

## COMMANDEURS: COLONIAL RULE IN ARUBA

### Introduction

The Dutch colonial rule which lasted until the Charter of the Dutch Kingdom was signed in 1954 has left indelible marks on Aruban society, yet only a handful of tangible mementos. Of the precious few historical monuments that bear testimony of this period, some are in very poor shape, and of the Dutch colonial rulers only some scattered, mostly unmarked and neglected graves remain at three sites in Aruba.

This is their story and a part of the Aruban heritage much overlooked and we therefore like to quote the Sioux saying: "A people without history are like the wind on the buffalo grass".

### Aruba discovered

On January 26, 1624 three ships of the West India Company sailed from the Netherlands, with Pieter Schouten as commanding officer. On April 24, 1624 Schouten sighted Aruba off the Venezuelan coast at Cabo Roman. The crew did not go ashore. The Hooiberg in the center of Aruba is described for the first time.

In January 1627 departed from the Dutch isle of Texel an expedition under Dirck van Uytgeest, commodore in the service of the West India Company. On May 2, 1627 the expedition arrived off the coast of Aruba, but upon spotting horsemen on the shore, the crew preferred the safety of the ships and did not disembark.

In 1623 the Dutch set foot ashore for the first time on the Leeward Islands in Bonaire.

In 1633 Spain conquered the island of St. Martin, a strategic spot between Brazil and New Netherland, two of the colonies of the Netherlands.

### 1636-1792: the West India Company rule

The West India Company needed a stronghold in the Caribbean to ensure supremacy in the New World and in July 1635 took possession of Curacao, but were driven out by the Spanish, and regained control by the end of 1635 under Van Walbeeck.

The Spaniards evacuated Aruba, and left the island uninhabited in 1636.

In 1642 the Spanish took possession of Bonaire again, and Peter Stuyvesant, infuriated, launched an expedition to maraud the Venezuelan coast.

The Dutch used Aruba as a base for op-

erations, from which to attack Venezuela, under Spanish rule, with Aruba doubling as a supply depot. At the end of eighty years of war between Spain and Holland, Aruba lost its military importance.

The first administrative organization of the Colony of Curacao, to which Aruba belonged, was created in 1629 by the Heeren Negentien (board of directors), of the Dutch West India Company.

The Amsterdam Chamber of the Company was put in charge of Curacao.

The colonial authorities, a Director in Curacao, and the governors for Bonaire and Aruba, received their commissions from the mother country. The governors of Bonaire and Aruba, whose title was soon changed to commandeur (commander), were subordinated to the Director in Curacao.

The rank of commandeur until 1848 was to represent the title of the governor of a subordinate territory.

Later in time the Commandeur of Aruba was made Chief of the Island.

It is not clear whether the first commandeur was appointed immediately after the occupation.

Not until 1667 or 1668 do we find mention of the first commandeur, an Irishman by the name of Williams, not unusual since the Company's military branch used to employ many foreigners.

In 1674 the second West India Company took over the possessions of the old one, and Aruba as a dependency of Curacao. In 1676 the second commandeur was a Belgian by the name of Joseph Flaccius, born in Brussels. During a brief interlude Johannes Bontemantel was the highest dignitary of Aruba, replaced by Flaccius who fulfilled a second term from 1680 to 1714.

During the first period the Commandeur of Aruba was the only white person in Aruba and in the beginning did not even command a garrison, as his Bonaire colleague did.

Defense never amounted to much in Aruba. In 1678 there were fifteen soldiers in Aruba, with the strength of the garrison varying.

In 1701 the occupational force consisted of Flaccius, two soldiers and two horsemen. Because Aruba was never considered a strategic island, it was poorly equipped to ward off buccaneers and enemy ships.

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## COMMANDEURS: GOBERNACION COLONIAL NA ARUBA

### Introduccion

E mando colonial holandes cu a dura te na firmamento di e Statuut di Reino Holandes na 1954 a laga marca permanente riba e sociedad arubano, pero masha poco recuerdo tangibel. Di e precioso poco monumento historico cu ta testimonio di e era aki, algun ta den masha mal estado, y di e mandatarionan colonial holandes ta algun tumba sin marca y neglisha por ser haña na tres sitio na Aruba.

Esaki ta nan storia y un parti di e patrimonio historico ignora. Esaki ta pone nos corda riba un dicho popular: "El pueblo que ignora su historia no tiene futuro".

### Aruba descubri

26 Januari 1624 tres barco di e West Indische Compagnie a nabega for di Holanda, cu Pieter Schouten como oficial na mando. Dia 24 april 1624 Schouten ta descubri Aruba desde e costa venezolano na Cabo Roman. E tripulacion no ta subitero. E Hooiberg di Aruba ta ser describi pa prome biaha.

Januari 1627 ta sali for di e isla di Texel un expedicion bao mando di Dirck van Uytgeest, comodoro den servicio di West Indische Compagnie. Riba 2 mei 1627 e expedicion ta yega cerca di costa di Aruba, pero mirando hinete na tera, e tripulantenan ta prefera e seguridad di barco y no ta desembarca.

Na 1623 holandesnan ta pone pia pa promer biaha riba e Islanan di Abao na Bonaire.

Na 1633 España ta conquista e isla di St Maarten, un punto estrategico entre Brazil y Nieuw Holland (New York, Merca), dos di e colonianan Holandes.

### 1636-1792: Mando di West Indische Compagnie

West Indische Compagnie tawata tin mester di un base fortifica pa asegura su supremacia den e Mundo Nobo y na juli 1635 a tuma posesion di Curacao, pero a ser expulsa pa e spañonan, y a recobra control na fin di 1635 bao mando di Van Walbeeck.

E spañonan a evacua Aruba y a laga e isla inhabita na 1636.

Na 1642 e spañonan a tuma posesion di Bonaire atrobe, y Peter Stuyvesant, furioso, a lanza un expedicion pa saquea e costa venezolano.

E holandesnan a usa Aruba como base di operacion, for di cual pa ataca Venezu-

ela, colonia spaño, y Aruba alavez sirviendo como estacion di abastecimento. Na final di Tachtigjarige Oorlog (1568-1648) entre Holanda y Spaña, Aruba a perde importancia militar.

E prome organisacion administrativo di e Colonia di Curacao, na cual Aruba tawata pertenece, a ser crea na 1629 pa Heeren Negentien di West Indische Compagnie. E camara di Amsterdam di dicho compania a keda encarga cu Curacao. E autoridatnan colonial, un Director na Curacao y e gobernadornan di Bonaire y Aruba tawata ricibi nan comision for di madre patria. E gobernadornan di Bonaire y Aruba, kende nan titulo pronto a cambia pa commandeur, tawata subordinada na e Director na Curacao.

E rango di commandeur te na 1848 lo tawata representa e titulo di gobernante di un territorio subordinada.

Mas despues e Commandeur di Aruba a ser haci Hefe di e isla.

No ta claro si a nombra e prome commandeur inmediatamente despues di a ocupa e isla.

No ta te 1667 of 1668 cu nos ta encontra mencion di e prome commandeur, un irlandes cu e nomber Williams, nada inusual ya cu e Compagnie su rama militar tawata emplea hopi stranhero.

Na 1674 e Tweede West Indische Compagnie a tuma e posesionan di su predecesor, y tambe Aruba como posesion di Curacao. Na 1676 e segundo commandeur tawata un belga cu e nomber di Joseph Flaccius, naci na Bruselas. Durante un corto interludio Johannes Bontemantel tawata e dignitario mas halto na Aruba, reemplaza pa Flaccius cu a cumpli un di dos termino di 1680 te 1714.

Durante e prome periodo e Commandeur di Aruba tawata e unico hende blanco na Aruba y den cuminsamento no tawata tin ni tropa na su disposicion, manera si tawata e caso cu su colega na Bonaire.

Defensa na Aruba nunca tawata gran cos. Na 1678 tawata tin diescincos soldat na Aruba, cu e forza di e tropanan militar variando.

Na 1701 e forza ocupacional tawata consisti di Flaccius, dos soldat y dos hinete. Pasobra nunca a considera Aruba estrategico, e isla no tawata bon equipa pa defende su territorio contra barco enemigo y pirata.

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