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A Slave Shackle with a Story*

'So that future generations can learn about the past'

• MARIA HOLTROP •

In 1946, the Suriname 'Baas' Menig gave the Dutchman C.D.H. Eygenberger two slave shackles, asking him 'to take good care of them so that future generations can learn about the past'.[1] He could never have imagined that almost seventy years later his wish would be granted. Since the Rijksmuseum reopened, one of the two shackles has been part of the permanent display and millions of people have been able to see it.

This slave shackle is a loan from the Tropenmuseum. The Tropenmuseum has owned this and the other shackle since the 1970s (figs. 1, 2). The two are different in size. There is a larger one, probably intended for the ankle, with a chain attached, and a smaller one for the wrist. It is the smaller of the two that is on display in the Rijksmuseum. The shackles are oval and made of two parts joined at the back by a hinge. At the front, the two parts end in a square flange with a hole through which a bolt can be pushed. In the large shackle the hole is circular and does indeed have a bolt in it, connected to a chain with nine links. In the smaller shackle the hole is cruciform and has no bolt or chain. The large shackle is 10.5 centimetres long by 8 centimetres wide. The square flange is 5.4 centimetres wide. The smaller shackle is 8.6 centimetres long by 7 centimetres wide; the square flange is 5.1 centimetres wide. The large shackle weighs 1.2 kilograms and the smaller shackle weighs 340 grams.

Fig. 1
Slave Shackle, Suriname, eighteenth-nineteenth century. Iron, 8.6 x 7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. NG-C-2012-7; on loan from the Collectie Tropenmuseum Amsterdam.

Although the shackles are similar, it is unlikely that they were linked together by the chain. The two shackles and the chain were not attached when they were acquired. In addition the holes through which the bolts pass to close the fetters differ in shape – circular in the large shackle, cruciform in the small version. Furthermore it is hard to imagine a functional use of the objects if they were linked by a chain. We know of very few illustrations in which a slave is shown with ankle and wrist shackles linked by a chain, but in the illustrations where this actually is the case the chains are a great deal longer. Apart from the two holes the shackles are identical in style. The hinges work in the same way and the means of locking the two halves with a bolt through a hole is the same. Although not connected by a chain the shackles probably do belong together.[2]

It is remarkable how few slave shackles have survived; they were the iconic symbols of slavery and were frequently used in images of its abolition. At the end of the eighteenth century the slave in chains was already an important image illustrating the abomination of slavery and the festival linked to the emancipation is called 'Keti koti', or broken chains. The only slave shackles found in the Nether-

Fig. 2
Iron Fetter, Suriname, eighteenth-nineteenth century. Iron, approx. 10.5 x 8 cm. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, inv. nos. 4440-144a, 4440-144b.

lands are in the collections of the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden and the Tropenmuseum. In Suriname there are slave shackles in the Surinaams Museum and the Bakkie plantation museum in Warappakreek (fig. 3). On Curaçao the Tulamuseum at the Kenepa estate has an original set of slave shackles with a chain in its collection.[3] Most of these shackles do not resemble the version in the Rijksmuseum, but the example in Kenepa is identical and the one at the Bakkie plantation is very similar.[4] Nevertheless we know nothing whatsoever about their provenance. It is also striking how little information there is about the use of slave shackles in the slavery literature. When there is a reference to punishment it is usually corporal punishment. Until now little has been known about how and when shackles were used in Suriname.

The shackles in the Tropenmuseum are unique in that their provenance is actually recorded. When they were acquired in the 1970s the owner, C.D.H. Eygenberger, was interviewed about how he had come by them. He went to Suriname in the late 1940s, lived there for forty years and collected several objects. Part of the interview with Mr Eygenberger features on the Tropenmuseum's website:

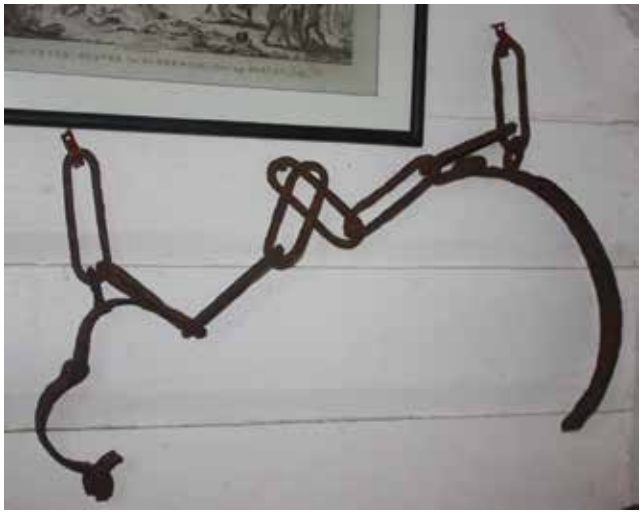

Fig. 4
Frans Menig-Muntslag with his two sons, Suriname, c. 1950. Part of the private collection of Leonel Muntslag.

> 'Baas Menig invited us to come and fish for tarpon in the Para River near Onoribo and Overtoom, where he lived with his wife, and to stay the night with them. … On that evening, we having become friends for life, Baas Menig fetched a slave shackle from his dark private corner in the attic, which he had carefully preserved as a family heirloom and memento of his ancestors. He offered it as a gift, asking me to look after it well so that future generations can learn about the past. … After that, summer 1946, we never came across a slave chain in Suriname, nor did we ever hear of the finding of another example.'[5]

This information gives us an opportunity to link a family history to the shackles and establish where they come from. The shackles were kept by a member of the Menig family, who came from the Overtoom plantation in the Para district in Suriname.

'Baas' Menig and his Forebears

According to the information supplied by Mr Eygenberger, Baas Menig was living in Overtoom in 1946. The first Suriname census of 1921 states that there were thirty-two houses on this former plantation. Four people called Menig lived there. In house number eight lived a woman and two children aged one and three years old; clearly none of them was 'Baas' Menig. Frans Menig, born on 17 November 1875, lived at number three. He was 70 years old in the summer of 1946 and died on 6 December 1962. In all likelihood he was the 'Baas' Menig in Eygenberger's story. This was corroborated by W.F.L. Herkul.[6]

On the plantation Frans Menig occupied himself with *kulturu,* which literally means culture, but in the broad sense of the word can refer to everything from the Creole way of life to Winti (fig. 4).[7] He knew a lot about medicinal plants and was regarded as a wise man. He was usually addressed as 'Baas' as a sign of respect.[8] In the photographs in the possession of Frans Menig's grandson, Leonel Muntslag,

< *Fig. 3*
Slave Shackle,
Suriname, undated.
Iron.
Bakkie Plantation.
Photo: M. Holtrop.

Fig. 5
Frans Menig-Muntslag's house on the Overtoom plantation, Suriname, c. 1950. Part of the private collection of Leonel Muntslag.

Frans is standing with his two sons, Frederik Herman Julius Muntslag and Alfred Cornelis Muntslag, in front of his house in Overtoom. Frederik Herman built this house for his father when he was sixteen. The house, which also features in another of Leonel Muntslag's photographs, is the one in which Eygenberger stayed and where the slave shackle was kept in the attic (fig. 5).

Frans Menig's whole family came from Overtoom.[9] In Surinamese genealogy from before the twentieth century the female line is decisive. Slaves were not allowed to marry one another and so it was customary for the mothers to pass on their names to their children. For a long time this was true of the Menig family. However in 1900, when they were both in their eighties, Marcelina Menig, Frans's grandmother, married Adolf Muntslag, the father of her children. At a stroke the entire Menig family acquired the name Muntslag – Frans too, but he found it hard to get used to his new name. He is recorded as Frans Menig in the 1923 census, but as Frans Muntslag on his two marriage certificates and in an obituary. This is why it is important in investigating Frans's family to look at the female line with the surname Menig as well as the male line with the surname Muntslag.

The Menig family line begins with Frans Menig's mother, Adolphina, who was born at Overtoom in 1856. In the emancipation of 1863, Adolphina, her mother Marcelina (1818), her grandmother Keetje (1802) and twenty-three other family members were given the surname Menig. It is not clear why, although the fact that there were so many of them could perhaps be a clue – 'menig' means many in Dutch.[10] Keetje Menig is recorded as Kea in the English census of 1811[11] – she was then nine years old and worked in the house. According

to the inventory of 1838,[12] Seraphina, Kea's mother, came from Africa. Seraphina also appears in the plantation inventories of 1767 and 1771[13] – at that time slaves were regarded as possessions. In both inventories she is described as a child; the first also gives her 'value' – two hundred guilders. Going backwards, the Menig family line stops at Seraphina.

The Muntslag line begins with Frans's grandfather, Adolf Muntslag, who was born in 1819 and was the first with this surname. His father was Avantuur van Windhorst, who from the records of Christian missionaries, the Moravian Brethren, came from Africa, was a carpenter and was baptized in 1805.[14] In 1833 Avantuur was expelled from the Moravian community 'because of polygamy, constant fighting and quarrelling'.[15] Slaves were not allowed to be baptized, so Avantuur must already have been set free before 1805. No manumission – the deed of freedom of an enslaved person – has survived for him, but his surname suggests that his former owner, or whoever freed him, must have been called Windhorst. Avantuur also appears in the Overtoom inventories. He is listed in the 1771 inventory and described as a 'veldneger' (field negro) in the 1773 inventory. Later he would have three children by Comtesse, a slave who also came from Overtoom. These three children, including Adolf, were all born into slavery because their mother was not free. Avantuur tried to buy their freedom, as his will of 1831 reveals, but he died on 10 August that year without having fulfilled all the conditions required to liberate the children.[16] It is estimated that Avantuur was seventy-four when he died.[17] After his death his children found themselves in a quandary. They were still not free, but were the heirs of their father, who had declared them free in his will. They were involved in legal proceedings for seven years and their claims were rejected several times. On one occasion the Governor-General wrote: 'My feeling in this matter is that appointing them as heirs is irreconcilable with the principle that slaves are not people.'[18] Eventually they successfully invoked Roman law, which states that on inheritance slaves can be given their freedom. Their manumission was approved. Their father had been dead too long for them to be able to take his surname, so from then on they were called Muntslag. The free Adolf Muntslag fathered several children, among them Adolphina, Frans Menig's mother, with the enslaved Marcelina Menig. Adolphina was born in slavery in 1856. Although her father was a free man, her mother was not free and, as we have seen, the female line was the deciding factor. Adolphina did not gain her freedom until slavery was abolished in 1863.

Overtoom Plantation

The forebears of the Menig and Muntslag families had lived on the Overtoom plantation since the second half of the eighteenth century. This plantation was situated in the Para district to the southwest of Paramaribo, a region crossed by the Para Creek, on which all the plantations lay (fig. 6). Originally Overtoom was a sugar plantation, but at the end of the eighteenth century it became a timber estate.[19] The first

Fig. 6
HENDRIK HUYGENS, *In the Para Creek*, Suriname, c. 1850. Pencil and wash in pen, 31 x 36.1 cm. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, inv. no. 6464-6.

Fig. 7 ALEXANDER DE LAVAUX, engraved by HENDRIK DE LETH, *Algemeene kaart van de Colonie of Provintie van Suriname* (detail), Suriname, 1737-57. Engraving, 62.7 x 94 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. NG-478.

known owner of Overtoom was the Widow Labory, Marie Girodet, who is named in a survey of 1708.[20] In 1711 she remarried. Her second husband was Pierre Juran, who is recorded as the owner of Overtoom on the well-known map by Alexander Lavaux of 1737 (fig. 7). At that time the plantation covered 1,919 hectares. Juran was a justice of the Court of Police and Criminal Justice. An inventory of the plantation was drawn up after his death in 1742.[21] It revealed that over the years the owners had amassed a considerable number of possessions.[22]

In 1742 there was a two-storey house on the plantation. The compiler of the inventory needed twenty-four pages to describe all the contents. Ancestral portraits hung on the walls, there were chests full of clothes and silver, there were mirrors, numerous cabinets and a French Bible with silver clasps. The site also boasted coffee and carpenters' sheds, a boiler house,[23] a liquor distillery,[24] an animal-powered mill,[25] two kitchen gardens and various meadows with animals. Finally, the inventory lists 197 slaves: 102 men, 52 women, 20 boys and 23 girls. They lived in thirty-

two wooden slave lodgings. There is no description of how the houses looked or how big they were, nor any mention of slave shackles in this inventory.

By the end of the eighteenth century Overtoom covered 5,500 acres (fig. 8).[26] A number of plantations were added over the years. From that time on the neighbouring plantation of Vreeland was also part of the Overtoom estate. Vreeland remained an independent plantation, but would always have the same owner as Overtoom. In this period Overtoom was yielding less, which was not unusual in those days. The soil in the Para district, where Overtoom was situated, was arid and sandy – not the type of soil suitable for the intensive farming of a crop like sugar. It was consequently decided that Overtoom and Vreeland would be more profitable as timber estates rather than sugar plantations.[27]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Overtoom and Vreeland were clearly struggling again and the owners wanted to transfer their slaves to other plantations they owned, where coffee was grown. There were violent protests. The slaves did not want to leave the place where their forefathers were buried and where their families lived, and they were well aware that the work on timber estates was relatively agreeable. Evidently their protests were successful, as the overseers informed the owners that the slaves 'are highly unsuited to other work' and moreover it would not be possible 'to take the negroes to Para…willingly, as [they] are very attached to their lands'.[28] Alex

Fig. 8
A.H. HIEMCKE, *Map of Suriname entitled 'Colonie Surnaame'* (detail), Suriname, 1830. Handdrawn and coloured map, 885 x 246.5 mm. Maastricht, G. Röell Collection.

van Stipriaan wrote how the planters did indeed need to have regard for their slaves. Slaves frequently rebelled in the event of transfer and these revolts could not easily be crushed. The authorities did not by definition help the planters. The most important thing for the colonial rulers was to maintain order and peace in the colony, and if this was threatened the planters were urged to find a different solution for their slaves.[29]

Compared with other plantations, life on a timber estate was easier for slaves to endure. They had more freedom there because their work was done at a considerable distance from the planter's house. This created a certain degree of independence. Unlike other slaves, for instance, they were given weekly tasks instead of daily tasks, because they worked so deep in the forests that they were not always able to return at the end of the day. When they had finished the week's task they were able to go and work on their own allotments.[30] It was in the interests of the planters to treat their slaves well, as those on the timber estates in Para were able to run away more easily to join the Maroons.[31] This was true of the residents of Overtoom. G.B. Bosch, the clergyman stationed on Curaçao, wrote about it in his travel report on the West Indies in 1842:

> 'The negroes in Para are healthy and strong; they are loyal, yet have an independent spirit. On *Overtoom* Mr Van de Poll had given them Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays for themselves so that they were only in his service for four days. The negroes were very satisfied with that and worked with diligence both for their masters as well as for themselves. The concept: to have their own land to build on links them to the place where they live, makes them more loyal and takes away the inclination to escape.'[32]

'The inclination to escape' was also removed in part because living with the Maroons was a lot more precarious. For many, all things considered, the relative freedom on the timber estates was preferable to the uncertain life of the Maroons.[33]

Despite the relative freedom, work on the timber estates was hard. Some men had to fell the trees, others had to strip the bark from the trunks or saw them square and others made planks from them, which were carried to the house by a final group. The *Reglement op het onderhoud, den arbeid, de huisvesting en de tucht der slaven op de plantaadjen en gronden in de kolonie Suriname,* which came into effect by Royal Decree on 6 February 1851, sums up what the slaves had to do on a timber estate every day in the minutest detail. For instance men had to fell fifteen to twenty-five spruces a day, depending on the height of the tree, and each man had to fell three trees (fig. 9).[34] In 1835, in his discourse about Surinamese arable farming, the agricultural expert Marten Teenstra wrote that men had to saw eighteen thirty-foot-long planks every week, which the women carried back to the house:

> 'Negro girls then carry these planks through the thick forest on their heads (where the negroes carry everything, with which one may charge them) with unbelievable strength and effort to the house. They come from a tree that, not infrequently, was felled more than two hours away and, notwithstanding this distance and the difficulty of the track, two such journeys are made in one day.'[35]

The majority of the wood that came from the timber estates was destined for the Suriname market; only a small proportion was intended for export. In the colony the wood was used for buildings and as fuel, particularly on the sugar plantations, where the sap from the sugar cane had to be boiled.

In 1856 Overtoom was sold. In the *Dagblad van Zuidholland en 's Gravenhage* it was reported that 'it is interesting that the Overtoom and Vreeland timber estate has been bought by Mr F. G. Caupain, who was born into slavery and comes from this plantation. Later freed, through diligence and care he has come so far that he is now the owner of a plantation, on which he was previously a slave and where there will most probably still be some members of his family in slavery.'[36] A former slave as the owner of a plantation was evidently so unusual that a Dutch newspaper reported on it.[37] It is interesting to note that in 1862 – a year before the emancipation – Caupain freed a number of his slaves.[38] He knew then that by doing so he would miss out on a substantial amount of money. At the time of the emancipation in 1863 the government gave every slave owner three hundred guilders compensation for each slave. Perhaps Caupain did not want to wait for the official abolition to free his family members from slavery and this was worth a considerable sum of money to him. Nevertheless he did receive compensation for the rest of his slaves amounting to 49,200 guilders.[39]

Unlike most of the freed slaves from other Suriname plantations, most residents of Overtoom continued to live on their timber estate after 1863 and work the obligatory next ten years on the old plantation. During the time of slavery, extended family networks were formed in the Para district, where Overtoom was located. In other parts of Suriname it was only possible to go and visit other people by dug-out canoe. In Para people could visit one another on foot because the planta-

Fig. 9
HENDRIK HUYGENS, *Wood Transport on Onoribo* (a plantation in the Para district), Suriname, c. 1850. Pencil and wash in pen, 31 x 36.1 cm. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, inv. no. 6464-7.

Fig. 10
Urn at the foot of a tree at Overtoom, in which the money used to buy the plantation was kept. Photo: M. Holtrop.

tions there were not separated by ditches. The population had formed a strong cultural identity that was linked to the soil on which they lived and in which their ancestors lay buried.[40]

In time, many of the families who remained on Overtoom bought a part of the plantations from their old bosses and owners. They continued to cultivate their land in the way they had done when they were enslaved. In the 1900 *Surinaamsche Almanak* Lodewijk Herkul – Herkul is another surname given to an Overtoom family at the time of the emancipation in 1863 – is named as the owner of the plantation,[41] and a notarial deed of 1907 reveals that he and nine other residents (among them Hendrik, Anna, Cato and Josephina Menig) sold part of the land to thirty-two other residents.[42] An urn can still be found at Overtoom at the foot of a large tree, where according to tradition the plantation residents kept the money they set aside to buy the land (fig. 10). It took them thirty-four years to save up enough. The deed states that the first ten had bought a part of Overtoom in 1897. This group, Lodewijk Herkul and a number of the Menigs, formed a sort of advance guard, which paved the way for the others. Today the Overtoom land is still owned by the descendants of this group.

The Use of Shackles

In the nineteenth century Overtoom was a timber estate with a relatively large degree of freedom. The last owner had been a slave himself. Yet the slave shackle on display in the Rijksmuseum came from there. In the very detailed inventories of Overtoom that have survived (from 1742, 1767, 1771 and 1773) there is no mention of shackles, whereas that is often the case in other plantations' inventories.[43] This could indicate that shackles were not to be found at Overtoom until after 1773. Nonetheless the question remains as to what possible function they had, both during the period of slavery and afterwards.

The first thing that emerges from the scant literature about the use of slave shackles is that they were used to prevent escape during transport. This was also the reason why slaves on the transport ships from Africa to the Americas were chained.[44] But it was not just on the ships – shackles were also present on the plantations. In his book *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou* (1989),

for example, Gert Oostindie mentions the case of an arsonist who was chained. He also writes that slaves who might have been risk factors on the plantation could be separated from the rest by means of shackles to prevent uprisings. Slaves who ran away and were recaptured were also put in chains. Sometimes they were actually kept in wrist fetters and even neck collars for months. Finally shackles were used in the case of sentences of hard labour. The *Koloniale verslagen van Nederlands West-Indië*, reports which had to be filed from the 1850s onwards, list the punishments given to runaways, for example. In 1859 Charles from the Marienbosch coffee plantation, for instance, had to serve three months hard labour in shackles when he was caught after five years on the run. Having been accused of plotting to flee the colony and a string of unspecified thefts, a number of slaves from the Badenstein and Moed en Kommer cotton plantations were sentenced to forty lashes and ten years hard labour on their plantations in shackles.[45]

Slaves were certainly put in chains as a form of punishment. In the eighteenth century, however, corporal punishment was far more common. Since the late seventeenth century, every few decades the governor and the Court of Police had issued regulations detailing the permitted ways of punishing slaves on plantations. The prohibitions they contain are distressing evidence of the type of punishments meted out until the time of the ban. Since the early 1680s a plantation owner had been forbidden by law to kill a slave.[46] From 1759 onwards the *blankofficier* – the plantation overseer – or the plantation manager were no longer allowed to use sticks on slaves, but only to whip them with a limit of fifty normal or eighty 'modest' strokes. More severe punishments could only be meted out by the owner. A slave could not be shot dead, except in self-defence. If it did happen the fine was three hundred guilders – but the case would have to be pursued and sentence passed, and that rarely happened. From 1784 it was no longer permitted to strike someone while he or she was suspended from a tree, but the *Spaanse bok*, a savage punishment whereby a slave was doubled over, tied to a stake in the ground and flogged until there was no skin left, was not abolished until 1828.[47]

Alex van Stipriaan argues that the severe punishments in the eighteenth century were a direct consequence of the fear that white people had of their slaves. White people in Suriname were greatly in the minority and constantly afraid that the slaves would rise up against them. They thought that the use of these severe punishments would keep them in check.[48] In her article Natalie Zemon Davis quotes from the minutes of the Court of Police in 1762 the answer of the councillors to the proposal by the governor to increase the punishment for killing slaves:

> 'Although no owner should ever arrogate the power over life and death over his slaves, it is nonetheless of the utmost importance that slaves should continue to believe that their masters possess that power. There would be no keeping them under control if they were aware that their masters could receive corporal punishment or be executed for beating a slave to death.'[49]

In the nineteenth century there was a gradual change in the treatment of slaves. Supervision of the plantation owners increased and the government introduced new regulations in an endeavour to outlaw the worst excesses in punishment. Corporal punishment was replaced in part by manacling the slaves, which was regarded as a less severe punishment. In 1842, with an eye to the abolition of slavery in the surrounding countries, the governor J.C. Rijk advised the planters to 'ease the lot of the slave in order to prevent

revolt and unrest'.[50] He was suggesting 'moderation and as far as practicable the avoidance of corporal punishment'. Was it not better as a punishment to lock slaves up at night for a maximum of fourteen nights, to withhold their food and drink or to chain them with a light shackle chain? Rijk was afraid that the abolition of slavery in the neighbouring countries and in the region might encourage slaves to revolt or run away. He was worried that with the limited means at his disposal he did not have the power to crush a violent uprising and he hoped to be able to prevent this by introducing a milder system of punishments. Almost ten years later his recommendations were included in the *Reglement op het onderhoud, den arbeid, de huisvesting en de tucht der slaven op de plantaadjen en gronden in de kolonie Suriname*.[51]

What does this all say about the possible use of shackles on the Overtoom plantation? It seems unlikely that shackles were used at Overtoom to prevent flight or imposed in combination with hard labour, because it was a timber estate where slaves had to have a relatively large degree of freedom of movement to do their work. The fact that shackles are not mentioned in the very detailed inventory of 1742 may perhaps be explained because punishments restricting freedom by means of shackles were not meted out as much in the eighteenth century. Corporal punishment was far more common then. In the nineteenth century, by contrast, manacle punishments were used more often at the insistence of governors for fear of slave revolts. The shackles from Overtoom probably date from this period and were acquired to comply with the governor's recommendations.

Fig. 11
ETRURIA WORKS,
Cup with an Abolitionist Scene,
England, c. 1853-c. 1863.
Porcelain, 6 x 7 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. NG-1994-53-A.

Fig. 12
PIETER VAN DER MEULEN after a drawing by CORNELIS GROENEVELD, *Allegory with Scenes from the Passion of Christ, The Suffering Christ*, Amsterdam, 1790-1858. Etching, 283 x 350 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1904-2846.

The Symbolic Function of Shackles

Slave shackles were not only used to punish slaves or discourage them from running away. They also had a symbolic function. Shackles have become the best-known symbol of slavery. The image of a manacled slave is primarily associated with the abolitionist movement, which from the end of the eighteenth century worked for the abolition of slavery. The well-known image of the kneeling slave in chains with the inscription 'Am I not a human and a brother?' by Josiah Wedgwood is a good example (fig. 11).[52] However this image of a human being in chains, a reference to slavery or lack of freedom, is part of a much longer iconographic tradition. In the western religious art of the Renaissance and the Baroque the fettered human alludes to man as a slave to his earthly desires (fig. 12). For far longer, broken chains had been used as a symbol of freedom in a political context. We frequently come across broken chains in the popular allegories of the regained freedom under the French Revolution, but we also, for example, recognize them in an allegory of the liberation of the Netherlands in 1813 in which a lion can be seen with broken chains. This refers to the throwing off of the French yoke (fig. 13).

This symbolic value of the slave shackle is probably one of the reasons why Frans Menig-Muntslag kept these objects with such care. He was known as a wise man and occupied himself with the *kulturu* on the plantation. It is therefore not surprising that he found the history of his family and the members of his community important enough to keep safe the objects that reminded him of it. It is unusual that he chose not to leave the shackles to his children but to give them to a Dutchman with whom he had become friends. He probably hoped that the shackle, and hence the history of slavery, would reach a wider audience – and now the shackles can be seen in the Rijksmuseum.

Fig. 13
Allegory of the Liberation of the Netherlands, 1813 Hollands Befreyung/ Das Erwachen des Löwen, Germany 1813-14. Etching and engraving, 454 x 342 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-OB-87.105.

Fig. 14
WILLIAM BLAKE, *Slave Girl with Ankle Shackle, before or in 1806*. Published in John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, London 1806. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. NG-488-A. Photo: University of Cambridge.

It is difficult to tell the story of slavery through original objects. Almost all illustrations of enslaved people were made by the colonial oppressors or by the abolitionists. Objects used or made by the slaves themselves are extremely rare. These shackles are actually directly linked to the life of slaves, in this case on the Overtoom plantation in Suriname. The shackles obviously derive part of their power from their strong symbolic meaning. Visitors recognize the object immediately and instantly know what it alludes to. In the Rijksmuseum the shackles are in a showcase with other items, including a teacup (see fig. 11) on which there is the famous image of the chained slave and an illustration from the nineteenth-century diary of the soldier John Gabriel Stedman which shows how slaves were punished in Suriname (fig. 14).

This slave shackle certainly has an interesting biography. Through the centuries it has had quite different functions: from instrument of punishment, by way of an object of family recollection to a symbol of slavery in a museum setting. Thanks to this research, however, the shackle is more than just a symbol. At last we can put names to the experiences associated with this object and we know something more about the place and the circumstances. The object is no longer anonymous.

NOTES

* Usage of the term 'slave' is contested and I am aware of the sensitivities. In addition to 'slave' I use the term 'enslaved', to emphasize that 'slave' does not refer to a fixed identity but is termed through the mechanisms of a socially constructed system.

1 http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl/default.aspx?ccid=141386 (consulted 25 August 2014).

2 This is also the conclusion of Hans de Marez Oyens, curator at the Tropenmuseum, which acquired the objects in 1976. See the documentation with the objects in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam.

3 Slave shackles hang throughout the Kura Hulanda Museum on Curaçao. However upon enquiry they proved to be replicas, although this is not explicitly stated anywhere.

4 As this issue went to press I saw shackles similar to those in the present article in a Vanitas still life painted by Cornelis Brisé in 1665 (inv. no. SK-A-1281) in the Rijksmuseum. Further research revealed that the Prison Gate Museum in The Hague also has seventeenth-century Dutch shackles identical to the Surinamese slave fetters. The shape of these shackles thus harks back to an older Dutch model, which had been used in the seventeenth century.

5 http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl/default.aspx?ccid=141386 (consulted 25 March 2014).

6 W.F.L. Herkul was born in Overtoom in 1928 and continued to live there until the 1950s to look after his grandmother. The interview with him took place on 27 May 2014.

7 Y. van der Pijl, *Levende doden: Afrikaans-Surinaamse percepties, praktijken en rituelen rondom de doo*d, Utrecht 2007, p. 65.

8 According to Herkul in the interview on 27 May 2014.

9 I could not have found the majority of the sources for the genealogy of the Menig and Muntslag families referred to in what follows without the immense assistance of Ank de Vogel-Muntslag. In the past few years she has traced the line to Avantuur van Windhorst, from whom she also descends, and she has been so generous as to let me use her work. I am extremely grateful to her.

10 Other families from the Overtoom plantation were also large. The Joval family had twenty-one members, the Purperharts twenty-five, the Strijdhaftigs twenty and the Venetiaans nineteen.

11 Suriname census under English rule in 1811, see http://deniekasan.files.wordpress com/2008/07/vt-1811-suriname2.pdf (consulted 25 August 2014).

12 The Hague, Central Bureau for Genealogy, Microfiches, card 5, book 128, fol. 3740.

13 NL-HaNA, Notarissen Suriname tot 1828, 1.05.11.14, inv. nos. 695, 232.

14 H.E. Lamur et al., *Catalogus der Negergemeine an Paramaribo*, Paramaribo 2011, pp. 205-06.

15 'wegens veelwijverij, onophoudelijk handgemeen en ruzie'. Ibid.

16 The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, Microfiches: Notarieel Archief Suriname, 1828-45, access no. 1.05.11.15, inv. no. 3, 11 August 1831.

17 *Surinaamsche Courant*, 7 September 1831.

18 'Mijnen gevoelens in deze is dat de benoeming van tot erfgenamen onbestaanbaar is, met het beginsel dat slaven geene personen zijn'. The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, Gouverneur-Generaal der Nederlandse West-Indische Bezittingen, access no. 1.05.08.01, inv. no. 170.

19 Strictly speaking, a timber estate may not be termed a plantation, because nothing is planted there. All the trees that are felled are there already. Nonetheless I will sometimes term Overtoom a plantation as this is customary in popular usage.

20 As quoted on pp. 1-2 in the Overtoom dossier by P. Dikland, see https://docs.google.com/folderview?id=0B88mZFitv8emQWpuTzJnc1FQTjg&tid=0B88mZFitv8emcjVfcG5hWFJOdWs (consulted 5 January 2015).

21 His grave can be found in the Reformed Church in Paramaribo.

22 The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, Suriname: Oud Notarieel Archief, 1699-1829, access no. 1.05.11.14, inv. no. 174.

23 Sap from the sugar cane was boiled there.

24 'Dram' – a type of rough rum – was distilled there.

25 The sap from the cane was pressed in this mill powered by draught animals.

26 National Archives, op. cit. (note 21), inv. no. 685.

27 Dikland, op. cit. (note 19; consulted 25 August 2014); A. van Stipriaan, 'Paranen tussen stad en bos: Een complexe Afro-Surinaamse ontwikkelingsgang vanuit de slavernij', in J. Egger (ed.), *Ontwaakt en ontwikkelt u: Creolen, na de afschaffing van de slavernij 1863-1940*, Paramaribo 2013, pp. 203-39, esp. p. 206.

28 'tot andere werken zeer ongeschikt zijn', and 'de negers in Para goedschiks … te brengen …, als zeer aan hunne gronden gehecht'. As quoted in A. van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750-1863*, Leiden 1993, p. 390.

29 Ibid., p. 392.

30 'De Negers op de houtgronden arbeiden het minste van allen; gewoonlijk hebben zij hunne taak reeds Donderdag-middag afgedaan, en zij kunnen de andere dagen tot Maandag, voor hun eigen gebruik, naar goedvinden, besteden; hun arbeid is daarbij van dien aard, dat dezelve meest in de schaduw kan verrigt worden; waardoor hun de hitte van de zon niet zeer hindert.' F.A. Kuhn, *Beschouwing van den toestand der Surinaamsche plantagieslaven, ene oeconomisch-geneeskundig bijdrage tot verbetering deszelven*, Amsterdam 1828, pp. 14-15; as quoted in Van Stipriaan, op. cit. (note 26), p. 207, note 217.

31 Maroons were escaped slaves who lived in the jungle, offered armed resistance and from 1760 received legal freedom and autonomy in the interior regions.

32 'De negers op *Para* zijn gezond en sterk; zij zijn getrouw, doch hebben eenen onafhankelijken geest. De heer van de Poll had hun op de *Overtoom* den Zaturdag, Zondag en Maandag voor zich gegeven, zoodat zij slechts 4 dagen in zijne dienst waren. De negers waren hiermee zeer tevreden, en werkten met ijver zoowel voor hunne meesters als voor zich zelven. Het denkbeeld: eigen grond ter bebouwing te hebben, verbindt hen aan de plaats hunner woning, maakt hen getrouwer, en neemt de neiging tot ontvluchting weg.' G.B. Bosch, *Reizen in West-Indië en door een gedeelte van Zuid- en Noord-Amerika; Derde deel: Reizen naar Suriname, in brieven*, Utrecht 1843, p. 347.

33 Van Stipriaan, op. cit. (note 26), p. 210.

34 *Reglement op het onderhoud, den arbeid, de huisvesting en de tucht der slaven op de plantaadjen en gronden in de kolonie Suriname*, Gouvernementsblad, Suriname 1851, supplement c, nos. 4, 6-8.

35 'Deze planken worden vervolgens door Negermeiden op hare hoofden (waarop de Negers alles dragen, waarmede men hen ook belasten mag), met eene ongeloofelijke kracht en moeite, door het digt bosch huiswaarts getorscht, waarvan de gevallene boom niet zelden meer dan twee uren verwijderd ligt, doende, niettegenstaande dezen afstand en de moeijelijkheid van den weg, gemeenlijk twee zulke togten op eenen dag.' M. Teenstra, *De landbouw in de kolonie Suriname, voorafgegaan door eene geschied- en natuurkundige beschouwing dier kolonie*, Groningen 1842, p. 340.

36 'Opmerkelijk is het, dat de houtgrond Overtoom en Vreeland gekocht is door den heer F. G. Caupain, in den slavenstand geboren en van deze plantaadje afkomstig is. Later gemanumittoerd, heeft hij het door vlijt en zorg zoo ver gebragt, dat hij thans eigenaar van eene plantaadje is, waartoe hij vroeger zelf als slaaf behoorde en waar hoogstwaarschijnlijk nog eenige leden zijner familie in den slavenstand zullen verkeeren.' *Dagblad van Zuidholland en 's Gravenhage*, 7 November 1856, p. 2.

37 I have tried to verify the information from the newspaper report. Although I have not been able to prove it with a manumission – there are few surviving manumissions from the early nineteenth century – I have no reason to believe that this information is incorrect.

38 http://gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00340/view/NT00340_manumissies/q/zoekterm/caupain/q/periode_van/1860/q/periode_tot/1863/q/comments/1/page_size/50 (consulted 4 December 2014).

39 Van Stipriaan, op. cit. (note 26), pp. 230-31.

40 E. Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid. Van slavensamenleving naar Creoolse gemeenschap in Suriname 1830-1880*, Utrecht 1997, pp. 164-67.

41 *Surinaamsche Almanak voor het Jaar 1901*, Paramaribo 1900, p. 209.

42 Copies of this notarial deed of 18 January 1900 are in the possession of both Ank de Vogel-Muntslag and W.F.L. Herkul. The whereabouts of the original is unknown.

43 National Archives, op. cit. (note 21); NL-HaNA, op. cit. (note 12), inv. nos. 232, 240, 695.

44 L. Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden: over de slaventochten en de ondergang van de Leusden, de leefomstandigheden aan boord van slavenschepen en het einde van het slavenhandelsmonopolie van de WIC, 1720-1738*, Amsterdam 2011, p. 58; G. Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou, 1720-1870*, Dordrecht 1989, p. 179.

45 Oostindie, ibid., p. 179; *Koloniaal verslag van Nederlands West-Indië over 1859*, The Hague 1862, pp. 32-33, 40-41.

46 N.Z. Davis, 'Judges, Masters, Diviners: Slaves' Experiences of Criminal Justice in Colonial Suriname', *Law and History Review* 29 (2011), no. 4, p. 941.

47 Ibid., pp. 941-42.

48 Van Stipriaan, op. cit. (note 26), pp. 369-70.

49 Davis, op. cit. (note 45), pp. 941-42.

50 'het lot van den slaaf te verzachten, teneinde oproer en onrust te voorkomen'. The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, 'Verzameling stukken, voor het meerendeel afkomstig van mr. Pibo Anthony Brugmans (levensjaren 1769-1851) en diens zoons mr. Anthonius Brugmans (levensjaren 1799-1877)', access no. 1.10.13, inv. no. 12.

51 Gouvernementsblad, op. cit. (note 33).

52 M. Gamer, 'George Morland's Slave Trade and African Hospitality: Slavery, Sentiment and the Limits of the Abolitionist Image', in E. McGrath and J.M. Massing (eds.), *The Slave in European Art: From Renaissance Trophy to Abolitionist Emblem*, London/Turin (both Warburg Institute) 2012, pp. 297-319, esp. p. 297.

Figs. 15a-d
The Overtoom plantation today.
Photos: Eveline Sint Nicolaas.


OVERTOOM