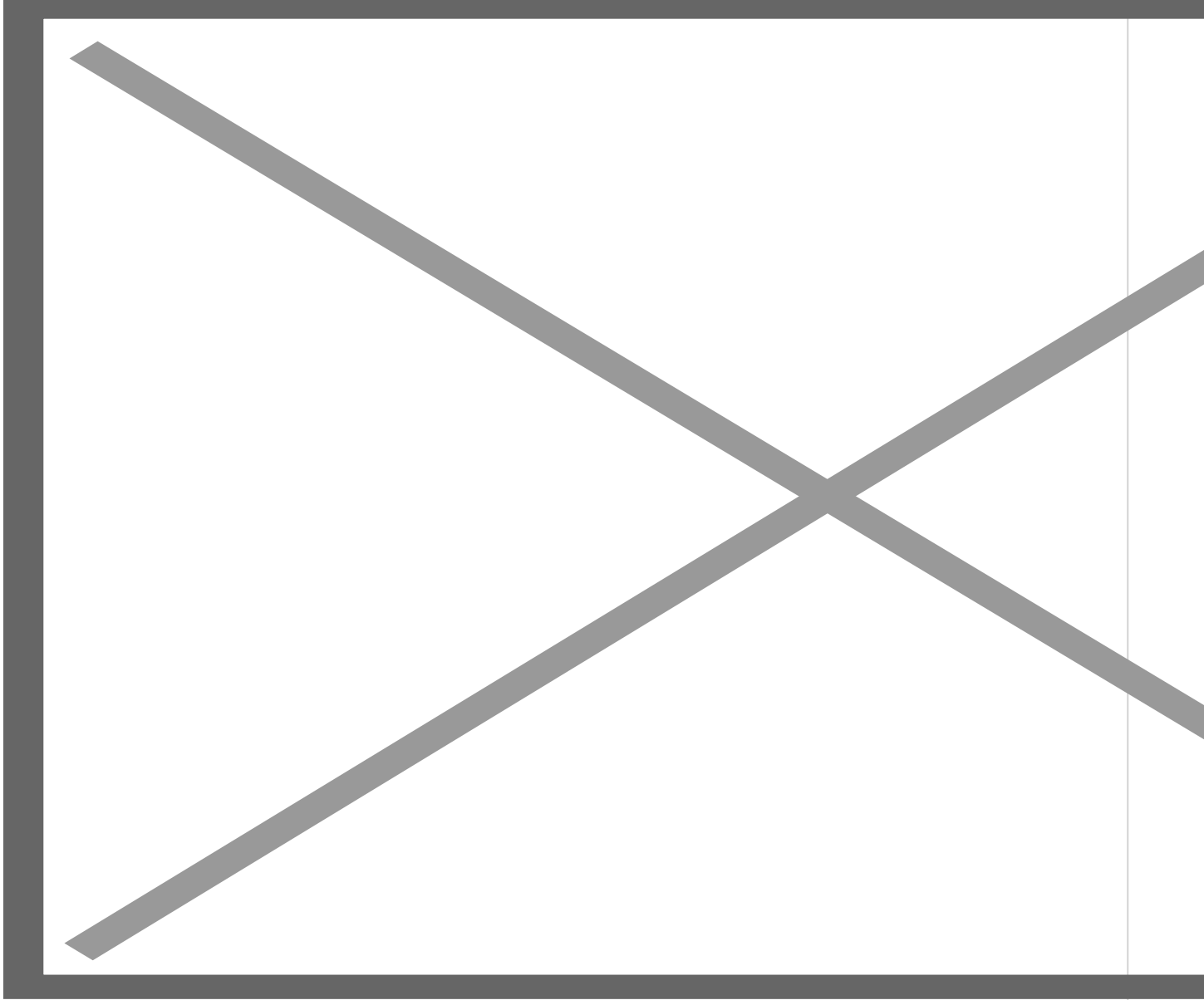


Dutch government's multi-million dollar colonial profits revealed

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Amsterdam, June 19 (RHC)-- The Netherlands' House of Orange profited from its colonial holdings by about 3 million guilders – \$600 million (?547 million) in modern money – from 1675 to 1770, according to the government-commissioned State and Slavery study, presented to the Dutch Parliament this past week.

The study is an effort to examine the role of the Dutch government and "related institutions" in slavery and its aftermath. The country is also looking into returning looted artworks. While the country abolished slavery in 1863, some argue the pinnacle of its economic and cultural achievements was accomplished on the backs of forced laborers.

King Willem-Alexander is expected to publicly apologize for the country's colonial predations on July 1st, the 150th anniversary of the Dutch abolition of slavery in its former colonies. Prime Minister Mark Rutte made an official apology of his own in December for the country's 250-year involvement in the slave trade, which he called a "crime against humanity," but some activists argued this was not sufficient and demanded a further apology from the monarch.

The Netherlands established a national advisory panel to interrogate its colonial history in 2020 after the death in police custody of Black man George Floyd in the U.S. initiated a wave of racial self-examination, protests, and recriminations globally.

The Dutch colonial empire included parts of what are now the Virgin Islands, Brazil, Mauritius, Suriname, Ceylon, and several Indonesian islands. Much of their Asian territory, administered by the Dutch East India Company, was captured from the Portuguese, who had previously colonized the area.

The Netherlands is not the only former colonial power investigating the possibility of atoning for its past sins against once-oppressed populations. The government of Jamaica last month announced it would introduce a bill that could potentially sever its centuries-old relationship with the British monarchy, which claimed the island as a colony in 1655 and allowed it nominal independence in 1962. A recent poll found that the majority of populations in nearly half of the British Commonwealth nations would become republics if they had the option.

In the United States, New York recently became the second state to take the first steps toward establishing a commission to investigate financial reparations for the descendants of black slaves imported from Africa.

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