

## Between Markets and Chains

An Exploration of the Experiences, Mobility and Control of  
Enslaved Persons in Eighteenth-Century South-West India

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On a Sunday towards the end of 1746, three men's lives intersected in a *schaggerije* (tavern) at Pagodinho—they belonged to an enslaved man, a christian *pandij* and a christian *mocqua*.<sup>1</sup> The enslaved man, Cruz, had been put to work in the tavern some two months earlier by his master, the Christian *mocqua*, Pedro Gomez. Records indicate that Pedro may have been the owner of the tavern or was closely involved in running it, as there is mention of him visiting the tavern “very early in the morning as usual”.<sup>2</sup> According to Cruz's later declaration before the court, Pedro Gomez's wife, Dominga, had forbidden Cruz from serving alcohol to her husband. And so Cruz had refused to serve Pedro a drink when he demanded one that Sunday. Cruz stated that Pedro then “threatened to sell him to one of the sailors” as soon as he got the chance.<sup>3</sup> Pedro confirmed this threat in his interrogation.<sup>4</sup>

The Christian *pandij*, Anthonij from Tutucorijn, aged twenty and residing at Pagodinho, noticed that Cruz was aggrieved when he walked into the tavern. In his interrogation before the court, Cruz declared that Anthonij, seeing him “being very sad, and crying bitterly ... asked for the reasons of his sadness”. After Cruz had “revealed that his *senhor* [master] wanted to sell him to the *scheepsvrienden* [sailors]”, Anthonij suggested that Cruz come with him and that he would help him reach his homeland. Cruz answered that “he did not know where his homeland was himself”. He agreed to leave with Anthonij, however, after Anthonij had reassured him that “he would know where it was”.<sup>5</sup>

## Introduction: slavery, mobility and control

An enslaved man working in a tavern with the help of an apparent stranger fled from his master because he was afraid of being sold off to sailors—Cruz’s case is interesting as it challenges dominant perspectives on Asian systems of slavery and bondage on a number of levels.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have argued that slavery in Asia was mostly a local phenomenon that manifested itself as debt and urban slavery, motivated by factors such as status and “conspicuous consumption”.<sup>7</sup> In the case of South and Southeast Asia the focus has also been on forms of bondage that tied enslaved people to the land or a landlord, and in which they were like “bondsmen”, *corvée* workers or serfs. This was accompanied by the idea that slavery in Asia was “milder”. It has, for example, been argued that “Indian slavery was less bland than the virulent form which it had assumed in the civilisations of the West and that the slaves were less in number”.<sup>8</sup> Such characterizations were extended to European contexts, even leading to references to “the ‘cosy’ intimacy of pure household slavery” in Batavia in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, there has been increased interest in the history of slavery in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago worlds.<sup>10</sup> In the last decade, attention has shifted to the role of long-distance connections, and to slavery in Asia as a “dynamic part of a continuously adapting, globally connected and increasingly capitalist economic system”.<sup>11</sup> These changing perspectives are supported by new evidence of the importance of the trade in enslaved people.<sup>12</sup> Rethinking slavery in Asia, scholars stress that land- and debt-based bondage was not the only form of slavery. It has been established that different regions in Southeast Asia were characterized by a “pattern of having both milder and harsher forms of slavery”.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, for the Indian Ocean world, it is recognized that “forms of status obligation, bondage, and temporary slavery (for debt, etc.) coexisted with forms of hereditary slavery similar to that in North America”.<sup>14</sup> This leads us to re-examine the characteristics and everyday functioning of systems of slavery in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago worlds.<sup>15</sup>

Using historical evidence from court records, this chapter studies the working and living conditions of the enslaved and the regulation and control of their mobility. This chapter thus aims to contribute to this volume’s mission of *seeing* slaves in their everyday lives in order to improve our understanding of what slavery meant, especially from the perspective of enslaved individuals. The current chapter was inspired by our earlier

investigations into everyday life dynamics of the motley crews of slaves, convicts, sailors, soldiers and runaways under the Dutch East India Company,<sup>16</sup> and our investigations into the dynamics of slavery, enslavement and escape by examining cases of slave flight.<sup>17</sup> Through this research, we aim to shed light on the everyday characteristics of slavery as a *status* (as a relation of belonging through bonds or property rights) and a *labour relation* (through coerced forms of labour mobilization). In this chapter, we compare the VOC settlement in Cochin on the Malabar Coast with that of the VOC metropole of Batavia on the island of Java—parts of the VOC empire that were highly connected, not least by the large (private) slave trade between the settlements. The legal/institutional arrangements underpinning systems of social control and slavery in both places were shaped by the Company in similar ways, but they operated quite differently depending on the locality. It is, therefore, interesting to compare different locations such as Batavia and Cochin with regard to the everyday functioning of slave work and mobility.

For this study the chapter relies on the court records of the *Raad van Justitie* (Court of Justice) regarding these Company settlements, as well as on additional sources such as ordinances and reports. The court records available from this part of the VOC empire are crucial sources for two reasons. First, the Courts of Justice instituted throughout the empire were the highest forums of imperial and locally situated systems of social and political control, tying together the many lines and structures of social order created by local administrations, city guards and urban and rural policing forces. Second, the court records produced by the Courts of Justice contain historical information on many underlying processes and actors who would otherwise have left no historical trace. Court records are rich historical sources for the study of everyday-level dynamics. The records are unique in terms of the degree to which they preserve the voices of historical subjects, ranging from soldiers to slaves and from *kaffers* to female pedlars. In these court records, slaves appear almost everywhere, often in the background, but just as often as witnesses, accused or victims. And, perhaps equally important, enslaved people appear with a voice, talking not only about the evidence which is at the core of the case, but also providing details that paint a picture of everyday backgrounds and situations. The individuals we encounter in the Dutch courtrooms are continuously trying to formulate and describe not only the “exceptional”, but in contrast also the “normal”. The abundance of court record material for the Dutch East and West Indies empires and their richness thus provides important opportunities for studying (albeit mediated) accounts of enslaved

individuals.<sup>18</sup> Our reading of this type of record resembles Ekama's in this volume. And although judicial sources of course tend to be fragmentary—as court cases tend to focus on specific incidents and practices targeted by legal and political authorities—and the transmission of specific historical information is distorted by legal procedures and translation, these specific challenges can largely be addressed by contextualizing the information through close reading and comparative analysis.<sup>19</sup>

The availability of such sources for Dutch overseas settlements in Asia (and the Atlantic) provides unexplored opportunities for historical research on a range of important themes, forming the basis for several new research projects on slavery and the regulation of diversity.<sup>20</sup> The use of these sources, however, is largely hindered by two problems: i) the difficult and time-consuming nature of access, and ii) the difficulty of assessing the value of findings based on only one case or a small number of cases. Indexing court cases opens up the possibility of studying these histories through what could be called global subaltern (social) history, as it opens up access to everyday micro-level interactions and social structures, and allows for analysing them from below through the systematic comparison of information from such historical sources that provides access to the everyday or micro level.<sup>21</sup> The indexes not only provide access, but they also allow researchers to assess the relevance of particular court cases to their study by conducting targeted searches on particular topics, persons or locations. This has led to a research project dedicated to, amongst other things, indexing the criminal court records of the Court of Justice of Cochin, resulting in the creation of a comprehensive database. This effort is currently expanded for the wider Dutch empire in Asia and the Atlantic, extending the court record indexing from Batavia to Elmina and Paramaribo (including for material dealt with by Ekama and Wagenaar).<sup>22</sup>

Based on an index of these digitized, but otherwise un-inventoried, records of the Court of Justice of Cochin, we were able to select multiple relevant court cases in which slavery and mobility intersect. This index includes 285 criminal court cases and provided some 30 cases involving enslaved people from which we selected four examples that deal specifically with slavery and (illegal) mobility for more detailed analysis in this chapter. For Batavia we were able to draw upon criminal court cases recorded in secondary literature. We have benefited most from Matthias van Rossum's *Kleurrijke Tragiek* in which criminal court cases were similarly selected from an index of Batavian court records. This index contains data for 1,654 criminal court cases, of which some 300 involve enslaved people. Court cases

from Eric Jones' *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines* have also been included in our analysis of the workplaces and mobility of enslaved people in the Batavian context. Batavia can be considered an important comparative case, not only because of its size and extensive history of slavery—with roughly one-third of the population consisting of enslaved people—but also because Batavia, as the headquarters of the VOC in Asia, strongly influenced the regulation of slavery and social and labour relations elsewhere in the Company's empire.<sup>23</sup> The court records to a large degree reflect the interests, fears and prosecution policies of the Company, but for our purposes they also provide clear and detailed background information on enslaved persons and their working conditions and mobility.

## Batavia

Batavia was the centre of the Dutch empire in Asia. It was characterized by “pseudo-European” planning and construction, which drew from styles prevalent in the Republic. The city's social composition changed towards the end of the seventeenth century, when bamboo houses were banned and brick constructions were made mandatory. *Mardijkers*, for example, were pushed to the suburbs outside the city walls because of the high rents being charged for stone houses.<sup>24</sup> Segregation in Batavia, however, was enforced not only for such indirect pecuniary reasons. The VOC actively pursued segregation by regulating the appearance of the city, as evidenced by the fact that in the second half of the seventeenth century Javanese were banned from living within the walled city—they were concentrated in ethnic quarters in the environs (*Ommelanden*) of Batavia.<sup>25</sup>

Even though Batavia grew into a settlement with a large free European population, enslaved people of various origins were brought to the city in increasingly large numbers. Between 1688 and 1779, the number of enslaved people in Batavia almost doubled from 26,000 to 40,000. These slaves were traded by Europeans and Asians alike, in various settings. People would gather at slave markets set up in and around Batavia to sell and/or buy slaves, and the town hall also held auctions where the slaves of deceased Company personnel were sold.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to the prevailing image of Asian domestic slavery, the house was certainly not the only, nor the dominant, backdrop to slavery in this region. Slave labour was exploited by the Company, Company officials and

European and Asian inhabitants alike in various ways and settings. Slaves were deployed at the roadstead of Batavia where they loaded and unloaded large VOC vessels; they were put to work in artisans' workshops where they assisted VOC craftsmen with carrying and loading goods; those working at Batavia Castle were responsible for carrying water, equipment and weaponry. These were only some of the duties imposed on slaves working for the VOC, some of whom were rented out by private owners to the Company for fixed periods of time. Most slaves were owned by Company officials and private individuals, rather than by the Company itself. These individuals would hire their slaves out for profit (often to the VOC) or employ them in settings ranging from tailoring shops to brickworks. In these cases households and workplaces often overlapped.<sup>27</sup>

Strict surveillance of the mobility of slaves was crucial to reducing the chances of escape. Both in domestic and market situations, formal and informal control mechanisms dominated the lives and work of slaves. Those working in and around the house were disciplined using surveillance, small rewards and severe punishments. These methods aimed simultaneously to achieve order and ensure the safety of the slave owners who lived in close proximity to the slaves they commanded. Fear seeped through slave-master relationships—slaves feared arbitrary punishment, while masters were wary of retribution from their slaves or their escape. The elaborate surveillance system established by the VOC benefited slave owners to a certain extent. The gates of the walled city were guarded by Company soldiers during the day, and kaffers and city guards at night.<sup>28</sup>

The 1759 criminal case against Ontong van Palembang reveals that, after staying out for too long one day, he was captured by Moorish guards at “the Chinese campong” under suspicion of absconding. He explained that he had received permission from his master's housewife to leave the house to wash himself, and that he had stayed out until dark. Two days later, Ontong was delivered to his owner, Lieutenant Alting, to receive his punishment. In his interrogation, Ontong declared that he dreaded this encounter with Alting, and his fears were not unfounded as, on Alting's order, he was severely beaten by other slaves. Ontong tried to break free from their grip and succeeded in grabbing a kitchen knife, but he failed to take his own life. He was still severely injured when he was brought to court to defend himself against the serious charge of attempted suicide.<sup>29</sup>

The surveillance of guards at ports and gates was, by definition, limited to the public sphere, so informal control was often more decisive in tracing

runaway slaves. Neighbours played a crucial role in informal social control, as revealed by several court cases revolving round runaway slaves in the Batavian Ommelanden, as mentioned in Eric Jones' *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines* (2010). One such case reveals how Christina, an enslaved woman, hid in the house of her fiancé, a goldsmith named Brandt, for eighteen months. The neighbours were the first to notice that something was different in the way Brandt entered and left his house. At some point he had arranged for his house to be joined to that of his brother, and he would always leave through the front door of his brother's house, which he would also conspicuously make sure to lock properly. Acting on the neighbours' suspicions, Christina's owner, Sara, went to some lengths to retrieve her slave, sending her niece to find and bring Christina back. Furthermore, even *attempts* to abscond could be foiled by neighbours and bystanders. Danie van Sumboewa, for example, had to confess to having plans of escape when the discovery of the dead body of her accomplice by a neighbourhood child led the investigators of the case to her.<sup>30</sup> The VOC encouraged this mechanism further by establishing bounties for the capture of runaway Company slaves.<sup>31</sup>

### VOC on the Malabar coast—a Pagodinho tavern

The South West Indian city of Cochin and its surrounding areas, situated on the Malabar coast, provide an interesting comparative environment. The physical presence of the VOC on the Malabar coast consisted of a series of forts and posts, while the small city of Cochin (conquered in 1663) was the main settlement. The region was characterized by a complex political landscape in which multiple sovereigns ruled over stretches of land with relatively well-defined borders that delineated the authority of the Company and other rulers. The VOC had a number of treaties with local rulers which included clauses that regulated the extradition of subjects prosecuted for offences within the jurisdiction of the Company (often after a trial before the Court of Justice). Geographically, the Malabar coast featured many waterways (backwaters and rivers) connecting villages and cities. Trade and shipping connected the region to the Indian Ocean world and parts of the VOC empire, but links also stretched to the mountainous hinterland, the Sahyadris (or Western Ghats). The Malabar region, therefore, was a site where different social, political and economic systems interacted.

The court records of the case featuring Cruz, the enslaved man working in a tavern in Pagodinho, shed light on how this environment affected mobility and control under slavery in everyday circumstances. First of all, Pedro seemed to own, or was at least closely involved in the running of, the tavern Cruz worked at, as he went by “very early in the morning as usual”. However, Cruz was responsible for the daily running of the tavern, including closing the tavern and opening its doors for business again in the morning. Pedro had been taken aback when he was greeted by the closed doors and windows of the tavern when he arrived the next morning, because Cruz had already left Pagodinho by then.<sup>32</sup> Just before Pedro left the tavern on Sunday evening, he had noticed Anthonij and Cruz talking, and proceeded to ask Cruz “whether he still did not want to go home, upon which mentioned *jongen* [Cruz] replied: who will keep you company here then ...”.

The remainder of their conversation is unfortunately untraceable due to material damage; however, this passage does reveal, first of all, that Cruz was not constantly supervised. After Cruz declined Pedro’s offer Pedro left the tavern alone, leaving Cruz behind with Anthonij. Pedro certainly did seem concerned that Anthonij and Cruz had been talking for some time. Trying to steer Cruz away from Anthonij, he suggested that it was late, and asked Cruz whether he wanted to go home.<sup>33</sup> We do not know whether Cruz lived with, or in close proximity to, his masters Pedro and Dominga, but we do know that Pedro did not check whether Cruz had left the tavern for his house the previous night. It was only when he reached the closed tavern the next morning and was informed by some children from the neighbourhood that they had seen Cruz and Anthonij talking near the water tank the previous night that Pedro realized that Cruz had not just left the tavern—he had left town.<sup>34</sup> Cruz was eventually recognized by Pedro’s relatives near “the land of Travancore”, and they urged him to return to his owner, which Cruz apparently did.<sup>35</sup>

Cruz’s relative mobility was, of course, not self-evident, and not without any control. In fact, it was the threat his master had uttered that Sunday, that he would sell him to some sailors, that had prompted Cruz to run away. Even though Cruz had some degree of mobility as an enslaved man, the grasp his master had on Cruz’s life and his ability to drastically change the direction it might take was very real and threatening. At the same time the case reveals Cruz’s fears of being sold and Pedro’s anxiety about the long conversation between Cruz and Anthonij. The case also clearly demonstrates the roles of neighbours and acquaintances in social control.

## Households and military guards

Similar dynamics can be discerned from the 1713 case of Maria and her European owner, the soldier Cornelisz Fredericksz. After a devastating house fire, Fredericksz had threatened—in a similar fashion to Pedro—to sell her “on board” a ship.<sup>36</sup> The prospect of being transported far away from the familiar domestic environment may have frightened the 19-year-old Maria, and she talked to another slave in the household, a 25-year-old who was also called Maria but went by the name Maij, who convinced Maria to run away with her. The two girls met Joan, a 50-year-old *chego* man, who agreed to help them escape. Maria stole a few items and “slave baubles”<sup>37</sup> from Fredericksz’ house and the trio ran away, heading towards the Kingdom of Porca. What followed was a week-long flight during which the trio hired several boats, walked long distances and stayed at several houses. During their travels Maria sold some of the goods she had stolen to finance their flight, and Joan was bitten on the leg by a dog at one of the houses in which they spent a night. Not far from their destination, near the settlement of Allepee, the three were arrested by two *christen lascorijns*. Their flight had been reported by Cornelisz, and because the runaways were expected to go to the nearby Kingdom of Porca the *pachter* (farmer) of St. Andries, Elias Jansz,<sup>38</sup> was informed, and he had sent the soldiers to look for and intercept the runaways.

The story of the flight indicates that in the company of Joan the runaway slave girls could move around relatively openly. Joan hired boats multiple times, and the trio travelled by road during the day and slept in houses at night, with Joan selling the stolen goods along the way. Although their capture might have been a consequence of their travelling in the open, it is interesting that there are no references to being questioned or stopped by the people they encountered. The trio seem to have been able to pass quite unnoticed, apparently without raising much concern, nor was it considered out of the ordinary. Informal social control, therefore, did not hinder their attempt at escape, perhaps because no one knew them well enough to identify them in the places where they travelled, or perhaps because the 50-year-old *chego* was taken to be the owner of the two younger, enslaved women. Formal control mechanisms did, however, turn out to be effective, in that policing was set in motion following the slaves’ escape—after a week at large, the three were caught when recognized by soldiers who were actively looking for them.

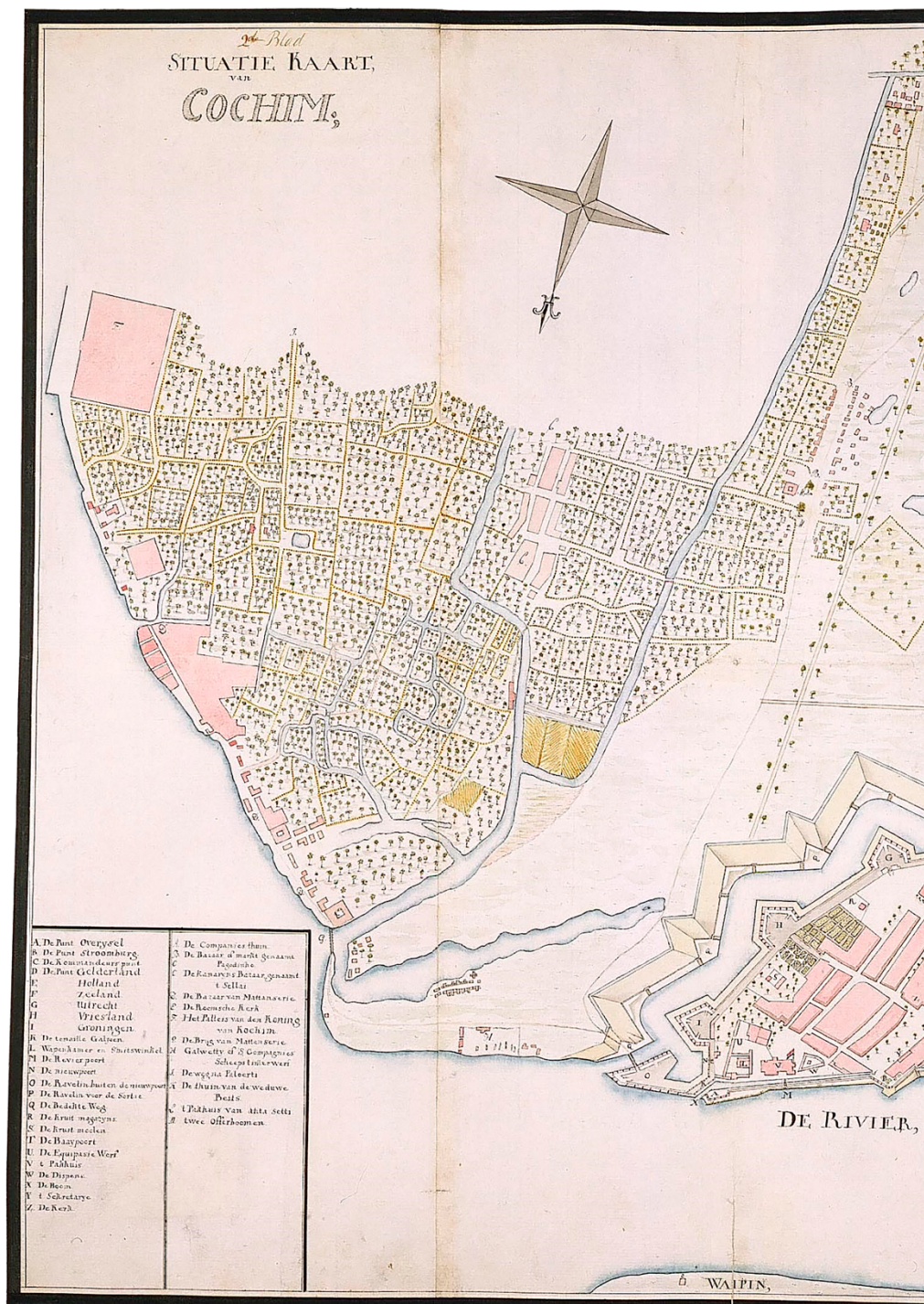




Figure 3.1. This map of Cochin shows the location of the quite large forge (L) and the bay gate through which Filander and Vrijgezel escaped (T). Source: National Archives of the Netherlands, Catalogus Leupe.

## Market transgressions

An interesting example of some of the dynamics of mobility and control can be found in a case dealing with interactions in a marketplace. Sometime in early April 1681, a 14-year-old chego named Anthonij, slave of the *toepas* Emmanuel Pereira, walked through the *Cannarijn* Bazaar just outside the city of Cochin. He was sent there by his master to sell a number of *woronge*.<sup>39</sup> While there, he was approached and greeted by Pedro, who acted as if the two were good friends even though Anthonij had never met him. (Pedro, a Moor, had himself been a slave but had run away several years before.) Pedro asked Anthonij if he wanted to go back to his homeland (Calicoilan), but Anthonij replied that he did not. Pedro persisted, asking him if he wanted to go to Calicot instead. Anthonij was more interested in going there, and he told Pedro that though he was interested he could not go with him just yet.

The two agreed that Pedro would bring his boat to the house of Anthonij's master the following Friday. The week progressed, but on Friday Pedro and his boat were nowhere to be seen. Finally, on Sunday Pedro moored his ship near Pereira's house and Anthonij climbed aboard. Just as Pedro was about to sail away, Anthonij jumped back ashore and told the Moor that he had forgotten some belongings in the house. He went into the house but, much to Pedro's surprise, instead of the boy himself returning, Pereira came running out with weapons drawn, yelling "A thief! A thief!".<sup>40</sup> Two nearby *toepas* men heard Pereira and rushed to help while Pedro tried to sail quickly away, but the three jumped into a nearby boat and caught up with him. Pedro drew his sword and shield but was quickly overwhelmed by his three pursuers. A quick blow hit his shield, another hit him on the arm, and the last blow made him throw his weapon overboard and surrender. This sudden and dramatic turn of events was the result of a special plan that Pereira and Anthonij had concocted. Pereira had told Anthonij sometime before that if anyone ever tried to tempt him to run away, he should agree to go and immediately tell Pereira, in order to capture that person as a slave thief, an offence prosecuted and often severely punished by Company authorities.<sup>41</sup>

Anthonij had a relatively high degree of mobility, in terms of both movement and agency. His owner trusted him to go to the bazaar by himself to engage in economic transactions, possibly in the name of his master. When Pereira planned to capture slave thieves or mediators who tried to help slaves escape, Anthonij was trusted to help carry out such plans.

## Private punishment and the Company

“Is this not all your fault?” These words were uttered by the slave Filander as he plunged his knife into the side of his supervisor, the Christian Diogo Anthonij.<sup>42</sup> Filander had felt betrayed by Anthonij and, in his anger and desperation, decided to attack his supervisor in the smithy where he worked. The events leading up to this 1752 stabbing had started three months earlier, in Cochin. Filander explained in his confession to the secretary of the Court of Justice that he and his fellow slave Vrijgezel had decided to run away together from the smithy. The two slaves were forced to flee together because they were tied together by an iron chain. How exactly their escape unfolded is not entirely clear from Filander’s confession, except that they simply left through the Baaijpoort (bay gate) at around 7 o’clock in the evening. They visited a blacksmith in Paroe (modern day Parur), a town very close to Cranganore (modern day Kodungallur), just north of Cochin. The Malabarian blacksmith there was willing to help release the two slaves from their chains.<sup>43</sup> From Paroe the two slaves made their way to Tallicherij (modern day Thalassery), which lay about 200 kilometres to the north, outside VOC jurisdiction.

Filander and Vrijgezel’s taste of freedom was cut short when their supervisor Anthonij set out to find them. Diogo Anthonij of Illawada had been sent by the boss of the forge, Hans Casper Thiel, to find the two slaves and bring them back. Anthonij, with seemingly little effort, found the men in Tallicherij and tried to convince them to return with him to the forge, promising that they would not be punished. Filander agreed but warned Anthonij that “... he’d better not lie, because if the confessant should be punished, he would find Anthonij and seek revenge”.<sup>44</sup> After three months, however, Filander found out that he was to receive a beating for his escape. True to his word, Filander sought revenge and lured Anthonij out of the forge by telling him that “the boss is calling you”.<sup>45</sup> Filander attacked Anthonij with a knife which he had hidden in his hand. Anthonij fell into a ditch and managed to escape without any serious injuries, after which Filander was arrested and tried by the court. For the attack on his overseer Filander was sentenced to “... be bound to a pole and beaten with a stick, after which he will be chained to serve on the Company’s common works for three years without pay.”<sup>46</sup>

The court case describing the events above mainly focussed on Filander’s stabbing of Anthonij, and most of the information, therefore, concerns that situation. Filander was relatively young—21 years old—and a member of the *chego* caste. The *chegos* were a lower caste and commonly worked as slaves in

VOC-ruled Cochin. From the court records it is clear that Filander was owned by Nicolaas Bowijn, a *koopman* (merchant) and *fiscaal* (fiscal, or public prosecutor), and thus one of the top VOC officials in Cochin. Although Filander was owned by this koopman, he worked in the Company forge, implying that Nicolaas had either rented Filander out to the Company or, more likely, had sent Filander to the smithy as a form of punishment.

Under what conditions were Filander and Vrijgezel slaves? How did these conditions impact on their mobility? From the court case it becomes clear that Filander and Vrijgezel were chained together, yet they were able to simply walk through the Baaijpoort. This begs the question of how mobility was regulated in the forge where they worked. Another court case provides further insight into how the *smitswinkel* (forge) operated and how the mobility of slaves and *kettinggangers* (those chained together in a chain gang) was regulated.

In 1750, the toepas Joseph Queljo of Chakengattij was tried before the Court of Justice. He had been accused of carelessness and dereliction of duty. At 11 o'clock on 19 July 1749, the gatekeeper of the smithy, Domingo, decided to go home for lunch. Joseph Queljo was ordered to take Domingo's place until 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Unfortunately for him, Domingo returned from his long lunch only at around 5 o'clock. After his shift was over, Joseph took it upon himself to count the prisoners and slaves working in the forge. "As usual he counted the slaves and reported to his supervisor Hans Casper Thiel that they had found 63 of them. To which the supervisor answered that there should have been 64."<sup>47</sup> Since the chainganger had been lost during Queljo's shift, he was sent to find the missing person but he was unable to find him. During Queljo's interrogation, he was asked several times if he was sure that he had not let one of the chaingangers through the gate, but he denied having done so. To the question why he had not counted the chaingangers at the start of his shift, he answered: "... I did not think that on exactly this day a chainganger would go missing."<sup>48</sup>

The case against Queljo reveals much about the place and context in which Filander and Vrijgezel were slaves. The forge in Cochin was a relatively large undertaking, and three years before Filander and Vrijgezel's court case took place, there were at least 63 people employed there. It should be noted that two categories of people were working in the smithy—*kettinggangers* and "unchained slaves". *Kettinggangers* were free people or slaves who were convicted of a crime and had been sentenced to work in chains on the VOC's public works projects; the slaves who worked at the forge were leased from

their owners and were not chained. It was unusual for slaves to be chained except at the moment of their capture or during transport.<sup>49</sup> They therefore worked in conditions that were to an extent the same as those of convicts, whether as chained convicts themselves or as workers rented out by their owners. This case can thus reveal as much about the control exerted over the mobility of slaves as about the control of the mobility of convicts.

Filander and Vrijgezel were described in the court case as slaves, but they were also chained together. This indicates that they belonged to the *kettingganger* category. How did they end up in the forge? One obvious answer is that the two slaves had been convicted of crimes, which routinely happened. A slave could, for example, be chained for the crime of trying to injure, defame or insult their owner, or even for walking the streets after sundown.<sup>50</sup> Chaining slaves could also serve as a disciplinary method. Although, formally, the owners of slaves were not allowed to chain or lock up their slaves, they could transfer them to the Company, which was allowed to force slaves to work in chains for its public works.<sup>51</sup> The threat of being given to the Company and forced to work for their *gemeene werken* (public works) could, therefore, be used as a mechanism of control, similar to threats of reselling, export or physical violence. It is likely that this happened to Filander. He was owned by Nicolaas Bowijn, the public prosecutor of Cochin, who could easily have transferred him as a final disciplinary measure, forcing him to work in chains alongside convicts.

The mobility of the workers in the forge was highly restricted. It was surrounded by walls, and those who came in and went out were checked at the gates. Furthermore, the slaves and prisoners were all chained together, obviously greatly hampering their mobility. Queljo's mistake reveals that the prisoners were supposed to be counted at the beginning and end of each day to ensure that all workers were present. Yet, Queljo's case also reveals that workers were allowed to pass through these gates if they were given permission. This could explain how Vrijgezel and Filander were able to leave the smithy. They probably simply received permission. They may have got as far as they did because it was believed that their chains would sufficiently hamper their freedom of movement. Filander and Vrijgezel were, however, able to get rid of their chains and travel a long way north to Tallicherij.

The control of mobility in the smithy, therefore, seems somewhat contradictory at a glance—the mobility of the prisoners working there was heavily impeded by chains, gates and walls, but under specific circumstances they were able to simply walk through the gates. The Company or hired slaves

working in the forge were not chained during their work or at night, but were subject to some of the same measures of control. They had to pass through the gates, and they were counted at the start and end of each day. It can be concluded that the forge was a highly restrictive environment—Filander, Vrijgezel and the escapee in Queljo's case were exceptions to the rule. Only because Filander and Vrijgezel were able to unchain themselves did they manage to get as far as they did (and even then, they were still apprehended). The smithy at Cochin was meant to keep prisoners and slaves in. The fact that so many were in chains while they worked meant that the work environment was tough and that the Company was keen to restrict the workers' mobility. Those people who did escape this specific environment were further restricted by other instruments of control—they were captured and tried by the Company.

The court cases above have shown that the control mechanisms used to curtail the mobility of the kettinggangers in the forge were highly restrictive. To what extent these mechanisms were specifically applied to the unchained slaves working there is unfortunately unclear. The fact that the slaves were not chained implies a higher level of mobility; yet, the case records also show that they were always under threat of being chained, which served as a way to discipline them and remind them of what could happen if they did not obey their masters. Just as the chains were meant to impede Filander and Vrijgezel's mobility, the threat of chains was meant to impede the mobility of the unchained slaves working not only in the forge, but in all of Cochin.

## Conclusion

The material and social conditions in which slaves lived were shaped most importantly by the relations between slave and master, and these, in turn, were highly influenced by trust, skill, and control. Some of the slaves encountered in this study had responsibilities that entailed a degree of mobility, like Maria, who felt compelled to escape as a response to the threat that she might have to leave the household environment that was familiar to her. Comparing the court cases reveals different approaches to exerting control over slaves, and how similar acts could have very different meanings. Some slaves were permitted to walk around, talk to and even trade with people in their masters' absence. Anthonij sold goods to strangers and had been sent to the bazaar unsupervised. In other environments the relative mobility of slaves seems to have been connected to workplace situations and their socially controlled

surroundings (such as Cruz running a tavern and being able to move at least between the tavern and his residence), or to (perceived) relations of belonging, such as in instances where enslaved runaways travelled under the (apparent) supervision of people who were, or appeared to be, free. This comparative study shows how, both in a busy metropole surrounded by intensive agricultural production (Batavia) as well as in a smaller Company settlement in the midst of a highly diverse and politically fragmented environment (Cochin), the interaction of formal and informal systems of control strongly influenced the dynamics of slavery.

Although the lives and work of the slaves who were part of European, Eurasian and Asian households were characterized by specific degrees of mobility, this mobility was not only relative and dependent upon the context (type of work and level of trust), but it was also clearly delineated and ultimately limited. Slaves needed permission from their masters to leave the premises, and they were identifiable and watched in the environments in which they normally operated. Away from this environment, informal control may have dwindled, but formal control became more marked, especially in the form of guards and military patrols. The interaction between the informal and formal is important and should be further explored. The cases presented here seem to indicate that in the absence of informal authorization (written notes provided by the master stating the purpose and destination of slaves, or bystanders who can testify to, or confirm, the legitimacy of the actions or movements of slaves), the apparatus and actors of formal control seem to have operated on the basis of distrust and suspicion, aiming to severely limit the opportunities of enslaved and otherwise bonded people and their mobility outside their informally controlled environments.

A crucial observation with regard to the functioning of informal control and its sometimes “hard” (rather than “mild”) characteristics is the slave masters’ recurring threat to their enslaved that they will send them away, and particularly sell them to (sailors of) ships, implying long-distance transport. This threat of being sold (and especially of being sent far away) functioned as a method of asserting dominance over enslaved women or men through fear. Interactions and behaviours in what appeared sometimes to be a relatively open and “softer” situation must, therefore, have been engrained with, and influenced by, the always-looming limitations and threats of the underlying relations of ownership, hierarchy and control. Recurrent physical punishment and verbal threats were the reason for many of the incidents of everyday resistance and more violent outbursts that we encounter in the court records.

The cases remind us of the complexities of slavery relations. Easy dichotomies of “benign”, “Asian”, “household” or “urban” versus “European”, “Atlantic” or “plantation” slavery, in this respect, are as much as revealing. It is time to move beyond such stereotypes in order to comprehend the dynamics of different kinds of coercive relations in more refined ways. The use of hitherto unexplored records of the Court of Justice of Cochin can provide detailed and new perspectives on the dynamics of slavery. Although these court cases give only fragmented and temporary insights into the world of the enslaved, they contain an untapped wealth of information on a range of different aspects of slavery, enslavement and its contestation.

## Notes

1. NL–HaNa, *Nederlandse bezittingen India: Digitale duplicaten Chennai*, I.II.06.II, inv. no. 440, ff. 1–39. Case ID Database CR-440–6. The Mocquas, Pandijs and Chegos were castes native to the Malabar coast.
2. NL–HaNa, I.II.06.II, 440, f. 20; 37. Original: “dat nu omtrent 2 maanden geleeden hij relatant door zijn senhor hier boven gem: [Pedro] in de schaggerije op Pagodinho is geplaatst geworden, om den drank te verkoopen”; “en des anderen daags smorgens heel vroeg na gewoonte na de schaggerije gegaan zijnde, heeft den deposant de deuren en vensters gesloten, en daar niemand gevonden”.
3. NL–HaNa, I.II.06.II, 440, f. 21. Unfortunately, we cannot read the complete passage due to damage, but the context provides a clear understanding of what Cruz’s statement should say: “[Pedro] gedreijgt heeft [hem aan de] schepelingen te verkoopen [...]”.
4. NL–HaNa, I.II.06.II, 440, f. 37. Extracted from Pedro’s interrogation: “4: Of den deposant daer over dien jongen niet gedreijgt heeft hem per eerste gelegenheid aan de schepelingen te zullen verkoopen; antw: Ja.”
5. NL–HaNa, I.II.06.II, 440, f. 20. Extracted from Cruz’s statement:  
[...] den relatant zeer bedroefd zijnde, en bitter wenende is ondertusschen den gev: in de schaggerije gekomen, hem relatant na doorsaak van zijn droefheid vragende die den relatant aan den gev: g’openbaart hebbende namentlijk dat zijn senhor hem aan de scheepsvrienden wilde verkoopen heeft den gev: hem relatant gevraagd of hij met hem wilde mede gaan, en dat hij hem na zijn land zoude brengen, op welke vraag den relatant hem gev: antwoordende, dat hij zelfs niet wist waar zijn land was, heeft den gev: tegens den relatant gesegt zulk wel te weeten [...].

6. A. Reid and J. Brewster (eds.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983; J.F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981; G.J. Knaap, "Slavery and the Dutch in Southeast Asia," in *Fifty Years Later*, edited by G. Oostindie, 193-206. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995.
7. G. Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, edited by G. Heuman, and T. Burnard, 52-63, 61. New York: Routledge, 2011; P. Boomgaard, "Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600-1910," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 24, no. 2 (2003): 83-96; Reid, *Slavery*, 7-14.
8. Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Slavery in Kerala*, 5. Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1986.
9. As Jones states in relation to slavery in Batavia, "plantations radiated outward from late eighteenth-century Batavia". See: E. Jones, *Wives, Slaves and Concubines. A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia*, 144. Dekalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010.
10. J.J. Ewald, "Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1914," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 69-91; M. Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131-177; I. Chatterjee and R. Eaton (eds.), *Slavery and South Asian History*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2006; A. Stanziani, *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014; R.B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850*. Athens OH: Athens, Ohio University Press 2015; M. van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek. De geschiedenis van slavernij in Azië onder de VOC*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.
11. M. Mann, *Sahibs, Sklaven und Soldaten. Geschichte des Menschenhandels rund um den Indischen Ozean* Darmstad: WBG, 2012. Freely translated from: "dynamischer Bestandteil eines sich permanent verändernden, in globalen Bezügen vernetzenden und zunehmend kapitalistisch ausgerichteten Wirtschaftsystems".
12. R.B. Allen, "Satisfying the Want for Labouring People: European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 1 (2010): 45-73; L. Mbeki and M. van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study Into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 95-116.

13. H. Hägerdal, *Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea. Conflict and Adaptation in Early Colonial Timor, 1600–1800* Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012.
14. Stanziani, *Bondage*.
15. For this point see Matthias van Rossum, “Connecting Global Slavery and Local Bondage—Rethinking Slavery in Early Modern Asia,” Opening Lecture, “Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds (16th to 19th Century): New Research, Results and Comparisons” (*International Institute of Social History*, Amsterdam, 9–10 November 2016); and Extended Paper for the International Workshop, “Enslavement in the Indian Ocean World” (Linnaeus University, Kalmar, 8–9 September 2017), submitted “Global Slavery, Local Bondage? Rethinking Slavery as (Im)Mobilizing Regimes from the Case of the Dutch Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds”, *Journal of World History* (accepted, forthcoming 2020).
16. Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty and Matthias van Rossum, *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism 1600–1850*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2019; M. van Rossum and Jeannette Kamp, *Desertion in the Early Modern World: A Comparative History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016; M. van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld. Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600–1800*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2014.
17. Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, Merve Tosun, Mike de Windt and Matthias van Rossum, “On the Run: Runaway Slaves and Their Social Networks in Eighteenth Century Cochin,” *Journal of Social History* (forthcoming 2020); Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*.
18. As explored in the Resilient Diversity project.
19. A. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009; C. Anderson, *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. For VOC sources see Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld*, 16–19.
20. This research is related to the following projects: Matthias van Rossum, *Between Local Debts and Global Markets: Explaining Slavery in South and South-east Asia, 1600–1800*, International Institute of Social History, NWO Veni Grant, 2016–2019; and Cátia Antunes, Ulbe Bosma, Karwan Fatah-Black and Matthias van Rossum, *Resilient Diversity: The Governance of Racial and Religious Plurality in the Dutch Empire, 1600–1800*, Leiden University and International Institute of Social History, NWO Vrije Competitie Grant, 2017–2022.
21. Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld*, 16–35.

22. The database created by Matthias van Rossum, Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout and Merve Tosun, *VOC Court Records Cochin, 1681–1792*. Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 2018, is part of van Rossum's *Between Local Debts* project, and will be made publicly available at its conclusion. Building on the indexing in Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld* for Batavia and the Cochin database, in 2017 we expanded this work and started indexing the court records created and located in other former VOC settlements, extending from Batavia to Elmina and Paramaribo. This indexing mission is part of the *Resilient Diversity* project by Antunes, Bosma, Fatah-Black and Van Rossum.
23. See the different contributions to the "Amok in Batavia. Over Amok in Nederlands-Indische rechtszaken" special issue, *Acta Historica* 3, no. 4 (2014). Also, see Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke Tragiek*.
24. Remco Raben, *Batavia and Colombo. The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities 1600–1800* (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1996): 10–20.
25. Remco Raben, "Round About Batavia. Ethnicity and Authority in the Ommelanden, 1650–1800," in *Jakarta-Batavia. Socio-Cultural Essays. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 187, edited by Kees Grijs and Peter J.M. Nas, 95. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000.
26. Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*, 22, 27.
27. *Ibid.*, 49–60.
28. Remco Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, 213; D.F. Lach and E.J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance, Book 3 Southeast Asia*, 1316. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
29. Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*, 67–68.
30. Jones, *Wives, Slaves and Concubines*, 104–25.
31. J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, VII, 5. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1885–1900.
32. NL-HaNa, 1.II.06.II, 440, f. 20; 32. Original: "dat nu omtrent 2 maanden geleeden hij relatant door zijn senhor hier boven gem: [Pedro] in de schaggerije op Pagodinho is geplaatst geworden, om den drank te verkoopen"; "en des anderen daags smorgens heel vroeg na gewoonte na de schaggerije gegaan zijnde, heeft den deposant de deuren en vensters gesloten, en daar niemand gevonden".
33. NL-HaNa, 1.II.06.II, 440, ff. 31–32. Extracted from Pedro's statement:  
 [...] dat nu omtrent 4 maanden geleeden den gev: in dezen bij hem deposant op voorsch: Pagodinho in de schaggerije, alwaar des deposants slave jongen mede was, gekomen is, en een soopje tager g'eischt hebbende, met gem: lijfeigen van den deposant is gaan zitten praten, 't gunt

den deposant merkende, vroeg aan zijn slaav, vermits het reets laat was, of hij nog niet na huis wilde gaan, waarop gem: jongen den deposant antwoordende: wie zal u hier dan geselschap [houden] [...] daarmede den deposant uit de schaggerije des avonds om 9 uren na zijn woom gegaan is, latende den gev: en voorm: zijn jongen daar ter plaatse.

34. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 32.
35. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 33. Extracted from Pedro's statement: "[...] deposerende wijders dat voortsch: zijn deposants jongen in't lan van Trevancoor door eenige bekenden van hem deposant ontwaart geworden zijnde, deselve gem: slave jongen geraaden hebben weder na zijn senhor te gaan [...]".
36. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 18. Case ID CR-77-I. "...slavinne Maria (alias Maij) hem confessant heft versogt haer te willen vervoeren, en elders near toe te brengen, also men haer gedreijgt hadde aanboort te verkoopen...".
37. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 2. Case ID CR-77-I. Original: "...te begeven naer 't land van den koning van Porca. Alvorens denselven, uijt zijne woninge, beroovende van het volgende, naementlijk: 1: bijl, zonder steel. 3: copere beckens. Paerthij grove tafel-piringen, en eenige slaven plunderagie."
38. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 2. Case ID CR-77-I. Original: "... door de uitgesondene van gem: Elias Jansz: omtrent Allepee ontmoet en opgevat".
39. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 75. Case ID CR-66-II. Original: "...door sijn monsieur voormelt na de baser Cannarijn bujten dese stadt is gesonden met eenige woronge, om deselve aldaer te verkopen." Possibly market stalls, derived from barung or warong. See "VOC Glossarium", <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl>.
40. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 67. Case ID CR-66-II. Original: "Een dief, een dief!"
41. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 75. Case ID CR-66-II. Original: "Sijn monsieur geseijt had wanneer hem ijmant wilde verleijden dat hij deertoe soude consenteren, en sulx bekend maecke om den dieff te vatte."
42. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.169. Original: "Is dat niet allemaal jou schuld?"
43. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.172.
44. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.171. Original: "[...] Dat hij hem met gene leugens voorkomen soude, want als hij confesst: straffe soude moeten ondergaen, wilde hij sulx aan hem Anthonij de ene of andere tijd soeken te wreeken."
45. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.169. Original: "Den baas roept jou."
46. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538 f. 179. Original: "[...] Aan een paal gebonden met rottings geslagen sijnde voor den tijd van drie achter een volgende jaren in

de ketting gebonden te werden omme geduurende die tijd aan compagnies gemeens werken voor de kost te arbeiden sonder loon.”

47. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 485 f. 185. Original: “Als wanneer naar gewoonte de slaven en ketting gevangenen gestelt en 63: stux bevonden hebbende, hij sulx aan voorsz: Hans Thiel gerapporteert heeft, waarop denselven te antw: gevende dat er dat er 64: diende te zijn.”
48. NL-HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 485, f. 194. Original: “[...] ik heb niet gedacht dat juist op dien dag een ketting ganger soude absent bevonden werden.”
49. NL-HaNa, 1.04.02, 9408 f. 24. This court case from 1744 concerning the slave revolt on the ship *Delfland* reveals that, except in the case of punishment for a crime, no person was meant to be chained.
50. J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlands Indisch Plakaatboek 1602–1811*, VI, 282–289. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1889.
51. Matthias van Rossum, “The Dutch East India Company in Asia, 1595–1811,” in *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, edited by Clare Anderson, 157–183. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

