



*Anglo-Dutch Suriname Ethnic Interaction and Colonial Transition in the Caribbean, 1651-1682*

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English colonists from Barbados founded the sugar colony of Suriname in 1651, but they lost their new territory to the Dutch province of Zeeland in 1667. When studying early modern Suriname, historians have generally focused on the period after 1683, when the Dutch Society of Suriname took control and the colony became economically successful. Instead, Suze Zijlstra focuses on Suriname's first three "Anglo-Dutch" decades. She investigated the interaction between the inhabitants of the colony: Dutch, English, and Jewish settlers, the indigenous population, and the enslaved Africans. She conducted research in English and Dutch archives, where the seventeenth-century documents from Suriname have long been preserved. Using hundreds of personal letters from Dutch and Jewish colonists, extensive government correspondence, contemporary printed accounts, and seventeenth-century maps of the colony, she uncovered the complex ethnic interactions that took place in the colony's first three decades.

Her analysis leads to various conclusions regarding early modern colonial development. She suggests that colonial development should not be considered from a national perspective as internal developments shaped the colony more than any European takeover did. Instead of a national approach, her research advocates the study of a geographic unit owned by various European powers. Suriname's first three decades demonstrate how the English and the Dutch were similarly limited by local circumstances in their colonizing endeavors, and especially by the actions of Amerindians and Africans. She argues, moreover, that colonial development should not be measured by a colony's economic accomplishments. Even if Suriname did not achieve financial success in the period before 1683, in these very years crucial transformations took place that were shaped by ethnic interactions. This period emphasizes that resistance to colonization by Amerindians and Africans was at least as important as interethnic cooperation for Suriname's development. In the period of Anglo-Dutch Suriname, the foundations were established for the plantation economy that characterized the eighteenth century.