,000 on behalf of the "Ministry of Public Education *etc.*". But whereas loans secured in this way were usually paid out in bank notes, Vollenhoven's credit was deposited in the account of the "Department of Commerce and the Colonies". Shortly afterwards, on 24 March, 1823, "Commissioner

H. Vollenhoven" did the same with a consignment of nutmeg which he put up for *f* 200,000. In other words, it seems that the Ministry of Public Education owned colonial goods and used them as collateral for loans paid into the account of the Department of Commerce and Colonies. How and why requires further research. Since the production of cloves in this period was linked with slavery, we decided to classify them as slavery goods in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Goods pledged against DNB loans (as a percentage of all goods pledged) per sample year, 1817-1863.*

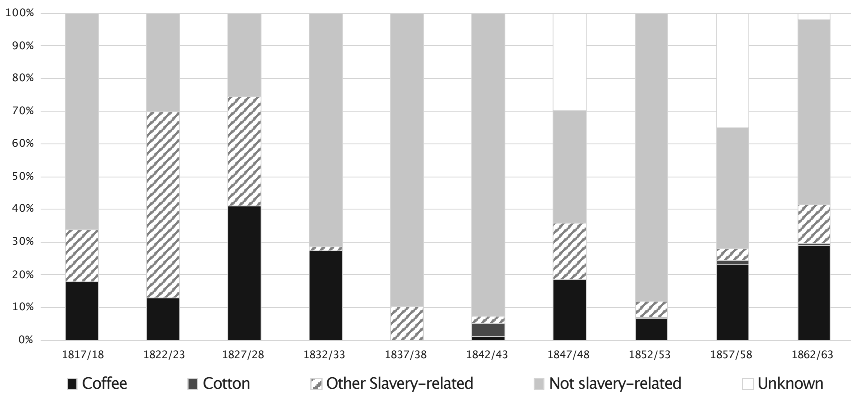


Figure 5 shows that gages of slave-based commodities to DNB fluctuated considerably over time. In the 1842/43 financial year, they represented less than 10 per cent of all collateral, whereas fifteen years earlier that figure had been almost 75 per cent. The reason for this has more to do with the borrowers than with DNB policy. For the bankers it was most important that a gage would have a reasonable value and not be too perishable. Whether it had been produced using slave labour was not a decisive factor. Because of the time it took to ship them from the plantation to the European market, by default slave goods had to have a long shelf life and were therefore particularly suitable as collateral in the event of liquidity problems. Also striking is the fact that coffee was quite clearly the product of slavery most commonly used to secure loans throughout this period. In years when little of this crop was pledged – as can be seen in 1837/38 and 1842/43 – the proportion of all slave goods in the overall total decreased. In 1862/63, coffee was the principal collateral commodity, accounting for 28.87 per cent of the total, followed at some distance by tin (12.39 per cent) and wheat (7.50 per cent). It also topped the list in 1842/43, but since most of that coffee – 55.76 per cent of the total, valued at *f* 1.5 million – was in NHM hands, it has not been counted here as slavery-related. Notwithstanding the fact that the share of slave goods in the collateral it accepted fluctuated considerably over the years, it is clear that – as part of its statutory remit – DNB played an important role in extending credit with their backing. Across all the years examined, such goods represented 29.61 per cent of all commodity gages.[424]

Proceeds from lending

DNB charged interest on the loans it provided against goods, securities, and specie. The rate was not fixed, but varied over time and could even change during the course of a financial year. In 1862/63, it fluctuated between 4 per cent and 4.5 per cent. How exactly the bank calculated these percentages is not readily apparent from the accounts, since the repayment entries mention the number of the loan concerned but not its collateral, and also because it was possible to extend a loan. In principle, though, goods could be pledged for three months at *x* per cent interest. However, that rate was an annual one. This means that if someone put up a consignment of coffee for *f* 10,000 at 4 per cent per annum, after three months they had to pay *f* 10,100 to redeem the loan: the principal plus a quarter of 4 per cent, making the effective interest at this point 1 per cent. In this example, DNB earns *f* 100 from a product of slavery, coffee. Of course, it was not unusual for a borrower to repay a chunk of the principal – *f* 2,000 of the *f* 10,000, say – before the end of the three-month term, or to pay off the final instalment late, after the three months were up. This is well illustrated by the example of one M. Wachtels, who on 14 March, 1827 pledged a consignment of 697 bales of coffee stored in the second attic of the Drontheim warehouse to DNB for *f* 18,600. The records in a so-called "loan book" do not mention any interest he paid, but it is clear that Wachtels repaid his loan in instalments and took more than six months to clear the entire debt.

Table 5. *Example of a loan book, 1827.*

Date	Bales of Coffee	Repaid, in *f*
17 Nov. 1827	255 bales	7,500
4 Dec. 1827	42 bales	1,100
29 Dec. 1827	the remainder	10,000

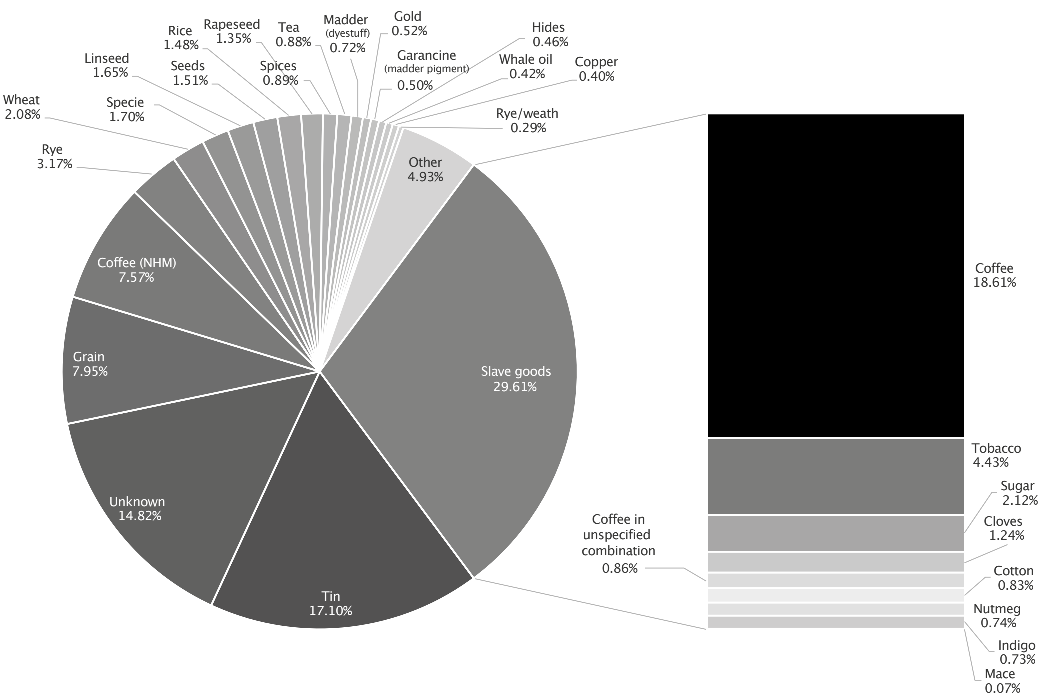
Source: NL-AsdSAA, 447, "Inventaris van het Archief van Handelshuis Van Eeghen & Co." [Inventory of the archive of Van Eeghen & Co.], inv. no. 180: "Beleningsboekje goederen" [Loan book for goods], 9.

Because a loan could be paid off earlier or extended, on the basis of the data gathered it is impossible to say how much DNB actually earned from lending against goods related to slavery. The same problem applies to credit extended against securities and specie, and in those cases is compounded by the other issues already mentioned as making it impossible to link individual gages with slavery.

The goods put up in the sample years reported in Figure 5 and in the 1833/34 and 1848/49 financial years together released credit worth a total of *f* 35,646,151.81, as shown in Figure 6. Of that collateral, 29.61 per cent is classified as slave goods. This does not mean, of course, that the contribution made by slavery-related activities to Dutch GNP had increased from 5-10 per cent in the eighteenth century to almost 30 per cent in the nineteenth; rather, it was because their long shelf lives made slave goods far more suitable as collateral than, say, barrels of herring.[425] Coffee was the commodity most commonly pledged, securing 19.47 per cent of the total amount loaned (including 0.86 per cent against coffee in combination with another product of slavery) – and that is without coffee from the NHM, which represented another 7.57 per cent. Perhaps even more than what it says about the importance of DNB to coffee traders is how crucial this reveals the crop to be for the Dutch economy as a whole. Not only was it a consumer good and a major export to the rest of Europe, it also played a central role in financing short-term credit. This factor may help explain why the merchants of Amsterdam protested so strongly in 1819 against a proposed hike in coffee excise duty (see Chapter 2). To a lesser extent, the same financing model also applied to other goods produced using slave labour.

Colonialism and slavery were thus intimately intertwined with the domestic Dutch economy. Since DNB's objective was to "stimulate commerce" by promoting the circulation of money, the bank naturally became embroiled in activities linked, albeit indirectly, with slavery. The interest it charged on loans backed by goods, securities, and specie was a source of income derived in part from human enslavement. If a loan was not repaid, moreover, the defaulter's collateral became its property and DNB would attempt to recoup its losses by selling it. This means that it is likely that DNB actually owned and traded in slavery-related goods and securities.

Figure 6. *Total of goods pledged against DNB loans based upon sample years, 1817-1863.*



Colonial payment traffic

DNB also looked after the financial affairs of the Dutch state, meaning that it handled some of the official payment traffic to and from the overseas territories. A completely random example from 21 April, 1852 illustrates its role. In the journal, under the heading “Overseas possessions”, are listed two transactions on that day “for paid dom. bills”. One for “the governor of Curaçao” and one for “A. v.d. Eb in Elmina” – Anthony van der Eb, governor of Elmina in Dutch Guinea on the west coast of Africa. An official had presumably presented bills of exchange for which DNB was the drawee, and on 21 April it had honoured them: *f* 6,000 for the governor of Curaçao and *f* 140 for the governor of Elmina.[426] It goes without saying that providing a service like paying colonial governors was important to keep the Dutch empire – and its slavery-based chain of production, distribution, and consumption – going.

Other colonial payments administered by DNB included subsidies for the Dutch colonies in the Atlantic region. Surinam, Curaçao, and Dutch Guinea were all loss-making in the 1860s. In 1862, the sum of *f* 271,500 was transferred to Surinam “to reconcile the balance”; for Curaçao and its dependencies the figure was *f* 264,513.80, and for Guinea *f* 64,000. This “burden” on the national budget was paid out of revenues from the East Indies. The subsidies had been keeping the recipient territories afloat for some time, although as Johanna van Winter wrote in 1953, these colonies were “no insolvent estate because private profits were still being made, albeit not as abundantly as in the previous century.”[427] In other words, the government subsidies administered by DNB flowed indirectly, in the form of interest payments, to the shareholders in plantation mortgages.