

The
colonial
and
slavery
past
of
Nijmegen

A historiographical
exploratory booklet

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This historiographical exploratory booklet
accompanies the manifesto presented to the
Nijmegen city council.

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Introduction

The colonial world system, the colonial past of our country, and to an increased extent the colonial past of specific regions, cities and institutions, have been receiving a great deal of public attention for some years now. In Nijmegen, a great deal of importance is attached to this part of history as well. This became apparent when we visited organisations and people who are connected to this past and often still bear the traces of it.

This exploratory booklet is by no means complete, but it does make clear that Nijmegen, like many other cities, is inextricably linked to its colonial past. This exploratory booklet is specifically intended as an impetus for further research. As such, it is inextricably linked to the manifesto presented to the Nijmegen city council on February 1, 2023, which calls for acknowledgement, recognition and exploration of Nijmegen's colonial and slavery past.

1 Colonial history: a long-concealed story

Dutch colonial history began around the year 1600 - when the United East India Company (VOC, 1602) and the West India Company (WIC, 1621) established trading posts and colonies all over the world. This often went hand in hand with threats and violence; moreover, Dutch colonists often forced Asian and African people into slavery. In addition, indigenous people were robbed of their land, treated violently and also enslaved.

The colonies of the Netherlands became independent over time. The majority were taken over by the British earlier after the wars and negotiations. Consequently, the Dutch East Indies, Suriname and the six islands formerly referred to as the Netherlands Antilles in the nineteenth century remained. After a four year colonial war, the Netherlands acknowledged Indonesia's independence in 1949, ceded New Guinea in 1962 and ended Dutch authority over Suriname in 1975. Despite the Hague's insistence, the Netherlands Antilles chose to remain connected to the Kingdom of the Netherlands to this day - each island in its own way.¹

After the independence of the former colonies, large groups of migrants moved to the Netherlands. The number of these migrants who came from the Dutch East Indies, Suriname or the former Antilles and their descendants today makes up 10% of the Dutch population.² With their arrival, colonial history literally came back to the Netherlands.

However, before these groups could tell their story here, some things had to change. It is true that, many Dutch people knew the story of colonialism as one of adventure and enterprise, of an ethical mission. The decolonization of the Dutch East Indies felt like a 'loss'; as recently as 2006, Prime Minister Jan-Peter Balkenende spoke highly of the 'VOC mentality'. The grief, violence and oppression that were caused by this mentality were

long-concealed. For a long time, criticism of the adventurous, the proud narratives were lacking.

However, today there is room for criticism. One reason for this is decolonisation and the associated postcolonial migrations. Increasingly, colonialism was no longer taken for granted. Dutch people with a past in the colonies played a prominent role in demonstrating the racist, violent nature of colonialism. This acknowledgement is permeating public debate, and thus recognition of colonialism as a "dark side" or "black page" in history is beginning to grow.³

It is important to emphasize that not all Dutch people with a colonial background think alike about colonial history and its contemporary significance. Each individual relates to it differently, but similarities have been found on a collective level. Many migrants from the former Dutch East Indies were connected to the colonial regime prior to coming to the Netherlands. After they became independent to the Netherlands to secure their own lives, at first thinking that it was temporary, but a return often proved impossible. Therefore, when Indonesia became independent, they lost a homeland. In Indonesia they were no longer welcome. In the Netherlands this pain was ignored and a cold reception awaited them. Therefore, the central commitment of Dutch Indonesians is therefore often the recognition of this history and the pain caused by the Dutch attitude. For Surinamese and Caribbean Dutch the emphasis lies often on the grief, anger and shame that slavery and racism led to and harmed their ancestors. This pain and racism can also be felt in the current generation.

Note that these characterizations still do not do justice to the diversity of groups, experiences and emotions associated with our country's colonial history.

2 Recent research on local legacies of colonialism

Consequently, research on colonial history is increasingly concerned with the question of how colonialism not only had an effect on colonized territories, but also has had an effect on in the Netherlands to this day.¹ This trend is visible in academia, but is certainly evidenced by the many initiatives that are taken to conduct research on their own colonial past.

The first publication aimed at demonstrating that we often still come into contact with colonial history in our daily lives appeared in 2007, with the publication of the book 'Op zoek naar de stilte' ('Searching for silence'). Traces of the slavery past in the Netherlands. Since then, several walking guides have been published for cities such as Amsterdam, Groningen, Haarlem, Leiden and Utrecht, a lot of these publications were included once again in the 'Gids slavernijverleden Nederland' ('Guide slavery history Netherlands'). Several cities have already released publications or museum exhibits. At a national level, for example the government, commissioned research on extreme violence in the Dutch East Indies.² At a municipal level, for example, Amsterdam, Rotterdam,³ Utrecht,⁴ The Hague and Middelburg have researched their own colonial past.⁵ At an institutional level, De Nederlandsche Bank has commissioned research into the question why its own institution is intertwined with slavery.⁶ In addition to these completed initiatives, numerous new studies have recently been launched on the same theme. In early December 2022, the Dutch Royal House announced that it would commission an investigation into its own role in the colonial past,⁷ Province of Overijssel is conducting a slavery study,⁸ and the WUR is currently investigating how the university was involved in the colonies.⁹ The municipalities of Groningen, Deventer, Eindhoven, Tilburg, Gouda, Delft, Haarlem, Zaandam and Hoorn have begun or announced an investigation into their slavery past, and numerous other municipalities are conducting other types of initiatives.¹⁰

Some of the knowledge generated from these initiatives has already developed into public outcomes. For example, in February 2022, Rutte offered his "deep apology" for the colonial war of independence, Amsterdam and Rotterdam and the province of North Holland have apologized for slavery, and 2023 has been designated as a commemorative

year for slavery.¹¹ Very recently, in early November 2022, it was therefore decided that the Dutch government would apologize for our Dutch slavery past even prior to this commemorative year.¹²

To the surprise of many, these apologies were offered very soon after the announcement: on December 19, 2022, Rutte expressed his apologies for our Dutch role in the slavery past, and several Cabinet delegates did so in Suriname, Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. While many of those involved are pleased with the gesture, it is also primarily seen as a first step. Suriname and St. Maarten do not accept the apology (yet). Those involved express unanimously that there is now a need for steps to put the apologies into practice.

In short: many researches have been completed, more have begun. At various regional levels, as well as at a national level, acknowledgement has been expressed for the harmful effects that the Netherlands' colonial and slavery past has brought about. This is why, in 2023, the colonial and slavery past is high on the political agenda.

3 Trends within (historical) research on local colonial history, and similarities found in Nijmegen

But what do the regional narratives of slavery and colonialism described above tell us? How can this global history in Dutch, local spaces manifest? Again, this is where each experience is unique. The history of Amsterdam, as a city with VOC headquarters, cannot be lumped together with the history of Overijssel or that of De Nederlandsche Bank. Yet the results from research contain recurring elements. Below you will find an analysis of ways in which cities, governments and institutions could be connected to colonialism. In each case the story of Nijmegen is also discussed.

3.1 A Dutch city active in the colonies: financial gain and administrative connections

When mayor Femke Halsema apologised for Amsterdam's role in the slavery past, she expressed that she was dealing with "a legacy of predecessors in office",¹ who were administratively connected to the colonies. For centuries, it was a common step in Dutch civil service careers to hold an official position in the colonies for a period of time. This also goes for Halsema's predecessors - who prior to their work in Amsterdam were still governor of a department in the Dutch East Indies. Several Dutch cities were financially linked to the colonies, as well as administratively. Superficially it seems clear that in cities like Amsterdam and Middelburg - that were linked to the VOC and WIC - a lot of money was made by activities in shipping, trade, slave trading and the plantation economy. These cities were run by people who were active in the colonies and made big money from the colonial activities initiated from their Dutch city.

Yet this was also the case on the eastern side of the country. The research project 'Traces of Slavery History in Gelderland' has already shown that several Nijmegen citizens, including a municipal official, earned money in and from the colonies.

Wilhelm Triebels: deputy mayor who had shares in plantations

The most famous person was Wilhelm Triebels, Nijmegen merchant who later became deputy mayor. Triebels was married to Anna Maria Bedloo. Together they lived in Huize Oraniënstein in Hees. The Bedloo family descended from Willem Bedloo, regent in Suriname in the 17th century, who led violent expeditions against fugitive enslaved people. In addition, the Bedloo family owned a plantation, d'Alyda plantation. This plantation was known as wretched. The owners were violent and slaves fled frequently.

After the abolition of slavery in 1863, former plantation owners received 'monetary compensation'.² Based on the idea that the owners lost their 'property', they received a sum of money per enslaved person. Plantation d'Alyda employed 75 enslaved people. For the owners, this meant a sum of 25,000 guilders converted. This amount did not go directly to Triebels, but to his mother-in-law. Even after the abolition of slavery, the Bedloo family remained colonially active. Under the name 'Gebroeders Triebels', Triebels and Bedloo's sons founded a 'trade in colonial goods' that remained active in Nijmegen for many years.

Other 'compensated people'

There are more Nijmegen citizens who made large sums of money after the abolition of slavery. For example, Maria Anna Pringle, who lived in Beek near Nijmegen. With a 5/21 share in several plantations, she received government compensation of 211,000 euros.³ Carel Hendrik Phaff, the owner of the Berg en Dal hotel, received a compensation for his 'loss of possession' of 23,700 guilders from his shares in plantation Zorgvliet.⁴ Charles Guillaume van Sandick had lived at Stockumstraat C379 in Nijmegen since 1849, having been active in the colonial administration for many years. Van Sandick received compensation from the Roozenburg plantation, Mon Bijou and 't Eylant.

Nijmegen companies in colonies

Money was also made in the colonies in other ways, as several Nijmegen individuals founded companies or subsidiaries in colonies. The soap factory Dobbelman, for example, obtained palm oil from the Dutch East Indies. The owners of the Nijmegen Paper Factory Gelderland, for instance, founded a second branch in Padalarang, near Bandung, in 1921.⁵ By owning this factory, they did not only hope to reach a larger sales area and mine local raw materials, but also to make use of cheap labour from the local population. These Nijmegen people remained active until 1958, after World War II and the Indonesian Independence.

3.2 A Dutch city active in the colonies: war and violence

Plantation owners and colonial company executives became rich because of their colonial possessions. This wealth went hand in hand with by exploitation and violence. However, violence also occurred in other ways. In fact, the colonial regime was one of systematic and extreme violence. In the publication "Colonial wars in Indonesia", Piet Hagen mapped how many wars took place in this former colony, between 1500 and 1975. To do so, he needed 15 pages of overview maps.¹ The Dutch presence in contemporary Indonesia, Hagen argues, was a succession of conflicts over power, exploitation, emancipation and the violent maintenance of economic gain.

Barracks with 'colonials'

Nijmegen is also explicitly connected with this piece of history. Indeed, from 1891 until the Indonesian independence, all colonial reserves - soldiers who were to fight for the Royal Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL) were trained in Nijmegen. These soldiers were popularly called colonials. From 1891 to 1911, two barracks were located in the city centre: the Waal Barracks and the Valkhof Barracks.

In 1911, a large barracks was opened outside the city: the Prince Hendrikkazerne on the Groesbeekseweg. These barracks were large and modern for those days. For instance, the barracks had electric lighting, central heating and, according to journalists, the toilets were "almost perfect and among the best equipped in Europe."² The presence of these barracks even contributed to the fact that the Four Days Marches were organized in Nijmegen.³

From the Prince Hendrikkazerne, thousands of colonials left for the East Indies every year. The presence of the barracks left a mark on Nijmegen. Colonials received months of military training in Nijmegen:

they did field marches, practised gymnastics and received lessons in fencing. They were also prepared for life in the Dutch East Indies: in Nijmegen they learned Malay, ate Indian meals twice a week. Nijmegen residents who lived near the barracks reported that they were able to smell the fried rice when the soldiers ate it.⁴

After having served six years, colonials were allowed leave. They often then returned to Nijmegen with Indian women and children, on leave or permanent residence.

Louis Beel, evil genius in the decolonisation struggle

The last colonial battle fought by the KNIL was the violent war of independence (1945-1949) and Nijmegen is also linked to this war in another way. Indeed, Louis Beel, the namesake of the chic Beel Room in Huize Heyendaal of the Radboud University, was ultimately responsible for this colonial violence. Beel was the former prime minister of the Netherlands (1946-1948, 1958-1959) and a professor at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (1949-1951). After his first term the prime minister, Beel was appointed as a Representative of the Crown in the Dutch East Indies. In this capacity, he was ultimately responsible for the extreme violence in the Dutch East Indies during the War of Independence, then called Second Police Action (Operation Crow).

About his performance in the War of Independence it can be said that Beel wanted to go one step further than the government in The Hague: where The Hague strived at getting rid of the rebellious republican Sukarno off the scene and create a moderate type of government, Beel had no intentions whatsoever to allow an Indonesian Republic. The author of the book "Revolusi," David van Reybrouck, therefore describes Beel as an "evil genius in the decolonisation struggle."⁵ However, after Indonesia became independent, Beel was appointed a teacher at KUN, where he was later immortalised by having a posh hall named after him. The Radboud University has indicated it will take a decision on a possible revision of this naming scheme by the end of 2022.

3.3 Domestic colonialism: encounters with colonial heritage on the streets

It has been repeatedly shown that a large part of Dutch real estate was built with colonial money. Sometimes this remains implicit, sometimes it is explicit. Façade stones of former plantation owners in Amsterdam contain elements referring to sugar, coffee, tobacco from plantations or even stereotypical depictions of enslaved people.¹ This means that wealth in contemporary society is literally made up of building blocks of violence, inequality, and abuse of power.

Nineteenth-century colonial buildings: Bandung on the Waal

Many Nijmegen properties also have a history that is traceable to colonial society. These Nijmegen properties tell us a story of retired colonials, a city government that wanted "status", and former soldiers.²

It is not uncommon for city governments to try and get former colonials to settle in their cities. By housing retired colonials, city councils hoped to give their city prestige. After all, they brought in money, had fancy houses built, and gave prestige to a city. The villages around Nijmegen also became popular destinations. In Hees, Neerbosch, Hatert, but certainly also in the hills of Beek and Ubbergen, colonials settled in chic country houses. Villan names like "Kemedjing," "Salatiga," and "Insulinde" are a reminder to us. This trend started in the seventeenth century, but especially in the late nineteenth century the settlement of former colonials increased.

During the same period, Nijmegen lost its status as a fortified city, fortifications were demolished and Nijmegen residents were allowed to build outside the former fortress walls. The municipality seized this opportunity: it wanted to transform itself into an attractive residential city for rich people.

And ex-Indies were a target group they clearly envisioned in doing so. The municipality put spacious plots for sale, hoping that former Indies would buy them and have villas built on them. And that is what happened. Examples include the Hüffer-Wilde family, who used money from their plantation on Hunnerberg to build Villa Salatiga, and the J. Boele family, who had Huize Padang (Padang House) built on the Groesbeekseweg. Later, the municipality also sold contiguous buildings, with luxurious rows of mansions. In the early twentieth century, this even brought the nickname "Bandung aan de Waal" (Bandung at the river Waal) into circulation.

In addition, the presence of the aforementioned Prins Hendrikkazerne (Prince Hendrik Barracks) left its mark on Nijmegen's colonial character. Several former KNIL soldiers decided to return to Nijmegen after their service. The wealthy among them settled in the ring of houses built after the expansion of the city, for instance on the Groesbeekseweg or the Oranjesingel. The barracks, and these houses, still exist today.³

Insulinde House

However, there were also KNIL soldiers who did not fare as well after their service. As they only had small pensions and after they became unmarried and disabled in the East Indies, it was not uncommon in the early 20th century for servicemen to get drunk, or become beggars. Unmarried and disabled pensioners could get help from Bronbeek in Arnhem, that already existed. But this was not enough. KNIL lieutenant and teetotaler Arie van Boxtel, who lived in Nijmegen, was concerned about the fate of former KNIL soldiers. This is why he founded a home for former soldiers in Nijmegen: Huize Insulinde (Insulinde House). Huize Insulinde ran on donations. Hundreds of former soldiers lived there, temporarily or otherwise, after their service.⁴

Housing for KNIL soldiers after the war

After the War of Independence and the independence of the then-proclaimed Republic of Indonesia, 80,000 civil servants, teachers and KNIL soldiers suddenly had to leave Indonesia. Among them were 12,500 KNIL soldiers of Moluccan descent, who, after fighting for the

Netherlands, could not return to the Moluccas. So suddenly there were thousands of people jostling for a place, and Huize Insulinde alone did not offer enough shelter.⁵

Nijmegen found emergency accommodation: the city provided a former reconstruction camp, located on the Ten Hoetstraat in the Hunnerberg district. The conditions were not ideal here: the facilities were often primitive and there was little privacy.

The Pelita Foundation also helped from 1947 onwards. They built Pelita houses, brick terraced houses with Pelita front bricks. In Nijmegen, two rows of Pelita houses were built on the Abeelstraat. To decide who were entitled to these houses, pre-war income was taken into account. Especially widows moved in, the remaining people had to wait.⁶

It was not until 1950 that the Repatriated Housing Act forced municipalities to reserve part of the housing stock for former military personnel. This meant that in Nijmegen 42 terraced houses were added in the Angerensteinstraat and the Gerensteinstraat in Hatert. These terraced houses in Hatert are situated in one of the last places in Nijmegen where the traces of the history of Moluccan migrants are tangible. These migrants are happy that the municipality has agreed to let them stay here.

"The parental home is more than bricks for us; your family and everything you got from your parents is in that house. We feel connected to it. If we would lose our house, we would lose a piece of ourselves. Our family bond is sacred. Many children continue to live in the neighbourhood, because it is part of their shared history."⁷

Unfortunately, other than these terraced houses in Hatert, many other traces have been lost. Buildings were demolished or were used for a new purpose. Post-war progressive thinking and increasing shame about colonialism means that this history is no longer visible in many places. The relief camps or Huize Insulinde are no longer visible. The barracks are still there and now serve as restaurants, schools and asylum seekers' centres. The villas and mansions on the Berg en Dalseweg, the Oranjesingel, the Groesbeekseweg and the Abeelstraat are also important traces of Nijmegen's colonial history.⁸

3.4 Domestic colonialism: colonial objects in Dutch museum collections

This is why tangible remains can be found in the streets, but also in collections of (cultural) institutions. Indeed, city councils facilitated the shipping of art and other valuable objects from the colonies to the Netherlands. Exhibiting colonial objects was partly educational: it served to teach Dutch people about what was happening in the colonies. The educational stories told through colonial museum objects often conveyed stereotypes, depicted Europeans as rulers and conveyed people and customs from "their" colonies as exotic and subordinate.

Besides demonstrating that seemingly neutral and educational institutions such as museums contribute to the creation and perpetuation of (imaginary) world rulers, historians have also shown that at the time of collection, the obtained collections were not ethically amassed. Often objects were stolen, taken as spoils of war. Where previously these objects played a cultural role, they were now put down as objects in a museum.

An increasing number of initiatives are taken place to examine, review, possibly return or at least critically approach these collections. For example, the Amserdam Historisch Museum (Amsterdam History Museum) and the Tropen Museum (Tropics Museum) are actively charting the colonial legacy of their museum collections. But Nijmegen cultural institutions also house many colonial objects with a complex history. The vast majority can be found in the Afrika Museum (Africa Museum), and one famous and controversial object can be found in Museum het Valkhof (Valkhof Museum).

The Afrika Museum

The Afrika Museum was founded in 1954 by Piet Bukkems, a retired missionary from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. This international Catholic congregation mainly stationed missionaries in African countries.

In the nineteenth century, their main aim was, in their eyes "unbelievers," to convert, but, as the Afrika Museum writes on their own website, from the twentieth century onwards they increasingly engaged in researching African culture. Missionaries of this congregation set out to collect African religious objects and educate people in their homeland about African culture.¹

Piet Bukkems also aimed at "informing interested people about the importance of the mission in Africa which might result in possible donations" at "introducing the Dutch public to the experience of the African continent."² That even in the second half of the 20th century, the museum still has an obvious connection to colonial depictions and stereotypes, as evidenced by exhibitions with themes such as "the foreign man and his religion".³ It was not until the 1990s that the Fathers set an innovative course, in which they also included contemporary art and the African perspective on history in their collection.⁴

Currently, the Afrika Museum, as well as the other museums in the National Museum of World Cultures, is conducting a study of their own collection, that is intended to determine which cultural objects should be returned.⁵ As recently as September 2020, the Afrika Museum was shaken up when five French-speaking activists attempted to steal a statuette from the Museum's collection and shared this in a vlog on YouTube.⁶ In the same video, they indicated that it was not just this statuette, but about 500,000 objects in total that were stolen. Although it is unknown whether this number is correct, the museum director indicated that he is aware of the presence of looted art in the museum. However, the museum's website still states that the collection dates back to mission times and that missionaries "wanted to research local culture".⁷ The question is: how neutral was that research. How cooperative were the local people when they were asked to cooperate with this research? How did they end up taking the objects? What should be done with these collections? These are questions that have not yet been (publicly) answered.

Museum Het Valkhof and its diorama

Museum Het Valkhof (the Valkhof Museum) also has an important colonial object in its collection: the diorama of Plantage Kerkshoven. This diorama, or viewing box, was manufactured in 1823 with the aim of teaching Dutch people about life on a coffee plantation. It showed many details, but omitted the atrocities of slavery. It is an important historical object - because, above all, it offers insight into the image the Dutch wanted to convey about themselves to their contemporaries.

The artwork ended up in Nijmegen nearly a century after it was made - in 1914 - after a descendant of the commissioner donated it to Nijmegen. Between 1979 and 2005, the diorama was on display in the Nijmeegs Volkenkundig Museum (Nijmegen Ethnological Museum), on the grounds of the Radboud University. Since then, it has been in the museum depot of Museum Het Valkhof.⁸

Since 2020, Marsha Mormon and Bas Spek have been trying to take the diorama to Suriname. Marsha is a descendant of one of the enslaved people who lived on the Kerkshoven plantation. Together with Bas Spek, she bought the land of this former plantation where+ they founded a museum where they showcased the atrocities of slavery and the plantation economy. In this museum, they also want to include the diorama - as the diorama depicts this same historical site.⁹

However, the management of Museum Het Valkhof believes that the diorama belongs to Nijmegen, because it depicts a "piece of shared, dark, history, which needs to be told in the Netherlands as well as in Suriname," and because it was "legitimately obtained" and not looted art.¹⁰

This discussion is still ongoing. In 2023, Museum Het Valkhof will hire a collection manager to research the object.

3.5 Domestic colonialism: enslaved people and colonial children in the Netherlands

Apart from the fact that there were former soldiers and stolen objects in the Netherlands, it was also not unusual for people from the colonies to come to the Netherlands. Several former plantation owners who had become accustomed to life in colonies returned to the Netherlands and took enslaved people with them. It was not unusual for wealthy Dutch families to have a slave in their household.

Several enslaved people also lived in Nijmegen. For example, the formerly enslaved Surinamese Clazina. She lived in Nijmegen between 1832 and 1834. Although she was released from slavery in 1832, Clazina moved from Suriname to Nijmegen with her former "owner's" family Pichot. Eventually, Clazina decided to return to Suriname herself.¹

There is also the story of Congolese Johanna and Alina Klein, who had come to Nijmegen from Congo. Johanna and Alina were the daughters of Gerhardus Jelles Klein from Groningen who worked as a factory worker in Congo (today's Democratic Republic of Congo) for many years.

Johanna and Alina's mother was a Congolese woman, whose name is unknown. When Gerhardus returned from Congo, Johanna and Alina were four and seven years old. Their mother did not come with them. Later Gerhardus died and the girls were taken to Neerbosch orphanage at the age of eight and 11, where they were prepared for an existence as servants.²

Research has shown that it was common practice in the colonies for Dutch fathers to have children with local mothers and then take those children from the mothers to "re-educate" them according to Dutch standards. However, to research the question of into what happened to Johanna and Alina's mother has not been completed yet.³

Conclusion and exhortation

There is a widely shared desire to conduct research on our colonial past. Initiatives from other cities show that local stories can offer insights into the complex connection of the local present with our colonial past. Cities were administratively and financially linked to the colonies and cities were involved in colonial violence. The influence of the colonies was also felt in the Netherlands: not only did enslaved or stolen objects end up here, money from the colonies was invested in real estate as well and is often still in existence. Moreover, diasporas ended up in Dutch cities, whose descendants still live there today. Consequently, they experience the legacy of the colonial past on a daily basis through their position in society, intergenerational traumas and stories.

A great many similar links also exist in Nijmegen. This has been demonstrated in the exploratory study 'Sporen van Slavernij' (Traces of Slavery) by Erfgoed Gelderland, and in other initiatives, such as this exploration. Barbara Esseboom and Else Gootjes, the initiators of the 'Sporen van het Slavernijverleden in Gelderland' (Traces of Slavery History in Gelderland) project, indicate at the same time that the traces they have found only cover part of all the traces present. More in-depth research promises to bring a lot of new knowledge to the surface.

Nijmegen can also conduct further research into its colonial and slavery past. The most important research question is: What has the colonial past meant for our city and what does it mean today?

To answer this question, dialogues with stakeholders and interested parties could include questions such as: how can our colonial past be researched? Which stories have been collected, and which ones are still missing? What terminology do we use? What role can our municipality play in this research? What role can the municipality play for heirs to this past? What can be created to generate additional attention?

There are many interesting and relevant substantive research questions to ask that contribute to this main question. For example: What was the role of mission in Nijmegen - can the church reform initiatives in the colonies

and does their communication about this matter to Nijmegen citizens teach us something about Nijmegen's colonial involvement? Were there also anti-colonial sentiments in Nijmegen - after all, at the time of slavery there were abolitionists active and after slavery there were also groups working against colonialism. Was there an anti-colonial sound in Nijmegen? The Nijmegen University educated generations of committed students - how did they relate to colonialism? How did the university deal with students from the former colonies? And which Nijmegen companies focused on the colonial sales market? Which sentiments about this past live among heirs of this past, how can justice be done? These questions are taken from a long list of questions that can be asked; examples of a past that needs to be explored and a group that needs to be acknowledged.

Final plea: the power of knowledge

The researchers of the project 'Sporen van het Slavernijverleden in Gelderland' (Traces of Slavery History in Gelderland), Barbara Esseboom and Else Gootjes inform us that the research into Gelderland's slavery past has "given wings to the communities involved." This research makes visible what people have known and felt for a long time, the results give people strength. A story about a black woman who came to Arnhem as an enslaved person made people from Arnhem with a Surinamese backgrounds feel that people with whom they can identify also lived in Arnhem. It highlights the city's intercultural historical imprint.

Knowledge from historical research has already led to greater acknowledgement and understanding in various fields. It points out the fact that the colonial past is a past shared by us all. This knowledge increases many people's sense of being heard and acknowledged increasingly, and serves as tangible evidence of their identity and interconnectedness with the local community.

Stories of local connections to the colonial world system are painful, but highlight the shared elements of our history. They belong to us all, and sees to it that we all live in a society that is the way it is.

Resources

1 Colonial history: a long concealed story

- 1 Gert Oostindie ed., *Het koloniale verleden van Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: Boom uitgevers), 10-11..
- 2 Oostindie, 11.
- 3 Oostindie, 12.

2 Recent research on local legacies of colonialism

- 1 Oostindie, 10-12,
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3.1 A Dutch city active in the colonies: financial gain and administrative connections

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- 3 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen: The Four Days Marches were run alternatively in different cities until 1912. At the time, distance marches were still a predominantly military phenomenon. When Nijmegen organised the Four Days Marches in 1912, the walkers stayed at the Prins Hendrikkazerne. This modern complex was well liked, and Nijmegen (and the barracks) remained the central point of the distance marches for a long time.
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3.3 Domestic colonialism: encounters with colonial heritage on the streets

- 1 Couzy.
- 2 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
- 3 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
- 4 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
- 5 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
- 6 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
- 7 Gootjes, Hooghoff, De Jong & Lucassen.
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3.4

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1 'Geschiedenis Afrika Museum.' *Afrika Museum* (undated), consulted at 2 December 2022. Available at <https://www.afrikamuseum.nl/nl/themas/geschiedenis-afrika-museum>.

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3 *Afrika Museum*.

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5 <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/sites/default/files/2019-06/NMVW%20Return%20of%20Cultural%20Objects%20Principles%20and%20Process.pdf>

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10 Nijtmans.

3.5

Colonialism close to home: enslaved people and colonial children in the Netherlands

1 *Erfgoed Gelderland*, 143.

2 *Erfgoed Gelderland*, 150.

3 *Erfgoed Gelderland*, 150.

Colophon

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