

ARUBA NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

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# THE ARUBA HERITAGE REPORT

Aruba's Intangible Cultural  
Heritage, an inventory

Study executed at the request of:  
Aruba National Commission for  
UNESCO  
by  
Luc Alofs



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Luc Alofs

November, 2003 / November, 2008



*Picture: Ravi Alofs*

*'The speed of social and economic change often goes counter to the rhythms of culture, which more often measures time in phases of experience, stages of life and even in generations, than in the nanoseconds of the digital networks.'*

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO

Preface to: 'World Culture Report 2000: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism'



Aruba National Commission

## Preface

Since the approval in 1989, of the Recommendation on the Safeguard of Traditional and Popular Culture, UNESCO has worked in sensitizing its Member Countries in their awareness of the essential function of Intangible Cultural Heritage and to define and draw national provisions for the promotion of its acknowledgement.

During the meeting of the National Commission and the Cluster Offices of San José and La Habana, held from 5 to 8 of February 2003 in La Habana, Cuba, Aruba together with Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua and El Salvador agreed to realize the elaboration of a National Inventory of Intangible Heritage, including the most important manifestations of the countries, which will serve as the basis for the further elaboration of an Atlas of Central American Intangible Heritage.

The Aruba National Commission for UNESCO approached drs. Luc Alofs, Cultural Anthropologist, as national expert to carry out this important task. Since the first contact with mr. Alofs, he showed great enthusiasm and interest in this project and accepted it without any hesitation.

The Aruba National Commission for UNESCO is proud to present this inventory of the National Intangible Heritage, since it is also for the first time ever that a study on our National Intangible Heritage has been published.

The Aruba National Commission for UNESCO will further promote publications on the UNESCO competent areas. I am sure that this publication will be a great contribution to the cultural development in our country and that it will be of great value for our community in general and our youth in particular.

Carla L. Zaandam  
Chairperson Aruba National Commission for UNESCO

November 2003 / May 2004

## **Introduction**

The aim of this project is to produce a report for the elaboration of a National Inventory of Intangible Heritage, including the most important cultural manifestations of present day Aruba. This inventory will serve as the basis for the further elaboration of an atlas of Central American Intangible Heritage by UNESCO. The degree to which it is possible to meet these objectives depends on the progress in the field of study of the intangible cultural heritage. This inventory is based on existing scientific literature and fieldwork by the author. Additional fieldwork to complement the available data cannot be part of the project and will have to be addressed in the future.

In paragraph I.1, I will review and discuss several UNESCO-definitions of the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paragraph I.2 briefly sketches the history of the people and the culture of Aruba. In paragraph I.3, I describe the history of the study of Cultural Heritage on Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles as of the end of the nineteenth century. The second chapter consists of the actual inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Aruba.

In chapter III, we look at the Aruban cultural heritage ‘in the making’, when we briefly discuss the developments in the visual arts and literature. In chapter IV, we present an overview of the Aruban museums and the most important cultural historic institutions on the island.

This inventory reflects the state of the art on the available research and literature on the topic. Although this report is far from complete and sometimes as speculative as the existing literature itself, it may function as a first step towards a guide to the intangible cultural heritage of Aruba. In the near future, fieldwork can add to our knowledge of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Aruba. Further research however, needs professionally trained scholars, institutional support and appropriate international scientific cooperation and funding.

In the fall of 2008, the report was slightly up-dated before it was placed on the website of ‘NOS ARUBA 2025’.

For comments and suggestions, you are invited e-mail the author at [alofsaruba@setarnet.aw](mailto:alofsaruba@setarnet.aw)

Luc Alofs  
November, 2003 / November 2008  
Seroe Lopes, Aruba

## Acknowledgements

This report was written in the fall of 2003. As this report had to be written in a two-month period, some sections were borrowed from other publications by the same author, such as the 'Encyclopedia of World Cultures', 'Countries and their Cultures' and the 'Encyclopedia of Urban Cultures' (Alofs 1994, 2001, 2002). In addition, parts of the exposition in the Historical Museum of Aruba -also written by this author- were adapted for this report. I would like to thank Joyce Pereira for her contribution regarding the section on Papiamentu and Gina Ramirez-Ramsbottom and Annemiek van Vliet for their translations. Frank Williams once again assisted with the corrections of the manuscript.

The section on Aruban Museums is based on my personal involvement with several of the Aruban museums and publications on museums of Aruba (in: Alofs, Rutgers & Coomans 1997). I express my gratitude to the National Library of Aruba for permission to quote from their recent publication 'Museo y Galeria di Aruba, un Guia' (Museo 2003).

I would like to thank Nita Semerel (†) and Frank Williams for sharing their knowledge on aguinaldos, mariachi's and gaitera's, which have become part of Aruba's cultural heritage only recently. Leticia Tromp was kind enough to provide me with her university thesis on communication styles. Stan Kuiperi, Wim Rutgers and Stanley Heinze critically reviewed the manuscript, adding their insights and professionalism.

Modern research cannot ignore the abundance of information on the Internet. A growing number of cultural, both governmental and non governmental, have their own websites. The web-sites [www.visitaruba.com](http://www.visitaruba.com) and [www.museumaruba.org](http://www.museumaruba.org) proved the most valuable as far as Aruba's cultural heritage is concerned.

James 'Jimmy' Oduber and Irais Sankatsing, respectively secretary general and (former) member of the Aruba National Commission of UNESCO provided the scientific literature, which enabled me to define the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to the UNESCO Aruba National Commission for commissioning this project and to 'Nos Aruba, 2025', for making this available via their website, exactly five years later, in November 2008.

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## I Intangible Cultural Heritage

### I.1 Definition and discussion

In the UNESCO thesaurus, we find as a definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) (French: Patrimoine culturel immatériel; Spanish: Patrimonio inmaterial)

*‘A set of living practices, knowledge and representations enabling individuals and communities to express themselves through systems of value and ethical standards.’*

The UNESCO thesaurus distinguishes the following elements:

- Cultural policy and planning
- Anniversary celebrations
- Cultural Values
- Customs and traditions (Fashion, Feasts, Food customs, Hunting, Masks, Rites, Excision, Initiations Rites)
- Folklore
- Oral Tradition
- Disappearing Cultures
- Disappearing Languages

This list provides us with a number of relevant topics to study. However, despite this obvious clarity, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is a complex concept. It refers to practices, knowledge and representations as the outcome of a historical process of a given society. Implicitly, modern history is often considered as the history modernization and state formation. As such, the concept is often state centered.

Intangible Cultural Heritage is often viewed upon as the result of a spontaneous cultural historical process in which progress, industrialization and state formation modernized traditional (pre industrial) cultural practices. The cohesive social functions of tradition and folklore in the pre industrial society were taken over by the state apparatus, making folklore static, as retentions of the pre modern period, as ‘things of the past’. UNESCO, in the definition mentioned above, emphasizes living but also static cultural standards and ‘disappearing cultures’ and ‘disappearing languages’.

Intangible Cultural Heritage is not simply the outcome of spontaneous socio-cultural development but also the result of socio-cultural policy and planning. ICH does not equal national heritage, but is often the cultural heritage one or more particular sub groups, which strive (or have already succeeded) for national cultural and / or political dominance or hegemony. Schama (1989) showed that much of the modern Dutch Cultural Heritage was the outcome of a planned cultural project in the Golden Age (17th century): the creation of a distinct national identity for the new nation. Weber (1976) showed how regional differences eroded during the process of state-formation in France, turning ‘peasants into Frenchmen’. Intangible Cultural Heritage is the outcome of the planned and unplanned processes of state-formation and nation building. The emerging states in the decolonizing Caribbean have faced this problem in the second half of the twentieth century. Along with economic development and regional integration, the process of nation building has been perhaps the single most important social and cultural challenge in the plural societies of the region.

On Aruba, the processes of nation building intensified especially after the nineteen sixties when it became clear the ties between Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands needed restructuring (see below I.2). During the nineteen seventies, cultural practices such as the ‘dandé’ were relived, either consciously or unconsciously, in order to distinguish the mestizo and Latin America oriented Aruban cultural identity from the Curaçaoan / Antillean Afro-Caribbean identity. In the course of this process, traditional folk customs were reinvented, often transformed, and re-standardized (see Anderson 1992 and Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992 for classical introductions, Giddens 2003: 36-51). Therefore, also the suffix ‘living’ in ‘living practices’ in our definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Practice needs attention and adaptation. We can also read ‘relived’, ‘revived’, ‘transformed’ or ‘re-invented’ cultural practice. Even static folklore is subject to change and the influence of the ‘politics of identity’ (Friedman 2000).

State formation, progress and modernization threaten, or seem to threaten, cultural expressions in the Cultural Heritage of a social community. The UNESCO ‘*World Culture Report 2000, cultural diversity, conflict and pluralism*’ dealt with the problem of the static, traditionalistic tendency of the concept of Cultural Heritage. Scholars like Anthony Giddens, Elie Cohen and David Throsby, included aspects of pluralism,

modernization, commercialization and globalization in the notion of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Also, recent academic interest in the concept of the ‘transnational communities’ add to our understanding of the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Olwig 1993, Duany 2002). It is not only a set of cultural practices restricted to national (state) communities or its subcultures, but is also part of the transnational community, including members of the national community living abroad, in the former metropolis or elsewhere in the ‘Diaspora’. Therefore, the cultural heritage as practiced by Arubans living in Sint Maarten and the Netherlands deserve our attention.

In 2001, UNESCO adopted as definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage

*‘the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and all it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.’*

UNESCO adopted a view on Intangible Cultural Heritage, which left space for spiritual and material aspects of the intangible heritage. The relation between material and intangible cultural heritage was made more explicit. The relation between these two is complicated since both are closely intertwined. An Amerindian preceramic tool as material object belongs to Aruba’s Material Cultural Heritage, but the knowledge and skill how to use the tool, belong to the field of Intangible Cultural Heritage. A monumental cathedral belongs to the Material Cultural Heritage of a religious community, but the belief systems practiced in that building is part of the communities Intangible Cultural Heritage. Understanding religion without material objects and places of worship is useless, while knowledge of technical tools without knowledge of the skill and knowledge how to use them is meaningless.

It is problematic, even artificial to make an absolute distinction between the material and intangible cultural heritage (compare Miller 1994 on material culture in Trinidad). In this preliminary report, we distinguish intangible heritage from material cultural heritage, but shall not treat them as separate legacies from earlier generations. We will include a short overview of Aruban museums and their Material Heritage and the making of Cultural Heritage in visual art and literature.

The mentioned definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage also opened up the possibility of having different cultural heritages of social groups, such as classes, ethnic groups or sub cultures, within a given society. Intangible Cultural Heritage may function as a mechanism of nation building and cultural integration; it may also function as a symbol of socio-cultural distinction in multicultural societies such as Aruba.

In the Third Round Table Conference of Ministers of Culture, it was suggested to take into account two kinds of culture. In the first place, *‘traditional culture, that is, cultural practices which a social group considers to have derived from the past through intergenerational transmission (even if these are recent inventions) and to which the group designated a certain status.’*

A second kind of culture is ‘popular culture’, *‘referring to those cultural performances and practices through which a sub-group of a society expresses its distinctive identity. These cultural forms are often commercialized and mediated’.*

UNESCO recognized both ‘static’ cultural folklore and the ‘dynamics’ of cultural change as part of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

From this short overview, we conclude that it is necessary to deal with Intangible Cultural Heritage in a pluralistic and dynamic manner. Aruba has been a multicultural society for many centuries. Cultural production and reproduction are an endless process of continuity and change. Tourism, information technology, mass media and migration are the modern agents of globalization and rapid cultural and social change.

However, freeing the concept of Cultural Heritage of its static, traditional (and often Eurocentric) limitations, confronts us with a methodological dilemma. The concept threatens to become boundless and therefore meaningless. The concept seems to have neither a beginning nor an end. In this inventory, we will try to solve this problem in a practical manner. We will emphasize Intangible Cultural Heritage as a plural and dynamic concept, though not without neglecting the historical roots, which are imminent in any heritage. Before we embark on our mission to describe the Intangible Cultural Heritage on Aruba, it is necessary to sketch briefly the history and culture of this intriguing multicultural island society.

## **I.2 Aruba, a history of colonization, creolization and migration**

Indian populations inhabited Aruba before the European discovery. Between 2500 B.C.E. and approximately 850 B.C.E., the island was visited and later on populated by preceramic Indians. These Indians had narrow and long skulls. Men had an average stature of 1.57 m. Women had an average stature of 1.49 m. Cemeteries of the preceramic inhabitants were situated at Malmok, Canashito y Boca Urirama. Their culture and language are still unknown.

Around 850 B.C.E., Caquetio Arowaks from western Venezuela migrated to Aruba, introducing pottery and agriculture. Aruba became part of the coastal Falcon Caquetio nation. The Caquetio language belonged to the Arowak language group. Major settlements were situated at Santa Cruz, Tanki Flip, and Savaneta. Their archaeology belongs to the best studied in the Caribbean region. In contrast to Preceramic Indians, the Caquetios had lower and wider skulls.

The Spanish discovered Aruba in or around 1499. Because of the absence of precious metals, Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao were declared 'Islas Inútiles' (Useless Islands). In 1515, the Spanish deported their inhabitants to Hispaniola to work in the mines. After an unsuccessful colonization effort by Juan de Ampíes (1526-1533), the island was used for cattle breeding and wood cutting. Small numbers of Indians from the mainland migrated to Aruba. Spanish priests from Venezuela attempted to Christianize them.

The Dutch West India Company (WIC) took possession of Aruba in 1636, two years after the conquest of Curaçao. Indians from the mainland continued to migrate. Colonization of the island was forbidden until 1754. In 1767, the colony consisted of one hundred twenty households, twelve of which were in the employ of the WIC. Another one hundred were Indian households. After the dissolution of the WIC (1792) and two English interregnums (1801-1803 and 1806-1816), serious colonization started. The elite was mainly active in commercial agriculture and (illegal) trade with South America. Free peasants remained dependant on small-scale agriculture, fishing, and labor migration within the region (Heinze & Alofs 1997). Slaves never exceeded 21 percent of the population (1849). Slavery was abolished in 1863, when 496 slaves obtained freedom. In the absence of a plantation economy, a peasant culture emerged. Colonists, Indians, and blacks intermixed forming the traditional Mestizo-Creole population. Between 1816 and 1924 there was a population increase from 1,723 in the year 1816 to 9,023 inhabitants in 1923. This growth was

the result of migration, and more importantly an excess of births over deaths.

The oil industry arrived in the 1920s and brought rapid modernization and immigration of industrial laborers, merchants, and civil servants from the Caribbean, Europe, the Americas, and China. Aruba became a pluralistic society of over forty nationalities. Afro-Caribbean migrants surpassed the traditional population in economic position and socio-cultural status. The position of the traditional elite as commercial entrepreneurs was taken over by Lebanese, Jewish, and Chinese migrants from foreign trade companies. Because of migration, the total population increased from 47,585 in 1948 to 60,563 persons in 1981.

A major economic setback was caused when the last major international oil company went out of business in 1985. The Eagle Oil Refining Company (a Royal Dutch/Shell affiliate) ceased its activities in 1953. Tourism, which was first initiated in the 1950s, strongly expanded and became the main economic pillar. The need for labor resulted in a new wave of immigration from the Americas, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and the Netherlands. Once again, economic recovery resulted in labor migration. In 2001, 90,507 inhabitants were counted during the national census. Of these, 30,104 persons were borne outside Aruba.

Aruba has been part of the Dutch Empire since 1636. Between 1845 and 1954 Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, and the windward islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius, and the Dutch part of Sint Maarten formed the colony of Curaçao and dependencies. As a relatively wealthy island, Aruba worked to separate itself from the colony since 1933. Cultural and racial differences with Curaçao strengthened insular nationalism. In 1954, the Netherlands Antilles were granted autonomy within the Dutch kingdom. After a rebellion on Curaçao in May 30, 1969, the Netherlands pressed for formal independence. Out of fear of becoming decolonized as a part of the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba opted for a separate status. Despite unwillingness on the part of Curaçao and the Netherlands, Aruba became an autonomous part of the Dutch kingdom in 1986. The decision that Aruba would become fully independent in 1996 was revoked; Aruba remains autonomous within the Dutch kingdom.

Due to its unique history, its geographical position and its specific climate, Aruba has both Latin American and Caribbean and even European features in its socio-historical, cultural and political heritage, but retains its unique position within the region.

Compared to the English speaking Caribbean, the role of the plantation economy, slavery and economic exploitation were limited. Large-scale slavery was absent and race relations in the colonial era were lenient. The Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage on Aruba is less dominant than on many of the other Caribbean islands (see below).

Decolonization has been taking place since the end of World War II and developed gradually as compared to the decolonization of the English speaking Caribbean. Political and demographic relations with the former mother country are manifold and of importance to the political and judicial stability and the economical climate.

Compared to the South American mainland or the Spanish speaking Caribbean, Aruba is a small-scale island society with a long lasting colonial past. Aruba lacks a history of wars of liberation, revolutions and counterrevolutions, like so many Latin American states. In contrast to larger countries such as neighboring Venezuela and Columbia, Aruba has no distinct Indian population or (sub-) culture and lacks a class of dominant landowners. Spanish influences in for instance traditional architecture are the result of migration and family ties with the mainland instead of colonial domination.

The globalization of mass media, tourism and migration are the agents of rapid change in Aruban cultural reality and its cultural heritage. Growing concern about this issue inclines some Arubians towards cultural conservatism. Others consider these changes to benefit cultural vitality of the local culture. Profound scientific study on the (possible) effects of globalization on the Aruban society and its material and intangible culture has yet to take place (Patullo 2005, Van Wijk, 2005). In this report, we will focus on the traditional cultural heritage, but also pay attention to processes of cultural change and dynamics and on ethnic and cultural pluralism in Aruba's globalizing island culture.

### **I.3 Research on cultural heritage, a short introduction**

Research on the cultural heritage on the Dutch Antilles, including Aruba, started at the end of the nineteenth century, after the abolition of slavery and on the brink of industrialization. The colonial race and class structure started to erode while at the same time the Dutch colonial government attempted to strengthen to Dutch culture in the Caribbean colony. The policy of ‘Hulandisahon’ however, failed. It is possible to distinguish three phases in the study of cultural heritage on Aruba and the Dutch Antilles, of which Aruba was part until 1985.

#### I.3.1 Colonial Ethnology with Curaçao as a starting point, 1897–1954

In 1897, the Historical, Linguistic, National and Ethnological Society (‘Geschied-, Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkundig Genootschap’) was founded on Curaçao. This organization aimed at the documentation of Historical, Linguistic, Social-cultural and Ethnographic situation of the colony ‘Curaçao’. Its members were mostly higher government officials, schoolteachers, catholic priests, successful merchants and military officials. The (former) governor C. Barge acted as the patron of the society. Outside the main island Curaçao; on each of the other Dutch Antillean islands, the Society had ‘corresponding members’. J.J. Beaujon former cantonal judge and owner-editor of the short-lived newspaper ‘Arubasche Courant’ (1894) was Aruba’s corresponding member.

The Society published Yearly Reports (‘Verslagen’) in which many historical studies appeared. The Society also showed interest in ethnology and linguistics. Publications on Papiamentu and folktales (such as the Nanzi stories) belong to the first studies of this language and its oral literature. After six years, the publications of the Society ended.

The establishment of oil refineries on Curaçao and Aruba marked the beginning of industrialization and of a definite rift with the traditional colonial society. The lack of local labor resulted in the migration of thousands of workers from the other Antillean islands and Surinam. Industrial laborers from the Caribbean, Latin America, Madeira, and Asia came to the islands, along with civil servants and teachers from the Netherlands and Surinam. Lebanese, Ashkenazim, Portuguese, and Chinese migrants became important in local trade. Industrialization ended colonial race relations. The Protestant and Sephardim elites on Curaçao remained their positions in commerce,



civil service, and politics, but the black masses were no longer dependent on them for employment or the access to agricultural land. The introduction of general suffrage in 1949 resulted in the formation of non-religious political parties, and the Catholic Church lost much of its influence. Modernization resulted in a growing interest in the traditional colonial society and culture.

In 1935, two decades after the arrival of the oil industry on Curaçao, a major publication on the cultural heritage appeared. John de Pool (Curaçao 1873-Panama 1947), a native born Antillean, with a cosmopolitan orientation, published his 'Del Curaçao que se va' in Santiago de Chili! The book was translated and published in Dutch in 1961 and 1985 under the title 'Zo was Curaçao' (This is what Curaçao looked like). De Pool recorded personal and family memories on the disappearing traditional colonial society. His memories include ethnological folk customs.

In 1947, Nicolaas van Meeteren (Curaçao 1861-1953) published his 'Volkskunde van Curaçao' (Ethnology of Curaçao). This ethnological study focuses on folk customs, such as family relations, music and dance, popular food customs, secular ritual, religion and superstition, folk tales, seasonal feasts, folk medicine, and Papiamentu. Despite its misleading title, Van Meeteren recorded and published ethnology from Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire. Van Meeteren was the first ethnologist who in a systematic and empirical manner studied Antillean Cultural Heritage. Van Meeteren became the founding father of Antillean / Aruban ethnology. Needless to say that Van Meeteren's methods may have met scientific standards of his time, but they have been outdated according to modern scientific practice.

The Yearly Reports of the Society, De Pool and Van Meeteren share a common interest in traditional semi-scientific ethnology. There is clear tendency towards romanticism concerning the pre-industrial past and a clearly Euro-centric point of view. The Groot Nederlandse Gedachte - the Dutch colonial ideology of the turn of the century - dominated these works (Allen 1997). Most attention was dedicated to Curaçao, but also the other island taking part in the colony - including Aruba - was given attention. Because of the limited interest in the other islands, their ethnology tends to stress the commonalities between the islands and not the differences between the six islands each with its unique cultural heritage.

The arrival of oil-industry on Aruba took place in the 1920s. On Aruba as well, modernization stimulated the interest in the pre-industrial past. On Aruba, H.E. Lampe (1931), L. Wernet-Paskell (1992), and many decades later W.E.M. Lampe (1968, 1971) recorded their memories of the Aruba of their youth. They recorded personal and family memoirs in times of great economic, demographic and cultural change. Their works witness the transition from a closed, agricultural to an open, industrial society (Donk, 1997, Rutgers 1994c, 1997).

While schoolteacher H.E. Lampe is strongly optimistic about the blessings of economic progress after the arrival of the oil industry, Laura Wernet-Paskell, also a schoolteacher, showed little interest (or less focus) in economic progress and demographic change. In her writings, often not much more than diary sketches, she collects memories of Aruba in the years before the oil boom years. These were prepared for publication in 1992 and they enjoy great popularity. In his two volume autobiographical sketches, W.E.M. Lampe described the memories of the Aruba of his youth and of his professional career as a public notary, lawyer and politician.

Compared to the Curaçao interest in traditional culture, H.E. Lampe, Wernet-Paskell and W.E.M. Lampe belong to the oral tradition of De Pool. Their publications are valuable sources of written ‘oral history’, but their descriptions of pre-industrial island culture lack an empirical basis and a systematic analysis.

### I.3.2 The search for post-colonial identity, 1954-1985

After the Second World War, decolonization took place. The Antilles became an autonomous part of the Dutch Kingdom. After World War II, activities in the oil-refining sector slowed down. However, political autonomy accelerated cultural autonomy and a growing interest in Antillean / Aruban history, sociology and cultural heritage. In the nineteen fifties, Dutch born authors Harrie Hoetink (1985), Cornelis Goslinga and Johan Hartog (1980) laid the foundation for scientific socio-cultural study on the Antilles and Aruba.

As a result of the autonomy, interest in cultural heritage became evident with the foundation of the ‘Department of Culture and Education’ which had offices in Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire and the Dutch Antillean Windward Islands Saint Martin, Sint Eustatius and Saba. Bonaire born Aruban Hubert ‘Lio’ Booi led the department on Aruba. Booi conducted an oral history project together with collaborator G.F. ‘Ito’

Tromp between 1967 and 1969. Booi and Tromp collected oral histories, mostly from the native mestizo Aruban population. Although not scientifically trained, Booi and Tromp have gathered much valuable information on the Aruban traditional culture. Their work is kept at the Aruba National Library ('collection G.F. 'Ito' Tromp') and deserves re-study by professionally trained anthropologists and historians.

On Curaçao, the Archaeological and Anthropological Institute of the Netherlands Antilles (AAINA) was established in 1967 as a division of the Department of Culture and Education. Archaeological investigation was initiated on the islands. University-trained anthropologist Rose Mary Allen took up oral history projects. Allen studied cultural heritage mostly after 1985, when Aruba had obtained its separate status within the Dutch kingdom. The Archaeological Museum of Aruba (Museo Arqueologico Arubano) was established in 1981. Egbert Boerstra became its first scientifically trained archaeologist (Boerstra 1977, 1982; Ruiz & Fingal 1997, Ruiz & Dijkhoff 2001), marking the beginning of an impressive progress in fieldwork and publications.

In the Antilles, several museums, such as the Curaçao Museum were founded. On Aruba, the foundation 'Aruba Nostra' was established in 1964. Its aim was the preservation of Aruba's natural and historical monuments and buildings. Foundations such as the Aruba Historical Museum, which inaugurated its exposition in the historical Fort Zoutman in, 1984, followed this initiative. A new Foundation for the Preservation of Historic Monuments ('Stichting Monumentenzorg') was established in the same year (De Lange 1997, Van Romondt 1997).

Aside from professionally trained scholars, and governmental organizations, non-professional Antilleans and Arubans took up the search for identity and cultural heritage. They started collecting ethnological facts about the pre-industrial cultural heritage. On Curaçao, Ellis Juliana and father Paul Brenneker did extensive research in the field of traditional ethnology and oral history. Their findings were published in a series of books like *Sambumbo* (10 volumes) and *Zjozjoli* (Brenneker 1969, 1986). These publications include Aruban topics, but cannot be considered a systematic study of Aruban cultural heritage. Mario Odor built up an impressive collection for

his private ethnological museum 'Museo di Antigüedad'. His numismatic museum opened in 1981 (Hermers 1997; Museo 2003).

Another group of amateur historians were a number of catholic priests, who researched the archives of the Catholic Church. Their publications include histories of the several parishes and townships. Father Brada (1946), father Nooyen's 'Millefiori' (1965) and 'Iglesia na Caminda' (Conseho Pastoral 1983) are some of the most important publications.

A driving force in the study of intangible heritage on Aruba was Julio Maduro. His best well known, but by now almost forgotten, ethological products were a series of documentaries called 'Aruba y su Pasado' (Aruba and its past), that appeared on television in the nineteen seventies. Maduro's work shows a clear nostalgia for the pre-industrial past. Maduro was also active as a member of the Aruban commission of the Foundation for National Parks of the Netherlands Antilles (STINAPA), which published two interesting booklets on Aruba's natural and ecological heritage (Booi et. al. 1977; Jansen et. al. 1982).

In the nineteen seventies, the local periodical 'Brindis' ('Toast') included publications on cultural topics by representatives of more traditionally inspired authors, such as Hubert Booi and more modernist progressive authors like Todd Dandare.

Dutch anthropologist Leo Triebels visited Aruba in the 1960's but his dissertation has not been published. In his lectures at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the nineteen eighties, Triebels often made reference to Aruban culture and identity. An exception was his 1980 study of the Antillean / Aruban traditional wake for the deceased, the Ocho Dia. Once again, the focus was on the Ocho Dia on Curaçao.

Socio-cultural studies were taken up by the American anthropologists Green (1969, 1974), Kalm (1975), and Phalen (1977). They studied Aruba as multicultural society; a topic was that was taken up by Alofs & Merkies in 1985 and 1988. Phalen's dissertation also included the study of early twentieth century marriage patterns. Of these, only Green's work (1974) and that of Alofs & Merkies (1990, 2001) have been published and earned serious recognition.

Arubans abroad have gained little attention from scientific scholars. Literature on Antilleans in the Netherlands mainly focus on migrants from Curaçao (Muus et.al., 1983, Koot & Ringeling 1984, Van Hulst 1997). Recently, Van Romondt (ed. 2004)

published on the cultural gap between the Netherlands and Aruba (and the Antilles) as experienced by successful Aruban (and Antillean) intellectuals.

Despite growing interest on the topic, scientific research concerning cultural heritage on Aruba remained scarce. In the periodic 'Schakels' a number of short reports on Antillean folklore were published (Sticusa 1975: 74-6). More important was the publication of the 'Encyclopedia of the Netherlands Antilles' (Hoetink ed., 1969), which contained valuable data on Antillean and Aruban culture and history. In the 1975 'Biography of the Netherlands Antilles' (Sticusa 1975: 74-7), no more than 55 mostly minor and fragmentary publications on Antillean Folklore were mentioned. Of these, only one was exclusively devoted to Aruban cultural heritage. A major publication was the 'Cultural Mosaic of the Netherlands Antilles' by Rene Römer (ed. 1977), in which contributions on cultural and folklore on the six islands appeared. Criens' 1985 inventory on scientific publications of Netherlands Antilles (and Aruba) showed that ten years later no relevant research had been done on Aruban ethnography and folklore (Criens ed. 1985: 158-171). The revised and updated Encyclopedia of the Netherlands Antilles was reprinted in 1985 (De Palm ed., 1985) is a most valuable reference work on Antillean and Aruban cultural heritage. Derkx (1996) offers a complete and concise bibliography of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

As late as 1984, Koulen, Oostindie & Verdon (eds.) and a group of Antillean, Aruban and Dutch collaborators reported on the progress in the field of social studies on the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. In their 1987 research guide, Koulen & Oostindie stated that scientific studies focus mainly on Curaçao, with the study of social integration in the plural Aruban society as a positive exception. Concerning Intangible Cultural Heritage on each of the six islands Koulen and Oostindie (1987: 85) conclude:

*'As for oral history and traditions, although data have been collected, they have not yet led to any scientific publications. This data may yet prove invaluable to social, cultural and historical studies'.*

### I.3.3 Status Aparte, 1985-2003

The revolt on Curaçao, in 1969, triggered the search for identity on all Antillean islands. As of the nineteen seventies, on Aruba, the growing desire to obtain a separate status from the Netherlands Antilles, promoted the search for a distinct Aruban insular identity, emphasizing the differences between the African Caribbean Curaçao and the more Latin America oriented mestizo Aruban folk culture. The struggle for Separation from the Dutch Antilles resulted in a heightened interest in Aruba's cultural identity. 'Status Aparte', which became effective in 1986, forced the Aruban community to detach itself from the Antillean search for national identity, to provide its own institutions, own funds and professionals to perform this task. Also, a national vision on cultural development had to be formulated.

To achieve this goal, in early 1988, a national congress was organized to discuss the position paper 'Bentana Habri' (Open Window) from different scientific and cultural disciplines and viewpoints. 'Bentana Habri' presented a plea for fortifying national cultural elements (traditions, identity), though not without openness for international and global developments. The authors insisted that international exchange could contribute to local cultural development. Internationalization should inspire local cultural development. Despite positive reviews from the cultural field, the paper and the discussions did not result in the formulation of a national cultural policy (also: Merckies 1991: 3-12; Geerman 2001).

After 1986, two institutions have been the main actors in the field of cultural study. The insular department 'Instituto di Cultura' (the Cultural Institute), was founded in 1973. An oral history project by the Instituto di Cultura in the early nineteen nineties, did not result in scientific publications. Project coordinator Mario Dijkhoff (1996) presented an interesting paper on Aruban cultural tradition in the Third Seminar on Latin American Folklore.

UNOCA is a non-governmental advisory board, which advises the minister of culture on the allocation of subsidies for cultural and scientific projects. UNOCA funds are from the Dutch development aid program. UNOCA supported many projects and publications in the cultural field, including folklore, modern arts, and scientific research (Geerman 2001).

With the National Historical Archives as a working place, Lucia Kelly has taken up the challenge to record and analyze oral history. Her efforts have resulted in

publications in which she combined oral history sources with written and photographic documentary research. Her publications concern the position of women, practices concerning marriage festivities and giving birth in the early twentieth century burial (Kelly 1999, 2005a 2005b, Hernandez 1997). Another actor of importance is the National Library, which organizes cultural activities in its yearly cultural month. In September 2002, a well-attended public forum on Aruban folklore took place. In 2003, the focus was on Aruba's museums.

Scientific research on Aruban cultural heritage after 1986 has been disappointing. Scientific disciplines in the field of language, literature and history have seen more progress. Mario Dijkhoff publishes on many aspects of (Aruban) Papiamentu. Wim Rutgers, Ramon Todd Dandaree, Joyce Pereira, Henri Habibe, and others publish on Aruban and Antillean literature (a.o. Rutgers 1994c, 2007, Rutgers red 2003). FUNDINI published several books on socio-political topics (e.g. A. Lampe ed. 1994, 1997). Alofs & Merkies (1990, 2001) published on socio-cultural integration and nation building on Aruba in the twentieth century. To celebrate the third lustrum of the Status Aparte, a number of local professionals reported on the economic, social and cultural developments on Aruba since 1986 (Alofs ed. 2001). In 2006, on the occasion of the royal visit to Aruba, a comparable volume with contributions by sixteen scientists and fifteen artists was presented to Queen Beatrix as the national gift (Heronimo et.al. 2006).

Publication by Aruban historians R.M. 'Duki' Croes and J. 'Chando' Pietersz in 1983 and 1987 and by Hernandez et al. (1986), promised the beginning of a new national scientific historiography, breaking away from the historicist tradition of Johan Hartog. Unfortunately, these publications were not followed by major studies by local Aruban historians, with the exception of Mansurs (1992) 'History of Aruba, 1499-1824'. In 1988, Daal & Schouten published their 'Antillean Story', (*Antilliaans Verhaal*), in which the history of the six islands was presented to a larger audience. The relative unimportance of Aruba during the the seventeenth and eighteenth century, was reflected in Den Heyers History of the Dutch West India Company (Den Heyer (2002). Alofs (1996, 2003, 2009) wrote a monograph on Aruban slavery and published smaller studies on Aruban history. In 1997, 30 Aruban, Antillean and Dutch authors published on pre-industrial Aruba (Alofs, Rutgers & Coomans eds.). In the

same year, 'Antilliaans Verhaal' was followed by a similar, more profound reference book for the Dutch and Antillean/Aruban reader (Dalhuisen et.al. 1997). In 2007, Ridderstaat published an impressive study on the economic history of Aruba and the history of the Lago Oil Company.

Several authors studied the political history of the Netherlands Kingdom, including the separatist movement on Aruba. Kasteel (1956), Verton (1977), Paula (1989), Van Aller (1994) and Oostindie & Klinkers (2001, 2003) and Alofs (forthcoming) are the most reliable studies. A. Lampe (1992, 2001), Jansen van Galen (2004), Sluis (2004), Van Romondt (red. 2005), Van Romondt et.al. (red. 2005) and A.G. Croes' (2006) dissertation are the most important introductions on possible future relations of Aruba and the Dutch Antilles to the Dutch kingdom and the European Community.

Belgian ethnomusicologist Gansemans (1989) published a valuable study on the musical instruments of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. Traditional healing methods were first studied on Curaçao by Van Meeteren (1947: 235-6). Several Dutch anthropology students (e.g. Evers 1996) and Aruban biologist Byron Boekhoudt (1997) reported on folk medicine on Aruba. On Curaçao, Dinah Veeris published several books on folk medicine, but former Curaçao based pharmacist A.M.G. Ruttens (2003, also 1999) recent publication is the most elaborate study on ethno-pharmacological practice on the islands.

In the fields of archaeology and museums, there has been impressive progress in recent years. The Archaeological Museum Aruba, which is part of Instituto di Cultura, has made impressive progress in the study of pre-historical archaeology (see bibliography under Versteeg, Tacoma & Van der Velde; Versteeg & Ruiz; Versteeg & Rostain eds.; Ruiz & Dijkhoff, Alofs & Dijkhoff eds. 2003, Dijkhoff & Linville 2004, also Wagenaar Hummelinck 1993). Successful joint projects by the Archaeological Museum Aruba, the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden and a number of international partners prove that innovative scientific research needs international cooperation and institutional back up, professional exchange and sufficient financial resources. The Archaeological Museum exhibits the preceramic and ceramic archaeology of Aruba. The Archeological Museum of Aruba moved to a renovated a monumental building in 2008.

The Numismatic Museum moved to an adjoining historical building in 2003 and renewed its exhibition in August 2003. The Historical Museum of Aruba in the



historic Fort Zoutman (1798) reopened in September 2003, with a new exposition on colonial history in the nineteenth century. In 1994, the minister of Public Health, Social Affairs, Culture and Sports founded the National Council of Historical Monuments and Buildings. The Council aims at the preservation, renovation and documentation of historic buildings (Webb-Kock 1997).

After 1985, numerous individuals, such as Olinda van der Linden and Johnny Dania to mention only two, have been active in collecting oral histories and artifacts. Aruban borne teacher Denis Henriquez used oral tradition in his first novel 'Zuidstraat'. In a chapter called 'Dera Gai' (Burying the Rooster), Henriquez links the ethnographical past of the traditional harvest festival to the sociological present of gender relations. Henriquez converted this chapter into a film script, which was made into a movie directed by Burny Every.

Dutch borne schoolteacher Jacques Thönissen collected folktales, which he used as source of inspiration in his novels. Findings of Van der Linden, Dania, Henriquez and Thönissen, as well as those of the Booi / Tromp oral history project, deserve closer attention and appreciation by trained professionals.

Outside Aruba and the Netherlands, little information on Aruban culture and heritage is available. Historic, linguistic, and political barriers hamper scientific cooperation between the (former) Dutch Caribbean and the Spanish, English, or French speaking Caribbean. Scientific exchange within the (former) Dutch Caribbean (Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, Surinam) is limited, while the Dutch scientific interest in 'The West' has declined over the years (with the possible exception of Surinam). Notable exceptions are A. Lampe 2001, Alofs, 1994, 2001, 2002 and several publications of the Archeological Museum Aruba. West-Durán (2003) included a section on Aruba in his reference guide 'African Caribbeans'.

There are few reliable websites on the subject (Geerman 2001). Websites like [www.visitaruba.com](http://www.visitaruba.com), [www.aruba.com](http://www.aruba.com), [www.caribline.com/islands/ar/](http://www.caribline.com/islands/ar/), [www.promoaruba](http://www.promoaruba) or [www.interknowledge.com/aruba/history](http://www.interknowledge.com/aruba/history) (the official web site of the Aruba Tourist Authorities), mostly focus on the island as a tourist destination.

Scientific research on Aruban cultural heritage and identity so far is unsatisfactory when taking into consideration the urgent need for recording and analyzing cultural heritage in a rapidly changing society. The general directions for a new national cultural policy as indicated in the 1988 position paper 'Bentana Habri' was not put in practice (also Geerman 2001). In 2005, a new cultural policy was outlined in 'Integraal Cultuurbeleid'. Once again, the importance of research in the field of cultural heritage was underlined. The study and preservation of cultural heritage is hampered by a lack of institutional and financial support, international cooperation and the fact that publications appear in Papiamentu or Dutch, languages that often do not sufficiently reach the international scientific community. The policy of the Archaeological Museum Aruba to publish mainly in English should be understood in this perspective.

Dedicated amateurs and individual scientific professionals have taken up research on Intangible Cultural Heritage generations ago. They have collected pieces of the puzzle on the Aruban intangible cultural heritage. These pieces have not yet been put together systematically, nor have their research findings been examined from a scientific point of view. Therefore, it is not yet possible to present a complete overview of the islands Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Aruban community is undoubtedly fascinated by (the study of) its intangible and material cultural roots. Unfortunately, Aruba lacks a scientific infrastructure (a cultural policy, trained personnel, adequate financial resources and international cooperation) to revive the study of its cultural past and present.

As will become clear in the coming sections, the study of the Aruban cultural heritage is fragmented, incomplete and often speculative, but it is also intriguing and despite its limitations, it clearly shows the unique position of the Aruban identity on the cultural map of the wider Caribbean region.

## II Aruba Intangible Heritage, an inventory

### II.1 National Symbols

Papiamentu, the coat of arms, the national flag, and the national anthem are the most important national symbols. They stress the inhabitants' love for the island, the close connection to the Caribbean Sea, and the multi-cultural composition of its population. Papiamentu as a symbol of national identity in a multilingual society will be discussed in a later section (II.11.1).



Source: De Palm (red.) 1985: 42.

The Coat of Arms is the oldest of the three national symbols. Phalen (1981: 228-9) analyzed the history and meaning of the Aruban 'escudo' (coat of arms). The island council of Aruba adopted the Coat of Arms on November 15, 1955.

*'A flowering Aloe Vera occupies the upper left quadrant. ... The plant is included since the aloe industry is considered to have been Aruba's first industry (neglecting gold mining and agriculture! L.A.). The upper right quadrant displays Aruba set in the sea and the elevation or mountain is Hooiberg (Haystack). Shaking hands, representing friendship with other nations is depicted in the lower left quarter. The lower right section includes a ship's wheel demonstrating Aruba's long involvement with shipping and interaction with other nations.'*

The National Anthem and Flag were adopted by the Island Council on March 16, 1976. The national anthem 'Aruba Dushi Tera' ('Aruba Precious Country' or 'Aruba

Beloved Island’) was composed by Juan Chabaya ‘Padu’ Lampe and Rufo Wever and is played and sung on many occasions. The third verse by Hubert Booi was added in 1976.

### Aruba Dushi Tera

*Aruba patria aprecia  
nos cuna venera  
chikito y simpel bo por ta  
pero si respeta.*

#### Refran:

*O, Aruba, dushi tera  
nos baranca tan stima  
nos amor p’abo t’asina grandi  
cu n’tin nada pa kibre (bis)*

*Bo playanan tan admira  
cu palma tu dorna  
bo escudo y bandera ta  
orgullo di nos tur!*

#### Refran

*Grandeza di bo pueblo ta  
su gran cordialidad  
cu Dios por guia y conserva  
su amor pa libertad!*

#### Refran

### Aruba Precious Country

*Aruba beloved home  
our venerated cradle  
though small and simple you may be  
you are indeed esteemed.*

#### Refrain:

*Aruba our dear country  
our rock so well beloved  
our love for you is so strong  
that nothing can destroy it. (repeat)*

*Your beaches so much admired  
with palm trees all adorned  
your coat of arms and flag  
the symbols of our pride.*

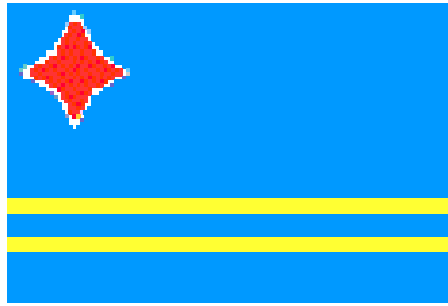
#### Refrain

*The greatness of our people  
is their great cordiality  
and may God guide and preserve  
its love for freedom.*

#### Refrain

Source: [www.visitaruba.com](http://www.visitaruba.com)

The Aruba flag has four colors: Bunting yellow, Larkspur (or U.N.) blue, Union Jack Red and White. The flag of Aruba consists of a red star with a white outline set against a sea-blue background with two parallel yellow stripes. The star symbolizes the four points of the compass, denoting the varied source of more than 40 nationalities living on Aruba. Each of these colors is significant: the color red of the star symbolizes love of country and the white outline surrounding it represents the white sandy beaches around Aruba as well as the purity of Aruba's inhabitants who respect justice, freedom and righteousness. The color blue of the flag denotes the surrounding Caribbean sea.



The two yellow stripes on the flag denote the free position of Aruba with respect to The Netherlands and other islands while maintaining closeness with them. The color yellow symbolizes abundance - as evidenced by the sources of economic and industrial prosperity, representing the island's past and present industries of gold, aloe, tourism, the oil refinery and so forth (source: [www.visitaruba.com](http://www.visitaruba.com)).

The Dutch flag functions as a symbol of the unity of Aruba, the Netherlands, and the Netherlands Antilles.

## II. 2 Anniversary celebrations

Aruba has many festive days. It is possible to make a distinction between (secular) national festive days, religious festive days, traditional festive days, and ethnic festive days. Festive days concerning labor and professional groups are growing in number and popularity. Also, international festive days are celebrated.

### II.2.1 National festive days

National festive days are the 'Dia di Himno y Bandera' ('Day of the National Anthem and the Flag') on March 18 and 'Queen's Day' on April 30. The first stresses Aruba's political autonomy, the second the lasting partnership of the Dutch kingdom. Thousands of Arubans living in the Netherlands, either as permanent migrants or students, gather and celebrate '18 di Maart' each year in Leiden. Aruba's former political leader Francois Gilberto 'Betico' Croes (1938-1986) is commemorated on his birthday, January 25. Croes is the personification of Aruba's struggle for separation from the Netherlands Antilles.

### II.2.2 Religious festive days

Owing to the fact that the majority of the population adheres to Roman Catholicism, most religious festive days have a Christian origin or orientation. Advent, Christmas, The Holy Week ('Santa Semana'), Easter and Whitsuntide accord to the catholic calendar. Other religions have festive days according to their yearly calendar. The Jewish people celebrate Yom Kippour and Jewish New Year's day.

### II.2.3 Traditional festive days

Traditional ceremonies often have a Catholic origin or orientation and are based on the pre industrial dependency on agriculture. On New Years Eve, best wishes are delivered at homes by small bands singing a serenade called 'Dandé'. St. John's Day (24 June) is celebrated with traditional bonfires and the ceremony of 'Dera Gai' (the burying of the rooster). Traditionally, a rooster was buried, leaving its head under a calabash above the ground. At present, the ceremony is carried out without the rooster. While a small band is playing and singing the traditional song of San Juan, blindfolded dancers from the audience try to hit the calabash with a stick. These festivities will be discussed in paragraph II.6.

#### II.2.4 Ethnic Festive Days

Several ethnic Groups celebrate their national or cultural festivities. The Portuguese community (originating from the Portuguese island of Madeira) celebrates Portugal Day or 'Dia di Camões' on June 10, to commemorate the death of Luis de Camões, Portugal's national epic poet. The national festive day of Madeira is celebrated on July 1. The Chinese community celebrates New Year according to the Chinese calendar in January or February. Although the Bonaire community has integrated in the Aruban population, some Bonaireans still celebrate 'Dia di Boneiru' (Day of Bonaire) on September 6. National festive Days of the Netherlands Antilles (October, 21), and its individual islands, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Statia and Saba, of which Aruba had a considerable population influx in the second quarter of the twentieth century, are almost completely neglected.

Recent migrants often celebrate their national festive days in newly established social organizations. Part of the Philippine community is united in the organization United Filipino Community in Aruba (Ufilcoa, app. 600 members) and celebrates their national festive days as a distinct but not exclusive ethnic group. Philippine Independence Day, on June 12, celebrates freedom from Spanish Rule (1898). The Surinamese community, which has increased recently because of migration, celebrates Emancipation Day on July 1, commemorating the abolition of Slavery on July 1, 1863. This day is called 'Ketti Koti', the breaking of the chains (of slavery). Surinamese migrants celebrate Independence Day on November 24 with mixed feelings, because of the failure of decolonization in that country. Many Surinamese migrants established themselves on Aruba to escape impoverishment and dictatorship in their country.

Migrants from Columbia have united themselves in the ethnic club 'Amigos de Colombia', but this organization does not seem to enjoy much popularity amongst the many thousands of Colombians on the island. Owing to the great number of Spanish speaking migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, the popularity of the Dia de La Rasa (October, 12) has increased somewhat in recent years, but is far from a national festive day, as in many parts of Latin America (Trouillot 1995: 108-40). The (Asian) Indian Business Association recently has been established to promote the

acceptance of the Indian community on the island. (Echeverry 1999, Alofs & Merkies 2001: 226).

### II.2.5 Festive days concerning labor and professional groups

Festive days concerning labor and professional groups are growing in number and popularity. International Labor Day is celebrated worldwide on May 1. Many occupational groups and service organizations have their own festive-day.

### II.2.6 International Festive Days

International festive days are growing in number and popularity as well. North American migrants, tourists and the mass media introduced Valentine's Day (February 14), which is becoming more popular by the year. On Valentines Day, within the family or the working place small gifts and cards are exchanged expressing friendship, appreciation and best wishes. April's Fool Day is celebrated on April 1. Mother's and Father's Day are in May and June. Halloween (October 31) is gaining immense popularity. Both North American Santa Claus (Christmas) and Dutch 'Sinterklaas' (December, 5) are celebrated on Aruba. Dutch migrants introduced this Dutch custom on Aruba during the twentieth century.

International initiatives concerning themes such as Women's Day, Day of the Museum and Day of the United Nations meet with varying response.

### II.2.7 Carnival

Carnival needs special attention since it is becoming Aruba's number one cultural festival for both the local population and tourists alike. Razak (1997) and Oduber (1996) published on Aruban Carnival. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this festivity was celebrated on a small scale by the elite population of Oranjestad in a modest, rather European way. According to Dijkhoff (1997 see paragraph II.6.1.1), in the townships the 'fiesta de Mamaracho' was celebrated as a predecessor to modern carnival.

The arrival of Caribbean migrants, especially from Trinidad and Tobago, marked the beginning of the more popular form of Carnival. In San Nicolas, Caribbean migrants started to organize Carnival festivities. Traditional elements of the Trinidadian Carnival were imported, like Calypso music, with social comments in its lyrics, the (much faster) Road March, with Steel Pan Music, and the by now



traditional Jouvert Morning, a dancing tour in the streets of San Nicolas in the early hours.

During the 1950's all population groups, including the native Aruban population accepted Carnival as a national festivity. Carnival spread over the island's townships. Jump-up parties - public-dancing parties on the streets - started to take place all over the island. As of 1954, Carnival was organized by the 'Foundation for Aruban Carnival' (Stichting Arubaans Carnaval). Formal contests to elect the Carnival Queen and the yearly Road March contest were introduced. Also Aruban / Dutch Antillean components were added to the Carnival celebrations. The Tumba is a typical Aruban/ Curaçaoan dance, which came to have its own contest. Carnival season ends with the burning of the Momo, the king or spirit of Carnival (Razak 1997: 74-5).

Aruban Carnival lost its European character and has become one the worlds most spectacular and colorful Carnival events. Carnival takes place before catholic Lenten season. In 2004, Aruba celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the national carnival.

Arubans living in Sint Maarten (Netherlands Antilles) and the Netherlands participate in the carnival festivities in those communities. The Antillean/Aruban Carnival in Rotterdam in July or on Sint Maarten in April attract Arubans, both from Aruba and the 'Diaspora'.

## II.3 Cultural Values

### II.3.1 Reciprocity: Paga Lomba and Sam

Cultural Values in the pre-industrial Aruban community centered around the notion of reciprocity. Both in agricultural production and on the marriage market, 'paga lomba' was an important concept. 'Paga lomba' (to pay with labor) was a reciprocal organization of labor. Brothers, cousins, and neighbors helped one another during the agricultural cycle, in activities like planting, weeding and harvesting. Before the actual working of anyone's field, the 'paga lomba' participants would decide in what order their cunuku's would be worked. The one whose land was worked had 'gana lomba'; those helping were 'paga lomba' (Phalen 1977: 86). Heinze (1987) in his appropriately called masters thesis 'Dunami un man, ruman' (Give me a hand, brother) basically confirmed Phalen's findings.

Phalen (1977) also analyzed marriage patterns on the traditional population. Two types of marriage dominated. The bi-lateral cross cousin marriage held that cousins married. This marriage type will be discussed in more detail in the section on Kinship. The so-called 'paga lomba' marriage was the second marriage type. Paga lomba is a metaphor he borrowed from the agricultural practice of 'paga lomba'. A direct exchange between marriage partners took place. Brothers-in-law exchanged their sisters (for a critical discussion see Alofs & Merkies 2001: 38-40).

Another reciprocal custom, which can be compared to 'paga lomba', is 'sam'. Sam is a system of saving. Groups of mostly women decide to pay each other a certain amount of money on a regular basis, for example once a month. Every month one of the members receives shares from all participants. The number of shares equals the number of participants plus one, for the benefit of the organizing person. He or more often she receives two shares of every participant, one in the beginning of the 'sam' and one at the end. According to the Encyclopedia of the Netherlands Antilles (De Palm 1985: 421), the word 'sam' is derived from the Dutch word 'samen' (together) or the expression 'sam-sam' (sharing equally).

Another form of sharing took place in the fishing industry. During the nineteenth century, larger ships and the smaller canoes would go fishing with towlines and depth contours. The larger ships would make longer trips of ten to twenty days. The trip's

profits would be split between the owner, the captain and the other participants. The owner had a right to half of the day's catch, while the other half was divided equally between the others. The captain was to receive two portions.

### II.3.2 Communication style

According to oral tradition, the communication style on Aruba was courteous. People greeted each other with the question 'Con ta Bai?' (How do you do?), which was answered by a polite 'Bon, danki' (Fine, thank you). People informed mutually and extensively on the well being of their families et cetera. Respect for authority structures and gender and age roles were of great importance. Refusing a request was considered impolite.

Tradition and the small scale of the island societies influence everyday interaction patterns. In two papers on Antillean interaction and communication patterns, Curaçao-an sociologist Römer (1981, 1991) stresses the fact that Antillean / Aruban people have intertwined, multiple relations. People interact as friends, relatives, clients and customers, as politician and voters et cetera at the same time. According to Römer, multiple relation result in role conflict and this promotes both an informal interaction style as well as a certain degree of reserve. In addition, the role of gossip entices people to indirect communication styles, once again: as in any small-scale community (also Marcha & Verweel 2003). As a consequence, to many outside observers, Aruban and Antillean communication styles lack openness and goal orientation.

In a recent master's thesis, Aruban communications student Tromp (2003: 50, 55) concluded that communication styles among students of the University of Aruba and the Aruba Teachers Training College tended to be 'attributional'. They tend to take into account many contextual aspects within the communication process. Misunderstandings are readily ascribed to the sending and not to the receiving party. Although, according to Tromp, Aruba is becoming an individualistic society, students base their communicational behavior more on contextual information, than on context free information.

### II.3.3 Mechanisms of socio-cultural inclusion and exclusion

As any other society, Aruba has its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Class lines on Aruba are loosely defined and are intertwined with ethnic relations and linguistic divisions. The upper class consists of traditional elite and Lebanese, Chinese, and Jewish minorities and expatriates from the United States and Europe. These groups hold better positions in tourism, trade, and banking, and work in the government or the educational system. Economic recovery after 1988 increased upward economic mobility for the local middle class, whose spending has increased. Lower class Arubians and recent immigrants from South America and the Philippines form the lower social classes. Some eight thousand unskilled or semi-skilled immigrants from South America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines are employed in lower-level positions in tourism, trade, and the construction sector. Women from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Haiti, and Jamaica work as live-in domestics for upper and middle class families.

Recent scientific studies on social diversity and inclusion topic were published by the Sociaal-Economische Raad (National Economic Development Council, 1995), the Central Bureau of Statistics (2002, 2003) and Alofs, Milliard & Stigter (2003). Other publications on pluralism, ethnic relations and social integration were discussed in paragraph I.3.2.

## II.4 Kinship, gender and division of labor

Phalen (1977), De Waal Malefijt & Hellerman (1972), Green (1973) and Alofs & Merckies (1990, 2001) analyzed kinship structures and mating patterns on Aruba. Kelly (1999) studied the participation of Aruban women in the labor market between 1900 and 1927. These publications proved that the traditional Aruban family and kinship patterns differ fundamentally from the generally female centered (often matrifocal) Afro Caribbean kinship patterns (compare Marks 1976 on Curaçao; Shepherd, Brereton & Bailey eds., 1995, and Barrow 2001 for a general overview on the Caribbean region).

### II.4.1 Kinship

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the extended family and the conjugal nuclear family household were the centers of kinship organization. Illegitimate birth and the matrifocal household were relatively low on Aruba as compared to Curaçao and Bonaire because of the absence of large-scale system of slavery. The everyday authority was in the hands of the mother, the ultimate authority with the father. Some authors (Green 1973) characterized the traditional family as matricentric kin instead of matrifocal (De Waal Malefijt & Hellerman 1972).

Traditionally, because of patri- or matrilocal settlement, groups of brothers and/or sisters and their spouses lived near each other on family grounds. In this way, young couples assured themselves of their provision grounds and family labor. Inheritance, like descent, was bilateral. Normally, all children received a share.

Marriage between close kin was common. Incest prohibition applied to the 'primo carnal' (also: 'primo ruman', the bilateral first cousin). Geographical and genealogical propinquity therefore were virtually synonymous. Certain family names therefore have belonged to certain townships for many generations (Phalen 1977).

Kinship terminology parallels that of the Roman Catholic canon law. The term 'yui mayó' refers to the oldest offspring's special position as the first successor of the parents. Ritual kinship focused around the godparents, the 'padrino' and 'madrina'. The padrino and madrina had clearly defined obligations regarding the godchild's baptism, first Holy Communion, and marriage (Alofs & Merckies 2001: 40-41). Kinship terminology was and is also used to address oneself to non-relatives, the terms 'ruman' (brother), 'primo' (cousin) and 'swa' (brother in law) meaning friend.

Traditional kinship patterns have been eroding slowly but surely since the arrival of the oil industry.

#### II.4.2 Traditional division of labor

Traditional division of labor stipulated that the men worked the provision grounds, usually of about 2 two hectares. The men would lay out their 'cunukus' and cultivate them. They would plant Indian millet, beans, peanuts and pumpkin. In addition, the men were in charge of maintaining the cactus fences. The whole family would help take care of the plantings. In harvest time, families often worked together with other families or family members. 'Paga lomba' meant that families would take turns helping each other without having to pay for it.

During the nineteenth century, lack of employment and rainfall forced Arubans to travel the region to find temporary employment. Hundreds of men left for the banana plantations in Venezuela and Columbia. Arubans worked in the construction of the railroads in Surinam. On Curaçao, phosphate mining and the oil industry offered employment to the Arubans. Cuba was a major destination between 1917 and 1922. The money they made was sent home to help their families survive. The arrival of the oil industry in 1924 made an end to this form of forced labor migration (Pietersz 1983).

Aruban women were generally mothers and wives; they worked in the home and on the cunuku (the provision grounds). Women would also trade in surplus agricultural produce and, in the absence of their spouse, would take over as head of the family. Two other jobs available to women were midwifery and to plaiting hats (Croes 1987, Kelly 1999).

## II.5. Traditional Architecture

Interest in Aruban traditional architecture first became apparent in 1966, when Temminck-Groll (1966, 1986) visited Aruba to research the Aruban monuments and historic building, producing an list of buildings in need of preservation. The following years, Nijdam (1967) and Dennert (1968) published on traditional Aruban architecture. Webb-Kock (1997) and Bakker & Van der Klooster (2001) summarized the history of the preservation of monuments and historic buildings on Aruba. In 2007, Bakker & Van der Klooster published an impressive study Aruban architecture. Their works offers a thorough overview of many aspects Aruba's culture and history in relation to of the existing Aruban monuments. On the request of UNESCO, Alofs (2007) made an inventory of Places of Memory of the Slave Trade Route. Three historical buildings and one archaeological site were officially declared as Place of Memory of the Slave Trade Route by UNESCO.

The Historical Museum of Aruba dedicates attention to traditional architecture in its permanent exposition. The simplest Aruban dwelling was known as the 'cas di torto' or 'cas di lodo' and originated in the peninsula Paraguaná, Venezuela. A structure of tree branches and twigs, filled up with loam (a mixture of mud and manure) and grass, formed the basis for this modest house. Often the floor was made of tamped-down clay. There were, typically, no doors between rooms; airy curtains were used instead. The walls were whitewashed (Gill 1997).

Later on, the 'cunuku house' was introduced. A mixture of cement and stone was poured into an encasement of planks. The walls were raised gradually, until they had reached the desired height; this type of wall is known as 'muraya basha'. The edge of the roof and the outside of the house were sometimes decorated with floral or animal patterns, or simple figures. These decorated houses are called 'cas floria', flowered house.

Bigger dwellings had a so-called 'saddle-roof', as well as more rooms, which were also more spacious. To the front and back of the house, spread out over the whole width, a space called the 'hadrei' could be found.

The traditional cunuku-house had a more or less set division. Two bedrooms ('camber') on the windy side of the house and the living room ('sala') in the middle formed the heart of the home. The kitchen, with its characteristic 'fogon' (built-in

fireplace), was situated on the least windy side of the house, to avoid severe damage in case of a fire. To catch rainwater, the 'regenbak' (cistern) was positioned at about a meter's distance from the house. The traditional Aruban house was not complete without a 'magazina' (pantry) and 'baño' (bathroom), often elsewhere on the terrain. The 'cura' (yard) was cleaned well, to avoid vermin entering the house.

The decoration of the house was generally sober and depended on the family's wealth, or lack thereof. The furniture was simple. The most treasured showpieces were kept in a display cabinet, the 'cashi di pronkstuk' (Van Alphen 1997; Bakker & Van der Klooster 2001).



## II.6 Customs and traditions I

### II.6.1 Feasts, ceremonies and celebrations

Traditional feasts were already mentioned in section II.2.3. However, three traditional festivities need closer attention.

#### II.6.1.1 Dandé and Noche Buena

The Dandé is the Aruban New Year's serenade. On New Year's Eve, best wishes were (and presently: are) delivered at homes by small bands singing a serenade called 'Dandé'. The musical groups normally consisted of a singer and five or six musicians, playing tambú (drum), guitar and maracas. In his paper, read at the Third Seminar on Latin American and Caribbean Folklore, Mario Dijkhoff (1997) wrote on the Dandé:

*'La palabra dande procede de dandará, lo que en papiamento antiguo significa parandear. (parranda es un grupo de hombres que sale, tocando, cantando y bebiendo para divertirse). El dande empezó alrededor del año 1880. El grupo que toca y canta el dande consiste de 5 a 8 personas, quienes con violín, tambora, guiro (los principales instrumentos), y con cantante pasa pa casa en casa de familia, de amigos, después del cambio de año, o sea a eso de las doce de la noche, cantando y expresando mejores deseos para un venturoso año. Durante se recorrido hay otros amigos que se usan a la cuadrillo con maracas, clavillos o cualquier otro instrumento musical, para seguir la paranda. Las familias de las casas, en forma de agradecimiento, depositan algo de dinero en el sombrero que el cantante lleva en las manos. Los pregones del cantante se puede alargar, como uno desea. Y después del dande se le brinda algo de beber a los intrigrantes del grupo, que muchas veces interpreta otro pieza antes de partir. Para darles una idea, quisiera traducir algunas pregones para ustedes:*

*'O dande nos a yega na bo porta / O dande, llegamos a su puerta  
O dande nos a bin pa saludá bo / O dande, venimos a saludarle  
O dande nos a trese bon deseo / O dande, traemos buenas deseos  
O dande bendishon lo compañía bo / O dande, que bendición le acompañe.'*

Rutgers (1994a: 50, 1994b) analyzed the existing literature on the Aruban dandé.

According to Jacobo Erasmus, dandé was first celebrated on Aruba in 1863, but there

is no scientific proof to this. The origin of dandé is still unclear: because of the call-response character of the dandé songs, some people think the dandé has an African origin; others state that the word dandé is derived from the French ‘dandin’ or the English word ‘dandy’. Since 1974, the yearly dandé-festival has contributed enormously to the revival of this traditional custom.

Traditionally, the dandé was preceded by the ‘Noche Buena’, on December 24 and followed by ‘La fiesta de Mamarocho’. Little is recorded on these somewhat similar celebrations and their interrelations. Informants state that the groups were smaller than the ‘Grupo di Dandé’. Once again, we quote Dijkhoff’s 1997 paper.

*‘Noche Buena se celebra el 24 de diciembre. En este dia grupo de músicos van casa de casa tocando, cantando y desando a las familias felieces pascuas. Después de la Navidad y Año Neuvo la gente contribuye con loque sobra de estas dis fiestas y festejan la Fiesta de Contribución. En esta manerese despidide la navidad y el primero de enero. En la temporada después de la Navidad y Año Nuevo, pero antes de cuarisma la gente viste máscaras y celebra de Mamaracho, que hoy dia es la fiesta de Carnaval.*

#### II.6.1.2 San Juan and Dera Gai

San Juan is the harvest feast that is celebrated on June 23 and 24. During the San Juan celebration one wore festive clothes with a lot of yellow, the color of the blooming kibrahacha tree. On June 23, the harvest offal was burnt, at which the men had to jump over the fire. Women performed the traditional ribbon dance. On June 24, the feast of San Juan, the beheading of John the Baptist was commemorated. The ‘deramento di gai’ (burial of the cock) was the highlight. A cock would be buried up to its neck in the ground. Then blindfolded dancers from the audience would try in three turns to bash its head in while a ‘conhunto’ played the Dera Gai song. A difference between the old and the new Dera Gai is that nowadays not a cock, but a gourd is sacrificed.

The origin and history of the yearly harvest festival are widely debated on Aruba. The Aruban harvest feast almost sunk to oblivion after the establishment of the oil industry, but in recent decennia, it revived. Reliable scientific research has not yet taken place. According to some (e.g. UNOCA, undated), the yearly celebration of San

Juan has a Central American origin. There, catholic clergymen would have replaced the Indian ('heathen') harvest feast with the celebration of Saint John. It would have spread southwards from Mexico to Venezuela and Aruba.

Phalen (1981, also: 1977: 85) hesitated between a possible European or a Amerindian origin of the festivities. Phalen places San Juan in the center of the yearly agricultural cycle. The festivities mark the transition period of aloe cultivation to food crop cultivation. We quote from his almost forgotten paper:

*'The beginning of the food crop half of the Aruban agricultural cycle is traditionally marked by the Fiesta di San Juan on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Work with aloe stops until the foodstuff harvest in January. The close relationship between the Fiesta di San Juan and the summer solstice warrants comment. The summer solstice occurs on June 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> and is ritually and ceremonially marked in many cultures. In the past, Arubans celebrated this day by lighting great fires and partying through the night. Several fires can still be seen burning on the island on the night of June 24<sup>th</sup>. It is during this occasion that a blind-eye is turned to excessive drinking and sexual trysting. As Turner (...) quotes, tolerance of usually socially proscribed behavior characteristically marks the liminal status of such festivals. It is uncertain whether this celebration is rooted in European or South American Indian heritage of the native Aruban population, or shaped by outside influences. The Catholic influence is quite obvious, especially in the use of the feast day of St. John the Baptist for the festivities and as the turning point for changing attention from aloe to edibles. Since the island's food crop yields is not dependable, fertility is the focus of this ritual. John the Baptist is the Catholic symbol of fertility. ... John was born of elderly parents, Zachary and Elisabeth. Throughout their marriage, Elisabeth was barren, yet at old age she conceived and gave birth. The conception and birth of St. John clearly signifies fertility. The Aruban setting of June 24<sup>th</sup> for marking the transition to edible crop production reflects the ritual importance of St. John's feast as an attempt to secure a good crop.'*

The relationship between San Juan and the San Juan festivities becomes even more intense when we realize that during the ritual of Dera Gai a rooster is decapitated, just like St John was killed by Herodotus. Dijkhoff (1997: 95) however, comes up with a

different explanation and meaning of the ritual of Dera Gai. According to him, the Dera Gai ritual traditionally took place on June 29, Saint Peter's Day. The rooster was sacrificed because of its role in the betrayal of Christ by Peter.

Fact is that in many Catholic regions –such as the agricultural east and southern provinces of the Netherlands- the burning of large fires takes place on this same day. To Phalen (note 2, page 228) this is indication of the possible Catholic-European origin of the San Juan / Dera Gai Festivities. The Dera Gai ceremony cannot be of pre-Columbian origin, since cattle breeding and poultry farming in the America's were imported from Europe in the sixteenth century.

The yearly celebrations of San Juan / Dera Gai are of special importance to the Aruban population. This reinvented tradition is an important marker of the islands national identity. It will be most relevant to study the origins of this tradition.

#### II.6.1.3 Ocho Dia

Dutch anthropologist Leo Triebels (1980) studied the traditional wake on Aruba and Curaçao in his 'Ocho dia or Novena, an African retention in the Caribbean?'. Triebels' essay was influenced by the acculturation studies by Herskovits (1990), Métraux (1989), Foster and Mintz & Price (1992, 2003). These authors investigated African and early European influences (retentions) in Caribbean folk culture.

The traditional wake is called 'Ocho Dia' (eight days', the duration of the customary mourning period, in which close kin and friends participate. During the evening praying took place, which was lead by the 'resadó' (prayer) or 'sacristán' . Also, public mourning and story telling took place. Because of the frequent use (and apparently misuse) of alcohol in the wake, during the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church strongly opposed to this folk custom. At the last evening of mourning the altar is taken apart, and chairs are turned upside down. Windows are opened to make sure the spirit of the deceased is able to leave the house. Although the custom of visiting the home of the deceased has remained, the traditional ceremonies of the 'Ocho Dia' are loosing popularity in the course of modernization.

Triebels rejected the generally accepted theory that the 'Ocho Dia' has an African origin as was first introduced by De Pool in 1935 and later repeated by Van Meeteren (1947) and others. According to Triebels, the wake has a medieval Spanish

origin. Hoetink (1986) doubted Triebel's findings but after Triebel's analysis, research after the 'Ocho Dia' came to a stand still.

The characteristics, the origins and local adaptations of all three major traditional cultural festivities - dandé, San Juan and Ocho Dia - are still unclear and deserve closer examination by professionally trained ethnologists. In addition, comparative study of similar cultural rituals should be taken into account.

## II.7 Customs and Traditions II

### II.7.1 Food customs

In the traditional menu, maize-dishes ('funchi', 'pan bati'), goat meat, fish, and stewpots ('stoba') of local vegetables (peas, beans) dominated. Fish formed an important part of the daily diet of most Arubans. A special soup is the 'Soppi di Yuana' (iguana soup). Soppi mondongo is a soup made of entrails. Hunting iguanas was declared illegal, but is still practiced as pastime activity for children. 'Bolo Pretu' (black cake) was offered at special occasions (also see: Dalhuisen ed. 1997: 124).

Nowadays, chicken, beef and fish are mostly eaten. The number one snack is the 'pastechi', a small pie filled with cheese or beef. The South American 'empanada' is becoming an alternative to the 'pastechi'. At almost all secular and religious celebrations, food is an important ingredient. At children's parties, a 'piñata' filled with sweets hangs on the ceiling. Blindfolded, the children try to hit the piñata with a stick. International food chains, Chinese, Italian and other ethnic restaurants have gained an important share in the food-market.

### II.7.2 Dress style

Vieira (1990) studied the history of clothing on Aruba. Traditional dress style was simple. During celebrations, women wore mostly white linen skirts, a colorful blouse, ribbons and black shoes. Men wore a simple white linen suit and black shoes as well. During harvest celebrations, such as the Dera Gai festivities, women wore clothes in which the yellow color dominated. Yellow symbolized the color of the flowering Kibrahacha tree. Men wore agriculture related clothes. In modern folkloristic dances, this dress code is canonized.

### II.7.3 Fashion

Fashion, dress style and etiquette include Caribbean and Latin American elements next to variations of the European and North American etiquette. Dress codes also accompany the life cycle of the traditional Arubans. During the mourning period women mostly wear black. For celebrations like the 15<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and weddings, white is the most chosen colour. Dress code tends to be formal on special occasions. Jewellery and eau de colognes are part of the formal dress style. In public,

people dress with care, but at home dress style is informal. The South American dress-shirt ('Guajabera') is in use amongst the older, while the younger wear modern clothes, varying from Jamaican dread locks to North American 'caps'. Younger generations turn away from the traditional culture and adapt North American life-styles in music and dress. Soft rock, hip-hop and reggae have become popular musical styles, next to salsa and meringue.

#### II.7.4 Hunting

Because Aruba has a dry climate and hosts few larger animal species, hunting has never been an important aspect of Aruban basic economy. Hunting as a means of subsistence is limited to fishing and the (illegal) shooting of iguanas. There are no traditional festivities or oral history connected to hunting.

#### II.7.5 Masks

Apart from their role in Carnival, masks play no specific role in the Aruban cultural heritage.

#### II.7.6 Excision

Excision does not play a role of any importance in the Aruban community. The nineteenth century Sephardic Jewish and the twentieth century Ashkenazim Jewish population may have known ritual excision, but this practice is far from common.

#### II.7.7 Initiation Rites

Of special importance is the celebration of an individual's 5<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. No scientific reports on these rites are available.

### II.8 Traditional Religion and Medicine

Traditional popular assumptions of the supernatural are called 'brua'. Although the term originates from the Spanish word 'bruja' (witch), 'brua' is not to be equated with witchcraft. It includes magic, fortune telling, healing, and assumptions of both good and evil. Magic is conducted by a 'hacido di brua' (practitioner of 'brua') and can be applied both beneficently and maliciously. As a counterpoint to Christian belief, the evil spirit is called 'spiritu malu'. Belief in 'brua' often is not confirmed because of the low social esteem attached to it.

Traditional healing methods ('remedi di tera') are practiced by a healer ('curandero', or 'curioso') who sometimes acts also as practitioner of 'brua'. They make use of herbs and amulets. Rooze (1982:55-7) in an interesting publication on Aruban wildlife, makes mention of traditional herbs and plants.

*'Suffering from a common cold? Place a rolled up leaf of the Yerba Stinki (Datura metel) in the nose to reduce the stuffy feeling, while some Carpata leaves (Castorbean, Ricinus communis) wrapped around the head or stuffed under the matrass might (or might not) relive your headache or fever. Bathing with an astract of Shoshoro leaves (Passion Flower vine, Passiflora foedita) is supposed to clear up skin rashes, while gargling with a root extract of the Seida (Flaira, Jathropha gossypifolia) is good for sour throats, etc. etc'.*

Also, Evers (1996) and Boekhoudt (1997) summarize a number of curative herbs and their use, such as aloe ('to clean out the system'), papaya (*Carica papaya*), cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*) and carpata (*ricinis communis*). Rutten's (2003) recent study on ethno- pharmacological practices on Curaçao may prove an important source of information on traditional natural healing methods. As in many other Antillean ethnological studies, the author's focus is on Curaçao. Therefore, Ruttens research results must be re-examined before they are confirmed for Aruba.

On Aruba, modern natural healing methods seem top be gaining popularity.



## II.9 Folklore

### II.9.1 Music and Dance

The study of Aruban musical heritage has been neglected for decades. Most of the existing literature, like Edgar Palm's 'Music and Musicians of the Netherlands Antilles' (1978) or Rojer's (1990) contribution to the special Antilles / Aruba issue of the Dutch magazine *De Gids*, focuses primarily on Curaçao. Data on Aruba and the other islands are included but are less complete and reliable. The early history of recording studios and artists was documented by De Wolf (1999).

### II.9.2 Bands and instruments: cohunto and tipico

Aruban folklore mostly originates in Aruba pre industrial past. The tipico or cohunto was and is the Aruban folk orchestra. A group of five to ten persons played a broad repertoire of traditional songs and music. The instruments of the tipico were the mandolin, violin, tambora, guitar, quarta, raspa (or wiri) and bass (De Palm 1985: 469).

### II.9.3 Caha di Orgel

Of European origin is the 'caha di orgel'. A rotating cylinder with attached little nails functions as the drive shaft of a hammer mechanism that plays a piano-like harp. On one roll several compositions were attached. For many caha di orgel, waltzes, boleros and mazurkas were professionally recorded. The caha di orgel is often accompanied by the 'wiri' (guïro), an iron rasp/percussion instrument that is possibly of Indian origin.

### II.9.4 Musical styles: Wals, Danza, Mazurka, Bolero

The Aruban waltz, such as the national anthem 'Aruba Dushi Tera', is European in origin. The three-fourths beat of the Viennese waltz is clearly identifiable. By moving the rhythm in relation to the bar (syncope), the waltz gets its flexibility and its typical Aruban character as compared to Waltzes from Vienna or Curaçao (Rojer 1990: 639-40).

Other music styles of European origin are the Danza, the mazurka and the Bolero. The Danza has a European origin and is also known in for instance Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The mazurka is an original Polish dance in three-

fourths rhythm with the accent on the second count (De Palm 1985: 125, 315; Rojer 1990: 640). The Bolero has an obvious four-four measure and is originally Spanish. It probably came to Aruba via Cuban labor migration. Waltz and Bolero as well as the Tumba and the meringue play an important role in the popular music by the Aruban composer and piano player Padú Lampe, also known as Padú del Caribe (cd 1993) and Victor Camacho (cd 1993) as well as musical groups such as Placentero Ritmo y Cuèrde (cd 1992) and Vicente Kelly (cd 1996).

### II.9.5 Musical styles: Tumba and Tambu

Similar to Indians and white colonists, the Aruban slaves left their heritage behind in the Aruban folk culture. The tambú is of African origin (Palm 1978: 43-50; Rojer 1990: 641-2; Rosalia 1997). Free Arubans took over the tambú from slaves who came to Aruba from Curaçao (Alofs, Lampe & Gomez 2000). The tambú was already known in Aruba in 1827. In the use of percussion instruments, complicated rhythms (poly rhythms) and the antiphonal singing (télélélélé) the Aruban tambú is similar to the Curaçaoan tambú. As in Curaçao, the tambú is danced individually. The Aruban tambú got its own rhythms such as the punda, bientu and siya. Also, the Tambú di Dande has a proper Aruban rhythm that differs from the tambú rhythms of sister island Curaçao.

While in Curaçao in the tambú often protest against slavery resounded, the Aruban 'tambulero' dealt with everyday occurrences such as the harvest, a lost love or a social abuse or gossip. The government and the Catholic Church found the tambú barbaric and uncivilized. Even though priests and the government forbade the tambú, the tambú still survived on our island. Thanks to groups like 'Sodo i Cuero' (cd 2001), the popularity of the tambú increased in recent years.

The tumba, which is more popular on Curaçao than on Aruba, is an adaptation from the tambú. Because of its fixed and somewhat simplified rhythm, the tumba is more suitable as dance music (Rojer 1990: 641). Differences between the tumba of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao still need closer examination by ethnomusicologists.

### II.9.6 Tradition and modernity in Aruban music

University trained musicians like Ivan Jansen (cd 1998, 1999, 2002), Delbert Bernabela & Ivan Quandus (cd 2000), and Cuban saxophone player Eduardo Proveyer (cd 2001) and many others blend traditional Aruban rhythms such as the danza, waltz,

meringue, tumba, and (Aruban/Trinidadian) steel pan music into modern cross-over music, creating a new kind of Aruban 'Crioyo Jazz'. Jansen aptly calls this musical direction 'a fusion of Caribbean rhythms and adventurous jazz improvisations'. The rising popularity of (Caribbean or Crioyo) jazz music is demonstrated by the organizers of the 'Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival', which takes place on a yearly basis in the month of September (Caribbean Sea Foundation 2008).

Popular musical bands like Claudius Philips' Oreo, BMW and Basic One keep the Afro-Caribbean musical tradition, introduced by Caribbean migrants in the first half of the twentieth century, alive. This younger generation of professional, semi-professional and amateur musicians incorporate rock, reggae, rock and Hip Hop into the ever expanding Aruban musical tradition. The large influx of migrants in the nineteen nineties resulted in the growing interest of South American rhythms such as the Ballenato. The local musical tradition goes global. At the same time, global musical styles, ranging from classical music to funk and Latin jazz and from rock and reggae to hip-hop becomes local.

#### II.9.7 Global folklore?: Aguinaldos, Mariachi's and Grupo Gaitera

In the age of globalization, also folklore is globalizing. During the twentieth century, new folkloristic musical styles were introduced. No scientific research is available on the arrival and spread of these musical styles. We limit ourselves to some preliminary observations.

Aguinaldos are vocal ensembles originally from Venezuela. Aguinaldo groups consist mostly of ten to twenty younger male singers. Musical accompaniment is mostly sober and restricted to guitar, tambú and violin. Especially around Christmas time, aguinaldos gave performances at public places such as shopping malls. Aguinaldo groups seem to have been most popular in the nineteen fifties and sixties. According to some informants, aguinaldo music was more popular on Curaçao than on Aruba.

Aruban mariachis have copied the Mexican repertoire, costumes and singing techniques for many decades. At present, Aruban mariachi songs are written in both Spanish and Papiamentu. Aruba's most famous Mariachi band 'Perla di Aruba' has existed for approximately fifty years. Since the early 1980s, this style of music has gained popularity owing to a growing number of Mariachi festivals on the island.

Mariachi festivals and contests take place, once again especially during the Christmas season. Each year, Aruban musical groups participate in Mariachi festivals in Mexico.

Grupos Gaitera have seen a growing popularity the last fifteen years. The Grupo Gaitera is a small band of almost exclusively young female singers. This musical style originates in the Maracaibo region in western Venezuela. Usually one singer is singing the lead vocals, while the rest of the singers either accompany or answer the lead singer. The Grupo Gaitera is accompanied by a number of musicians. Their instruments are guitar, quarta, bass (if available) piano, and percussive instruments such as the tambú (drum), raspa, wiri, timbal, clavio, and the (Brazilian) furuku. Because of the fact that (one of) Aruba's first Grupo Gaitera, 'Grupo Chicas Gaitera', consisted of young women, the gaitera has a feminine reputation. In reality, many groups are of a mixed composition.

Like the Mariachi's, the Grupos Gaitera have taken over the position of the Aguinaldos in the Christmas Season. They are often invited to play at parking lots of the larger supermarkets at the closing of the year.

At present, the Afro-Brazilian dance and music style of Capoeira seems to enjoy a growing popularity.

## II.10 Oral Tradition

### II.10.1 Oral Literature

Research on oral literature started in the late 19th century when the Curaçao Society devoted attention to the African based Compa Nanzi-stories in its third yearly report (Geschied-, 1985). In 1993, Baart wrote a dissertation on the Compa Nanzi stories. Pinto's collection of Antillean Nanzi stories was published in 2005. On Aruba, R. 'Archie' de Veer (1996, 2008) published modern Nanzi stories.

Because of the lack of a canonized oral literature, Rutgers (ed. 2001: 23-7) in his overview of Antillean and Aruban literature broadened the oral tradition to contemporary authors making use of the oral tradition of story telling, as a distinct literary form. Rutgers included authors such as Archie de Veer and Denis Henriquez.

### II.10.2 Oral History

As stated in the first chapter several projects concerning oral-history have been initiated. In the nineteen sixties, Hubert Booy and G.F. 'Ito' Tromp conducted fieldwork amongst the traditional Aruban population. Their reports are kept in a special collection (collectie G.F. 'Ito' Tromp) at the National Library of Aruba in Oranjestad.

In the early nineteen nineties, Mario Dijkhoff started an oral history project, which resulted in a 1996 paper for the seminar on Latin-American and Caribbean Folklore. The project however did not result in a scientific collection of oral histories.

Lucia Kelly started preserving the oral tradition of elderly Arubans, mostly women. In the first chapter, her publications were already mentioned.

Dutch anthropology student Van der Hurk (1998) recorded the life-stories of some 45 former single female immigrants from the Caribbean who came to Aruba to work as live-in maids for American families working for the Lago. Aymer (1997) reported on the life stories and living conditions of English speaking Caribbean migrant domestics in the nineteen nineties.

Several television productions dedicate attention to stories told by elderly Arubans. These productions, although sometimes interesting and valuable, are not based on profound scientific research.

## II.11 Languages

Aruba is a multilingual society in which Papiamentu is the national language. Spanish, (Creole) English and Dutch are the second, third, and fourth most spoken languages. On the island, also Portuguese, Patois (French Creole), Sranan (Surinamese), Tagalo (from the Philippines), German, several Chinese languages and dialects and many other languages can be heard.

### II.11.1 Papiamentu as a National Language

Papiamentu is the most important marker of Aruban identity. Papiamentu is a Creole language that is also spoken in Curaçao and Bonaire. The origins of Papiamentu are much debated. According to the more popular monogenistic theory, Papiamentu, like other Creole languages of the Caribbean, originates from one single Afro-Portuguese proto-Creole, which developed as a lingua franca in Western Africa in the days of the slave trade. The polygenetic theory maintains that Papiamentu developed on Curaçao on a Spanish linguistic base. For scientific debate on the origin of Papiamentu see Martinus Arion (1996), Van Putte (1999) and Fouse (2002).

Employees of the West Indian Company and colonists from Curaçao introduced Papiamentu in Aruba at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest document that proves that Papiamentu existed in Aruba is a letter written in 1803 (Gomes Casseres 1990). Papiamentu increasingly dominated social life in Aruba in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the emancipation of Papiamentu did not take place without problems.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, colonial authorities promoted the idea that everyone in the Dutch colonies should speak the Dutch language. The fact that Papiamentu was not a European language enforced this negative attitude. The provisional education law of 1819 prescribed that education must take place in Dutch. At the public schools, the instructional language was Dutch. Unfortunately, few Aruban children understood this language and the material was not adapted to their circumstances either.

The catholic and protestant missions understood that to reach the people they must speak to them in their own language. Even though they promoted Papiamentu for practical and religious reasons, this fact was favorable for the development of Papiamentu. In 1825 in Curaçao, father Martinus Niewindt (1796-1860) published the first catechism book in Papiamentu, which was also used on Aruba.

The Protestants in Aruba did not stay behind. On December 19, 1847, reverend Van Dragt held his first sermon in Papiamento in the church of Oranjestad. Reverend N. A. Kuiperi, who came to Aruba in 1858, held his first sermon in Papiamento on January 8, 1860. Remarkable is that as of 1862 the Protestants in Aruba also had their catechism in Papiamento, written by the same reverend Kuiperi: '*Katekismoe of sienjansa di berdad i mandameentoenan di religion di kriestianan pa oeso di Protestant na Aruba*'. Kuiperi's Katekismo was printed in 2001. Van Dragts 'Predikaasie' and Kuiperi's 'Boekie di Pidiemeento' (1864) appeared in facsimile print as late as 2005 (N.A. Kuiperi 2001, Coomans red. 2005).

As of 1880, Dominican priests also worked in Aruba. The priests produced many publications in Papiamento, especially for lessons in religion such as prayer books and the life stories of saints. In 1847, father Van Ewijk emitted the first Papiamento grammar book and in 1875 a Dutch-Papiamento-Spanish dictionary. The Dominican priests advocated for the recognition of Papiamento in their schools in Oranjestad, Santa Cruz, Noord and Savaneta. They made education material such as storybooks and arithmetic books. Thus, for practical reasons, the Catholic mission continued using Papiamento and Spanish in education.

Officially, to get subsidies for school, the use of Dutch was a requirement. In 1941, the friars of Tilburg and the Dominican sisters replaced the Dominican priests. They accepted the discrimination of Papiamento. The education ordinance of 1935 became effective in 1936 and as off that year every school was obliged to use Dutch as the only instructional language.

Papiamento was formally recognized the 1970's. In 1976, it got its official orthography. In the nineties Papiamento made its entrance in vocational education as an obligatory subject. In 2003, Papiamento entered the elementary school as instructional language and as an obligatory subject in secondary education in 2004.

### II.11.2 Multilingualism on present-day Aruba

Owing to 360 years of colonial domination, Dutch is the official language in education and public affairs. During the twentieth century, the oil industry, tourism, and subsequent migration brought English and Spanish to the island and at present, those are the second and third most spoken languages. Most residents are multilingual. Despite massive immigration since the mid 1980's, the absolute number of Papiamento speaking inhabitants of Aruba has increased from 48,335 in 1981 to

59,984 in 2001. Relatively, the number decreased from 80.1 per cent in 1981 to 70,0 percent in 2000. The proportion of the population that speaks English at home decreased from 10.6 (or 6,393 persons) to 8.2 (7,001 persons) in the same period. Spanish has seen a large growth from 1,891 or 3.1 percent in 1981 to 11,368 persons or 13.3 per cent in 2001. 5,289 persons primarily spoke Dutch in 2001, compared to 3,013 persons in 1981. The percentage of Dutch-speaking inhabitants rose from 5.0 to 6.2 per cent (CBS 2002: 87-90).

Aruba is a multilingual society and most Arubans are multilingual. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics over sixty per cent of the native borne population, speak at least four languages to some degree (CBS 2002: 90). Papiamentu is increasingly considered as the national language by the majority of the islands inhabitants. Papiamentu functions as a lingua franca between groups of migrants. English is mostly connected to migration in the oil boom years and recent migration from the Caribbean. Apart from its demographic importance, English is the most important language in Aruba's economy, since this economic sector is primarily based on tourism from the United States and Canada. In addition, in the oil industry English is spoken. Both Spanish and English are important because the most watched television networks are from the U.S. and South America, especially Venezuela. Dutch is mostly spoken at home by migrants from the Netherlands and Surinam, and in the educational and judicial system.



## II. 12 Cultural Transformation and Heritage

In the Caribbean, cultures do not disappear, they mix, they combine, and they create new forms of culture, life style and identity. Earlier forms of culture are absorbed in new languages, new belief systems, in evolving folklore et cetera. As every Caribbean society, Aruba is a creole society.

Recent research by Toto-Labarador & Wever (et. al. 2003, also Wever et.al. 2003) showed that members of the traditional population had mitochondrial DNA material from Amerindians, Europeans and Africans. Although this research was only exploratory and the sample of the research was too small for definite conclusions, it made clear that the traditional Aruban population in its biological make up, has incorporated American, European and African contributions.

The same goes for Aruba's cultural make up. The traditional Aruban population considers itself either Indian, or (European) white or a mixture of the two; as (Latin American) 'mestizo' or 'Rubiano criollo'. While the historical role of the Amerindian in the making of the Aruban cultural identity is often overemphasized, Afro-Caribbean aspects in the Aruban cultural heritage are often denied (Alofs 2003a, compare: Duany 2002 on Puerto Rico).

Recognition of historical roots is often dependent on socio-political factors. In the nineteen seventies, Aruba underlined its Amerindian and Latin American identity in order to distinguish its identity in contrast to Afro-Caribbean Curaçao. Stressing differences in cultural identity had to contribute to the political struggle for separation of the (Afro-Caribbean) Netherlands Antilles. In this section, we will briefly outline Amerindian (Caquetio), African and European aspects of Aruba's cultural heritage.

### II.12.1 The Amerindian heritage

Spanish conquistadors, slave traders and European diseases destroyed the Aruban Caquetio culture during the sixteenth century. New Indians came to Aruba after the arrival of the Dutch in 1636. Despite the Dutch take-over, Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao remained part of the Spanish diocese of Coro, which Spanish colonist Juan de Ampies had founded in 1531 (Cardot 1982, Deive 1995). The Dutch Protestants did not undertake any serious efforts to Christianize the black slave population of Curaçao and Bonaire nor the Indian population on these islands and on Aruba. Spanish (catholic) missionaries used to visit Aruba, irregularly and often illegally. As

early as 1668, the Aruban Indians were reported to be Christian and in the 1715 census, all people reported as 'Indians owning cattle' had Christian names. In 1750, a Spanish priest built the Chapel of Alto Vista. In 1777, a church dedicated to Santa Anna followed in the village of Noord. Those were the centers of the Indian population. There is no proof or indication of any form of Indian resistance to the missionary activities by Spanish priests. Neither in the national and clerical archives nor in the ethnographic present have I found any pre-Christian survivals in the Aruban Christian belief or practice (Alofs 2003b).

Colonists, soldiers and slaves adopted culture elements of the original Indian population. This occurred elsewhere in the Caribbean region, including Aruba. Aspects of the Indian heritage are Indian place names such as Basiruti, Cashunti, Yamanota, Andicouri y Wadirikiri. Even though the Indian language was lost in the nineteenth century, Papiamentu still uses Indian words (Van Buurt & Joubert 1997). Adoption of cultural elements possibly explains the similarities between the Indian baking sheet and the Aruban 'casuela'. In addition, in Aruban music we come across Indian elements such as the 'raspa' and the 'wiri'. Ethno-musicological research by Ganzemans (1989) surprisingly enough proved that the Amerindian musical heritage is stronger on Bonaire than on Aruba.

### II.12.2 The African heritage

The African cultural heritage is both strong and well hidden in Aruban cultural heritage. As was presented in the section on history of the Aruban people and culture, in 1848 just over 20 per cent of the population was slave. The 486 freed slaves were given family names and of the 100 last names up to this day, 40 names exist. Because of slavery's small scale, Aruba was not a typical Caribbean slave society. Slaves did not form a separate Afro Caribbean culture and after emancipation in 1863, former slaves integrated in the free society rapidly (Alofs 2003a). Racist conceptions of the African biological heritage however, did and do exist on Aruba. By marrying a darker colored spouse, an individual would damage his or her race: 'daña rasa'. The opposite occurred when a person married a lighter skinned partner: 'drecha rasa'.

However, Papiamentu has an African base and so have tambú and tumba and according to many (with the exception of Triebels) the Ocho Dia. Also, the trickster stories of the spider Nanzi are of African origin (Geschiedkundig 1985, Baart 1993).

Aruban conceptions of superstition and magic bare resemblances with the Curaçaoan Brua, which is considered to have an African origin. After the arrival of the oil-industry, Afro-Caribbean workers migrated to Aruba and introduced Carnival, Creole English, Patois and to some degree African-American cultural belief systems, such as Winti (Surinam) and montamento (Dominican Republic, De Palm 1985: 322).

### II.12.3 The European Heritage

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Aruban elite did not develop a strong sense of identification with the European motherland, as was the case in for instance Curaçao, but also amongst many of the white upper classes in 'plantation America' (Hoetink 1986, Johnson & Watson 1999). The political relation between the local elite and the Dutch government was characterized by tension and competition during the century. As early as 1847 the protestant minister of Aruba had to turn to Papiamentu to reach his community. On Aruba, the Dutch oriented 'Algemeen Nederlands Verbond', never became very popular. It was only after the turn of the twentieth century, that loyalty towards the Dutch royal family became a fact (see Waltmans & Groothoff 1999).

Nevertheless, from an objective point of view, the European heritage on Aruba can be seen in many aspects of its cultural legacy, varying from European contributions in Aruba's musical culture via the waltz, or contributions of the Dutch language in Aruban Papiamentu. The last names of most of the traditional Aruban families have a European origin, like Croes (Zeeland, the Netherlands), Eman (Harpenscheid, former East Germany), Irauquin (Basques Provinces, Spain), Solagnier (Ardèche, France) Van der Biezen (the Netherlands), Wouters (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), Oduber (France) (also: Kraft 1951).

### **III Heritage in the making, modern Arts**

#### III.1 Visual Arts

Recently, two important studies appeared on Aruban (and Antillean) visual arts. In 2001, Stan Kuiperi (2001) wrote a general introduction on the developments in Aruban visual arts since the 1980s. Martis & Smit published a larger study on the same topic in 2002. The exposition and the booklet 'My Rights' (2001) introduced 24 female artists living and working on Aruba to the local public.

Aruban art life can be divided into two spheres: a commercial one and the other directed towards tourism and local recreation. Numerous artists are active in both. A lack of funds and a clear governmental policy result in a tension between the commercialization of art for the benefit of tourism and the professionalization of local talent for non-commercial purposes.

Aruba has many visual artists of different disciplines and styles. There has been a strong development and a growing popularity since 1986. Aruba's history, tradition and natural landscape inspire many artists. These aspects are incorporated in a modern, universal form. During the last decade a number of younger Aruban artists have been working from a more individualistic perspective. The constellation has become an important popular art medium, combining both static and dynamic (video) visual images with sound images in a multi-dimensional manner.

During the last two decades, a number of professional Aruban and migrant photographers have portrayed the island and its population in artistic ways. Most photographers participate in expositions. Some (Van Nie 1987, 1996, Harms & Aal 1990, Arroniz app. 2001) publish their work in semi-commercial, but interesting books.

Training abroad, (temporary) migration, workshops and interchange with foreign artists residing on Aruba and participation in expositions abroad (e.g. by Atelier '89, Carib Art, 1993; Martis & Smit 2002: 139-40), prevent the art community from isolation. In 2001 Aruban artist Evelino Fingal organized the exposition 'Sanger Caribense' (Caribbean Blood) featuring Aruban artists in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Expositions are often organized in banks and ateliers. In recent years, several new galleries and art schools opened their doors such as Atelier '89, Access Gallery, Alida Martinez' Art Studio-Gallery Insight, the Osaira Muyale Contemporary Art Studio, Toyota Art Gallery and Mar Azul Art Gallery Oranjestad. The Sint Nicolaas Foundation for the Arts (SINFA) revived the 'Galeria Moderno' in San Nicolas. For an inventory of Aruba's arts and craft companies, see Sankatsing (2004).

### **III.2 Literature**

Aruban literature is written in Papiamentu, Dutch, English and Spanish. Hubert Booy (Bonaire, 1919), Nicolas Piña Lampe (Venezuela 1921-Aruba 1967) and Ernesto Rosenstand (Santa Martha, Colombia 1931) are among the pioneers of Aruban literature. Their most important literary output works was published in 2006 (Booi 2006, Rosenstand 2006). Aruban actress and author Nydia Ecury (Aruba 1926) spend most of her active career (since 1957) on Curaçao.

In the nineteen seventies, a new generation of Aruba borne writers from different cultural backgrounds such as Frederico Oduber Henri Habibe, Denis Henriquez, Frank and Williams started writing about social, political and personal topics in literary magazines like ‘Watapana’ and the more traditionally oriented ‘Brindis’.

In the 1980s a number of interesting novels, plays and poetry by writers such as Desiree Correa, Francis Kelly and Richard Pieternella – in part guided by the renown Dutch author Miep Diekman – were published by Aruba’s editorial house ‘Charuba’ in cooperation with the Dutch publishing house Leopold.

In the nineteen nineties, Aruban novelist Denis Henriquez, who is living in the Netherlands, published three novels by the authoritative publishing house ‘De Bezige Bij’. Dutch borne Jacques Thönissen published three novels and two children’s book in the Netherlands, while Aruban writer J.R. Nicolaas (2004), based in the Netherlands, published his first novel in Papiamentu. Christiaans (2002), Oduber-Winklaar (2007) and Zaandam-Buckley (2008) are among the growing group of active writers on Aruba.

Re-occurring themes in Aruban literature are religion, the love of the island, Papiamentu and the islands pre-industrial past. In the poetry of Ph. Wong, Kock-Marchena and others the distinction between poetry and declamation is transcended.

In 1983, ‘Cosecha Arubiano’ a collection of Aruban literature presented the islands multicultural and multi-lingual literary heritage (Booi et. al, 1983). Other compilations literature are Claassen (1992, translations in Dutch) and Williams (2000, translations in English). General introductions to Aruban (and Antillean) oral and written literature are Rutgers (1994a, 2001, 2007, Rutgers ed. 2001, ed. 2003), Broek (1998, 2006) and Todd Dandaree (2003). These authors situate Aruban literature both in the Dutch and in the Caribbean tradition.

In 2003, Charuba was revived after a decade of virtual non-existence. Also, UNOCA has become active as an editorial house. Many poets publish on their own.

## **IV Intangible cultural heritage and its infrastructure**

### IV.1 An overview of the Aruban Museums

The Aruban museums were described by Ruiz & Fingal, De Lange and Hermes in 'Arubaans Akkoord' (Alofs, Rutgers & Coomans eds., 1997), in Ruiz & Dijkhoff (2001) and more recently in a publication by the National Library of Aruba (Museo, 2003). 2003 Was a very fruitful year for the Aruban museums. Aruba has less than eight museums. The Minister of Culture aims at the development of a cultural route through Oranjestad in which the museums will play an important role. More than ever before, museums play a central role in Aruban cultural policy. Hopefully, this will benefit both educational purposes and tourism. In 2008, Fundacion Herencia di Sclavitud Aruba organized a large exposition on the heritage of slavery on Aruba. A book will be published in 2009 (Fundacion 2009).

#### IV.1.1 Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is part of the Cultural Institute. The Museum has scientific, educational and museum functions. The museum has published nine books on archaeology and education. Its permanent exhibition covers an era starting 4500 years ago and lasting until app. 1880. Seashells, stone and ceramic objects tell the history of preceramic Indians (2500 B.C.-950 A.C.), the ceramic Caquetío Indians (950-1515 A.C.) and the indigenous people during the historical period. The museum has moved to the historical centre of Oranjestad in 2008.

#### IV.1.2 Historical Museum of Aruba

The Historical Museum is situated in Fort Zoutman in the center of Oranjestad, overlooking Horse Bay. Although it is a private foundation with an independent board, the museum personnel consists of civil servants of the Cultural Institute. The Museum offers a general introduction into the history of the island and its people and shows urban and rural life on Aruba in the nineteenth century. Apart from its role as museum, Fort Zoutman also hosts cultural events such as the weekly Bon Bini Festival (Welcome Festival), which is mostly visited by tourists.

#### IV.1.3 Numismatic Museum

The Numismatic Museum of Aruba was founded by Mario Odor and was adopted by the Cultural Institute. The museum exhibits historic coins, paper money and stamps from Aruba and other parts of the world. The exhibition also covers the monetary history of Aruba and the islands actual monetary system. Part of the museums collection is discussed in Odors publication 'Introducion Numismatico' (Odor 1997). The Numismatic Museum has its own website [www.arubamuseum.org](http://www.arubamuseum.org).

#### IV.1.4 Museo di Antiguedad Aruba

Apart from the Numismatic Museum, the family Odor has a private museum showing all kinds of historical objects from the preceramic period until the twentieth century. The museum also has a collection of fossils and other kinds of stone on Aruba.

#### IV.1.5 Aloe Museum

The Aruba Aloe Balm Company has its private museum adjourning the aloe fields, factory and aloe store at Hato, just north of Oranjestad. The museum tells the history of aloe in the Caribbean and Aruba. The museum combines modern technology with relics from the past. From a catwalk surrounding the factory workshop, visitors can observe the process of manufacturing aloe products.

#### IV.1.6 The Ds. Dr. A. van den Doel Bible Museum

The small Bible museum is situated in the Protestant Church in the center of Oranjestad and is named after the late minister Anthonie van den Doel. Its collection consists of historic bibles in several languages and religious objects and paintings.

#### IV.1.7 The Model Trains Museum

The Model Trains Museum is a private museum situated in San Nicolas. This museum offers visitors an overview of train traffic from 1875 to the present. In addition, model cars and planes can be admired.

#### IV.1.8 Sports Museum

The Sports Museum exhibits the achievements of Aruban athletes in the past and the present. The museum is dedicated to Francisco Chirino, the first and only Aruban to have been inducted in the International Softball Hall of Fame in the U.S.A..

## IV. 2 Cultural historic institutions

### IV.2.1 Archivo Historico Aruba / National Archives of Aruba

The National Archive of Aruba in Oranjestad holds government documents mostly from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onward. Its genealogical department is much appreciated by the public. During the nineteen nineties, the Historical Archive was revived after many years of neglect and decay. Despite its important function as a center for scientific and genealogical investigation, the archive still suffers from a lack of appropriate housing, equipment, and trained personnel (Hernandes 1997). In recent years, collaborators of the archives have published a number of inventories, improving the accessibility of the archives.

Other important public archives for Aruban historians are the Central Historical Archives on Willemstad, Curaçao and the Dutch Public Records Office (Algemeen Rijksarchief) in The Hague, the Netherlands (Meilink-Roelofs 1982). A systematic inventory or pilot study of relevant archives in Venezuela (Coro, Merida and Caracas), Great Britain (London), and Spain (Sevilla) has not yet taken place.

### IV.2.2 Biblioteca Nacional Aruba / National Library of Aruba

The National Library has branches in Oranjestad and San Nicolas, while a bus visits elementary schools all over the island. The library's department 'Arubiana / Caribiana' holds a large collection of literature on the Caribbean region, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The National Library has a cultural database. The Library frequently organizes cultural activities, especially during the month of September (Rutgers 2002).



#### IV.2.3 Cas di Cultura

Cas di Cultura (House of Culture) was founded in 1958, right after the introduction of the Statuut. Cas di Cultura is Aruba's most important public theater and hosts many cultural activities in the field of classical and modern music, dance, theater and expositions. In recent years, Cas di Cultura has become a more active player in the cultural field and frequently organizes cultural activities for all age groups and cultural disciplines (Arens - Tjong-A-Tjoe 2006).

#### IV.2.4 Cas Editorial / Publishing House 'Charuba'

'Cas Editorial Charuba' has been mentioned in this report several times already. Charuba was founded in 1984 to offer publication possibilities to Aruban authors and provide the public with local literature. After a seven-year period of silence, the publishing was reactivated in 2003. A lack of structural funding hampers the productivity of Charuba.

#### IV.2.5 CEDE-Aruba

CEDE-Aruba is a non-governmental advisory board which allocates funds for social development projects. Like UNOCA, CEDE receives its funding from the Dutch Development Aid program and Fondo di Desarrollo Aruba. As part of their efforts to promote public education, CEDE occasionally supports projects on cultural heritage.

#### IV.2.6 Directie Cultuur / Instituto di Cultura

As stated in the introductory chapter, the Instituto di Cultura (the Cultural Institute) is a governmental department founded in 1973, as an insular service comparable to the (national Antillean) Department for Culture and Education. In 2005, a new policy concerning cultural heritage and research was presented. At present (2008), the cultural institute is in the process of transition in order to become 'Directie Cultuur'.

#### IV.2.7 Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok

Fundacion Parke Arikok is aimed at the preservation of the 34 km<sup>2</sup> large National Park Arikok at the north eastern side of the island. The park was created to protect the extraordinary landscape and nature, to preserve its cultural history. (see Parke 2000).

#### IV.2.8 Monumentenbureau / Historic Buildings Bureau

The bureau aims at the preservation of monuments and historic buildings by offering technical advice and financial support. A number of monumental buildings in the center of Oranjestad have been rescued from further deterioration thanks to this bureau. At present, the bureau continually adapts the list of national monuments and monumental buildings and publications on Aruba's monuments (see Webb-Kock, 1997, Klooster & Van der Bakker 2001, 2007). Every two years, the bureau organizes open monuments days, either in the center of Oranjestad (2006) or in San Nicolas (2008).

#### IV.2.9 School of Music / Skol di Musica 'Rufo Wever'

The Aruba school of music situated in Oranjestad is named after Rufo Wever (1917-1977, see Palm 1978: 200-3), the composer of the national anthem. The school of music has classes in all major musical instruments and offers singing lessons to individuals and small groups. Its frequent public performances by its pupils attract large audiences.

#### IV.2.10 UNESCO, Aruba National Commission for UNESCO

The Netherlands Antilles has been associated members of UNESCO since 1983. Aruba became a separate associated member in 1986. Aruba is part of a cluster of non-English speaking Caribbean countries, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haïti and Aruba. The clusters regional office is situated in La Havanna, Cuba. The UNESCO committee of Aruba offers funding for social and cultural projects to organizations on the island.

#### IV.2.11 Union di Organisacionan Cultural Arubano : UNOCA

Union di Organisacionan Cultural Arubano (UNOCA) was already mentioned in the first chapter. UNOCA is a non-governmental advisory board, which advises the minister of culture on the allocation of subsidies for cultural and scientific projects. UNOCA funds are from the Dutch development aid program and Fondo di Desarrollo Aruba (FDA). UNOCA has supported many projects and publications in the cultural field including folklore, modern arts, and scientific research (Geerman 2001).

**On the author**

Luc Alofs (1960) studied Cultural and Social Anthropology at the Catholic Radboud University of Nijmegen under professors Jan Pouwer, Leo Triebels and Ton Lemaire and at the Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht under professors Harrie Hoetink and Arie de Ruijter. Since 1985, he studies the culture and history of Aruba and the Dutch Antilles. His publications focus on colonial history and slavery, modernization, social integration and nation building. He is curator of the Historical Museum Aruba and Fundashon Herencia di Sclavitud Aruba. Luc Alofs teaches Social Studies at the Aruba Teacher's Training College.

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