



## The First Inhabitants of Aruba

### ***Introduction***

Aruba's history is a fascinating account of cultures that have left their mark on the landscape, architecture and population of the island. The first human activities on Aruba took place in the landscape, which had its origin 95 million years ago. To understand the beginning of human life on our island, we must take a short look at the arrival of the first humans on the American continent. This probably happened about 20.000 years ago (possibly as early as 40.000 B.P.), when *bands* of hunters/gatherers from Asia were following big game (*mega fauna*) and entered America by crossing the Bering Strait, which became trespassible a few times during the latest glaciation (*Wisconsin*) between 80.000 and 7.000 years ago. The earliest human inhabitants of northern South America arrived in Northwestern Venezuela having a distinctive ancestral population from the Taima Taima/El Jobo area, dating back to about 16.000 years B.P.

### ***First Human Activities (2500/2000 B.C.)***

The oldest *site* (archaeological terrain) on Aruba is probably Sero Muskita, where just one stone tool was found. At Arikok a similar tool was encountered, and based on their finishing technique and shape, it is thought that people were on Aruba ca. 4000/4500 B.P. They might be the result of incidental visits from the mainland, as inhabitants of coastal Venezuela already made similar tools for thousands of years. The first evidences we have that Indians lived on our island indicate that as early as 500 B.C. they made Aruba their homeland.

### ***The Sites***

On Aruba, there are 22 sites that are classified as *Preceramic* (2500 B.C.-1000 A.D.) and all have shell but no pottery. For the latter reason this period is called the Preceramic Period. The majority of the Preceramic sites are situated within one kilometer from the sea or water resources, mostly at the southwest leeward coast and some at the windward side, except the Soledad site. The location and findings suggest a marine, coastal orientation, except for the Coashiati and Canashito sites. Most of the sites are *shell-middens* (soil layers with shell debris), while two primary functioned as cemeteries (Canashito and Malmok). Two sites (Coashiati and Dos Playa) were used for stone extraction and stone working activities. Preceramic sites of importance are situated on a limestone surface (20 out of 22), and important cultural activities are limestone-associated. Most of the information we have of these Indians is from two places where they buried their dead;



Canashito and Malmok. (Boca Urirama is a third burial place, while at Daimari a fourth probable burial site was recently discovered).

### ***Canashito***

At Sero Canashito (70m) in inland Aruba, three sites are located; a cave cemetery and two other sites with a large shell content. Furthermore, one of the Canashito caves has *pictographs* (rock paintings). The Canashito site is dated is at 500 B.C.-500A.D., while the cave cemetery is dated at 100 B.C.-100 A.D. Stone tools found at Canashito were often *multi-functional*. In the cave cemetery one family group was buried consisting of five adult individuals with a male of advanced age in the center. Two of these skulls could possibly have been *artificially deformed*. In the Hato cave of Curaçao also a family group was buried with a male in the center, and the burial pattern was the same as at Canashito. The Canashito finds were compared with those of Malmok and striking similarities were found; the dead have a similar posture and skull shape typical to the Malmok Indians, as will be discussed below.

### ***Malmok***

The site is situated on a large sandy terrain at a distance of 200m (S)-300m (N) from the sea, parallel to a former salina. The site consists of a shell-midden dated at 1-350 A.D., and a cemetery dated at 450-990 A.D. In the cemetery, 60-70 individuals were buried, in which 15 family groups could be distinguished. In each group, males older than 25 years had a central position, while large complicated stone arrangements on top of their bodies were found which functioned as grave- and *status* markers. Women, children and lower-status males had simpler stone lay-outs and were buried in the territories of the high-status males, probably representing *household clusters*. Within such a territory, graves were often found in pairs of opposite sex suggesting marriages. A territory of ca. 18m in diameter was reserved for each family. The planning of the cemetery shows that it was used over a longer period of time and according to strict rules; central males of three family groups formed *isosceles triangles* in the south part of the cemetery, a lay-out which was recorded 6 times. In the north part central males were buried on a straight northwest-southeast line. The individuals had relatively long, high, and narrow skulls, while the average adult died at an age of ca. 35 years. The average stature of a man was 1.57m and a woman 1.49m. Men and women had strong muscles and heavy bones, which would describe them as relatively small, strong people. *Caries*, *dwarfism*, *humpback* and *arthrosis* have been identified on some of them. Some of the teeth of these people were very worn out, indicating that they used them as a tool. The skulls of many of them were coloured red before burial. This dye was compared with the red dye of Aruban pictographs, but they didn't coincide. Most skeletons had a hand grasping at the head and lay on their side (*fetus position*). Many individuals had shells as grave gift, while 10% was



buried on or below a large sea-turtle carapace. The shell-midden is at least 100 years older than the first burial activities, which means that the Indians selected the shells from the midden for the burial activities knowing that they were objects of their ancestors. This is interpreted as "*territorially based descent groups*" stressing their relationship with their ancestors. Probably successive generations of one band buried their dead in this well organized cemetery.

The burial pattern of Malmok, the association with stones on the dead body, one hand resting against the head, the sea-turtle remains, and the similar skull shape, is shared by the St. Michielsberg site of Curaçao. Striking parallels for the Preceramic burial sites on Aruba and Curaçao are found in Cuba and Colombia; group burials, red ocher in grave rock shelters, similar burial postures, and comparable skull shapes are found in Preceramic burials of Colombia (Sabana de Bogotá). Similar postures, red ocher on skeletons, hand-head relations, small-group burials in caves, group burials in a midden area, and large cemeteries of 30-40 individuals, are found in Preceramic Cuban (*Ciboney*) burials.

The Malmok cemetery was meant to function as territory marking, knowing that hunters/gatherers have the tendency to mark their territory by the placing of cemeteries. Formal disposing areas also emerged at the end of the Preceramic Period in other parts of the world, and are interpreted as an expression of territoriality, an increased residential stability associated with economic changes.

### ***The Aruban Preceramic Lifeway***

The Preceramic people of Aruba were fishers/hunters/gatherers who had no agriculture, no ceramics, and lived in small *semi-nomadic* family bands (10-15 persons). They exploited the natural resources of the island, ate fish, shellfish, sea turtles and their eggs, herbs, seeds like the cactus seeds, snails and small game. Their tools were made of stone, shell, and possibly organic material (wood). Although they lived in small bands, they were well organized as the Malmok cemetery reflects. Probably different similar groups occupied different parts of the island, each having their own territory where their collecting activities took place, but stress on the resources could occasionally have played an important role, reason why a formal cemetery like the one at Malmok emerged, to emphasize their traditional rights to the use of the area. The Malmok band was probably divided into two *clans*; a northern clan where the graves rarely had shells, and a southern clan where a positive association with shells in graves was found.

The stone artefacts of this period on Aruba have not been analyzed thoroughly, reason why it's difficult to associate the Preceramic Indians of our island with the two cultural areas of Venezuela of that time; Manicuaire (East Venezuela; 2500-1000 B.C.) and El



Heneal (West and Central Venezuela; 4000-1000 B.C.). Evidence shows that the Aruban Indians came from the South American continent; one theory states that they came via Curaçao to Aruba (and Bonaire), while the other states that they came directly from the mainland after their ancestors moved eastward via Central America and Colombia along the north coast of South America colonizing Aruba (Curaçao and Bonaire). Unfortunately, we don't know which language they spoke, how they called themselves, or to which ethnic group they belonged.

The Preceramic Period on Aruba begins at 2500 B.C. and lasts until 900/1000 A.D. with the arrival of the first agricultural *Ceramic* people, archaeologically called the *Dabajuran* people and historically known as the *Caquetio*, who didn't only differ in their culture, their economic base and had larger communities, but also differed in their physical aspect. A big question is: "What happened to the Preceramic people?" Were they killed? Did they flee? Or were they absorbed into the Ceramic lifeways? In different parts of this region the Preceramic way of life survived well into the first millennium A.D., just like the Malmok people, implying that there could have been a symbiosis between the Preceramic and Ceramic people of Aruba. Pressure from more advanced groups like the larger Ceramic communities, could have triggered the changes in the Malmok society; the Preceramic Indians felt threatened by the arrival of the 'new' Ceramic Indians who arrived at 800 A.D. in Northwestern Venezuela, and by 1000 A.D. were colonizing Eastern Falcón, Coro and Paraguaná. The Caquetio could have taken control over the Preceramic Indians, or they could ultimately have reached an alliance with them.



## The Caquetio Indians of Aruba

### ***Introduction***

The first human activities on Aruba took place ca. 2500/2000 years B.C. and were the result of semi-nomadic bands of Indians who came from the mainland. They were fishers/hunters/gatherers having neither agriculture nor ceramics, reason why that period is called the *Preceramic* Period (2500 B.C.-1000 A.D.). By 900/1000 A.D. another group of Indians immigrated from the mainland to Aruba who didn't only differ in their culture, their economic base and had larger communities, but also differed in their physical aspect.

### ***The Sites***

On Aruba 58 *sites* are classified as *Ceramic* (1000-1515 A.D.), with 2 stone extraction sites (Coashiati, Dos Playa) possibly also used by the Preceramic Indians, while 6 have Ceramic and Colonial remains. Most of the Ceramic sites are situated on or closely associated with the crystalline areas of the island, which have the best hydrological (*roois*=gullies) and soil conditions, what was very important for these agriculturists. Three sites are qualified as large villages (Santa Cruz, Tanki Flip, Savaneta) and 2 as medium-sized villages (Tanki Lender, Parkietenbos), all covering several hectares. The rest of the sites are much smaller and interpreted as exploitation camps or small permanent settlements. The Indians who lived on Aruba in the Ceramic Period were culturally, socially, politically and economically tied to the *Dabajuran* Indians of the mainland. They had the same pottery, differentiated burial practices and other similar aspects.

### ***Western Venezuela***

The archaeological finds of the Ceramic Period in Venezuela and the Antilles are classified into *styles* called *series*. In Western Venezuela, these are since 1958 the Dabajuroid, Tocuyanoid and Tierroid series. In 1989, they were redefined into the Macro-Dabajuroid and Macro-Tocuyanoid Traditions. The ancestral Macro-Dabajuroid Tradition probably began to diverge in the Llanos, possibly at the Cojedes River between 1-500 A.D. The Dabajuran (*Caquetio*) branch moved up the Cojedes through the Yaracuy and colonized eastern Falcón, arriving at the Dabajuro area at ca. 800 A.D. By 1100 to 1200 A.D. the Dabajuran colonized much of eastern Falcón, Coro, Paraguaná, and settled along major coastal rivers in western Falcón between the Borojo and Mitare rivers. At this time, they learned maritime navigation and colonized Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Isla del Tesoro and Ave Grande. These boundaries correlate well with the ethno-historic Venezuelan *Coastal Caquetio* polity.



### ***Characteristics of the Aruban Ceramic (Dabajuran) Sites***

Ninety percent of the artefacts found in the Ceramic Period sites in Aruba are ceramics. There are storage vessels, cooking pots, very large vessels used as urns, transportation vessels, food-serving and ceremonial pots. The basic shapes are bowls, dishes and jars, while a wide variety of bases are found. Clay was also used to make griddles, clay-discs, figurines, body-stamps and spindle whorls. Stone tools are mostly made of tonalite, basalt or dolerite. *Manos* and *metates* are regularly found, the same as small pointed flint chips (cassava rasps). Heavy tools were axes, hammers, chisels, knives, slingstones, hearth- and grindstones. Coral was used to make rasping, grinding and polishing tools, while shell was used to make axes, perforators, scrapers, spoons, beads and pendants. Bone served to make pins, points, drills and needles. There are generally 5 types of human burials identified until now on our island, while the Aruban Dabajuran Indians buried their dead in- or outside their houses, sometimes in a dump area. Mostly the individuals were buried in a fetus position. That the culture of dead was very complicated is not only reflected in the 5 general ways the Indians were buried, but in more than 50% incomplete skeletons are found, which are the result of complicated *rites de passage*. Many times the dead were buried in groups of 4 to 6, but within such a group, never the same burial occurs. Within the villages, several structures have been recognized. At Santa Cruz and Tanki Flip, circular and oval houses were identified. There are circular houses that housed two nuclear families, while the oval houses were communal houses where extended- or multifamilies resided. Within the houses, several hearths were found. Rectangular structures interpreted as ceremonial structures also were recognized, while spaces between the houses functioned as *plazas*. Fences were found at Santa Cruz and Tanki Flip, while also horse-shoe shaped structures were recognized. The villages were next to the confluence of roois, and roois also functioned as natural communication routes between the villages and other sections of the island.

### ***Subsistence and Social Organization***

The Ceramic Period Indians were intensive farmers of maize and cassava (of which flat cakes were made), and possibly agave, cotton and tobacco. Cultivation of cassava and maize probably took place in cleared gardens (*slash & burn*) and in gardens placed on the edge of roois. Agave could have served for fiber to produce rope, baskets, nets and hammocks. In addition, an intoxicating drink called *fique* was made from agave, just like maize was used for an intoxicating drink called *maçato*. Furthermore, the Dabajuran Indians ate fruits, turtles and their eggs, iguanas, birds, edible shellfish, crabs, fish, and small mammals. No evidence of domesticated animals has been found yet. The figurines, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations on the pottery, the complicated burial practices, incense burners, ceremonial drinking bowls a.o. show that the Aruban Dabajuran Indians had strong religious beliefs. Aruba was under socio-political control of





the Venezuelan Coastal Caquetios who on the cultural scale of development were at a *paramount chiefdom* level. There were: 1. local (village) *caciques* (*datihaos*); 2. chiefs (*diaos*) of several local caciques who controlled smaller territorial/socio-political units (*cacicazgos*); 3. the overall paramount chief/*cacique suprême* (also *diao*) who was at the top of the hierarchy. It is possible that on Aruba each village had a local cacique, while a second order chief controlled the region, or perhaps even the offshore islands. It is also possible that Aruba was part of the Caquetio sub-polity Guaranaos whom, together with the Amuayes, dominated the Peninsula of Paraguaná, but were subordinated to a central, supreme authority resided on the mainland. Based on the central position of the Santa Cruz site, its size, the underground cave burials found at Budui where at least 3 persons of a possible high rank were buried, and other archaeological finds, it can be assumed that the second order chief, who dominated our island, resided at Santa Cruz.

### **Synthesis**

The Ceramic Amerindians arrived at Aruba at ca. 900/1000 A.D. from the coast of Falcón and went to live at 3 important villages: Tanki Flip, Santa Cruz and Savaneta, but also at Tanki Lender and Parkietenbos. There was a network of satellite sites for fishing, shellfish collecting or agricultural activities around them. These Amerindians were agriculturists that belonged to a *clan* of Caquetios (called *Arubaes* in 1607 and *Arubanas* in the mid-18th century) who on their turn belonged to the paramount chiefdom of the Coastal Caquetio polity. Every village on the island was probably inhabited by 100-150 Amerindians who were socially and politically much more developed than the Preceramic Amerindians. For a large time the 3 biggest villages on the island were contemporaneously inhabited, and considering the 2 medium-sized villages, at some point in time in the Ceramic Period Aruba was inhabited by 450-600 Dabajuran Amerindians.

The early Dabajuran period (850-1350 A.D.) was a time of rapid and continuous territorial expansion through coastal Falcón, a period when possibly hegemonic control over, or tacit alliances with the archaic fisherfolks on the mainland and the offshore islands was accomplished. A question remains: "What did really happen to the Preceramic Amerindians?"

In Ceramic sites Preceramic 'techniques' and tools can be found, but they could be the result of older activities by the Preceramic Amerindians. Physically the Ceramic Amerindians had relatively low, wide and short skull-shapes, which is in total contrast with the high, narrow and long skulls of the Preceramic Amerindians. The stature of the Caquetio at the time of European contact ranged between 1.55m and 1.65m, while the average stature of a Preceramic Amerindian man was 1.57m and woman 1.49m.

Interestingly the typical shovel-shaped incisors of the Preceramic Amerindians are in some cases found on Ceramic Amerindians, showing some degree of mixing with or descendency of the earlier Preceramic people. To know for sure if there was any mixing between these two totally different people, an intensive DNA research has to be carried



out. Archaeologically there is some difference between Aruba on one hand, and Curaçao and Bonaire on the other hand, while two historic documents state that on Curaçao and Bonaire probably a different clan lived called the *Indios Curaçaos*. The Coastal Caquetio nation was not only hierarchically structured, but within each village, there was an elite class social structure, which is a.o. reflected in the wide variety of burials on our island. Archaeological finds show that not only did Aruba belong to the core area of the Dabajuroid culture, but there were direct or indirect commercial, social and cultural contacts with Central Venezuela (Valencia area), the Peninsula of Guajira (Colombia), the Andean area in interior Venezuela (a.o. Trujillo), (North)Western and Eastern Venezuela, Curaçao and Bonaire. Santa Cruz functioned as the central village dominating Aruba; Savaneta functioned as a coastal harbour village where connections with the region were held and strengthened, while Tanki Flip functioned mostly as an interior village more isolated from the rest. Just when the Caquetios were reaching the top of their cultural development, they were interrupted by the arrival of the Spaniards who destroyed their culture completely, culminating ultimately in the killing and deportation of all the original Caquetios of our island to Hispaniola in 1515. Unfortunately, this marks the end of the Ceramic Period on Aruba.





## Aruba 500 Years?

### ***Introduction***

As in 1999, Aruba was commemorating 'Aruba 500 years', which is about the encounter of two cultures, some topics that need to be highlighted will be treated, as there exists much confusion about them. Furthermore, the period of first contact between two totally different cultures, of two totally different worlds, would change the course of history of our island in such a drastic way, that it needs to be taken under the microscope to get an idea how this process started.

### ***The First Europeans in Aruba***

Great confusion exists about the year and day the Europeans set foot on or saw our island for the first time. Numerous authors have tried to reconstruct the first European voyage along the ABC-islands to some extent, like Kohl (1860), Menkman (1937, 1942), Van Meeteren (1937), Hartog (1953, 1961, 1968), Goslinga (1971, 1979), Ramos (1981), De Palm (ed.) (1985), Oliver (1989), Harley (1990), Havisser (1991) and Mansur (1991) a.o., but none have solid evidence as to which year and day the Europeans first knew of the existence of Aruba (all are *secondary* and *tertiary* sources). Others have tried to guess, assumed or even tried to manipulate facts to get a year and day, because we are so eager to have the exact date when this took place. In science and especially in history, facts in the form of written documents at the time certain events happened (*primary* sources) are very important to sustain a theory for 100%. In this case, these documents don't exist, were lost or just haven't been encountered yet. The fact is that, during the famous expedition of Alonso de Ojeda along the Venezuelan coast, accompanied by famous *pilotos* like Amerigo Vespucci, Bartolomé Roldán and Juan de la Cosa, in front of northwestern Venezuela, two islands were visited which are obviously and generally accepted by historians as being Bonaire and Curaçao. It is known that the explorers of the New World carefully documented everything they did, saw and encountered, although they had a vivid imagination when doing this. This means that if they really visited or saw a third island (Aruba!), this would have been documented. The only primary sets of records we have of this expedition are the court records during a trial in Sevilla (1504) which related to charges of fraud by Bartolomé de las Casas and others, charging that Vespucci was attempting to rob Columbus of the credit (of being the first European) for "discovering" the New World. Another set of records for the 1499 De Ojeda expedition is a series of letters supposedly written by Amerigo Vespucci from 1500 to 1504 and a map of the New World compiled by Juan de la Cosa in 1500, from his and Vespucci's notes of the voyage. Unfortunately, the original notes of De la Cosa vanished shortly after his return to Spain,



with only the map surviving. This *mapamundi*, drawn in or around the year 1500 by De la Cosa and being the first map of the New World including the Caribbean, clearly shows that there are **only two** islands in front of Northwestern Venezuela and not three as would be expected if Aruba was known at that time by the Europeans, like many authors have suggested. Some authors believe that there exists evidence that at least in 1501 the Europeans knew of Aruba's existence, as in June of that year, before De Ojeda began with his second voyage in 1502, he was named governor of Caquivacoa, Ququivacoa, Qunquevacoa, Chichivacoa, Coquibocoa and more frequently Coquivacoa (Coro) by Ferdinand and Isabella, to which the *Islas Adyacentes a la Costa Firme* also belonged. To these islands, supposedly, Aruba also belonged, but then again, there is no document that states that Aruba was specifically one of these islands in front of the *Tierra Firme*. Moreover, the Portuguese Cantino World Map, which was drawn in 1502 by an anonymous cartographer and is the second world map including the Caribbean, also shows only two islands in front of the northwestern coast of Venezuela. However, it seems very probable that somewhere between 1502 and 1505 Aruba was known to the Europeans.

### ***Historic Misconceptions in the History of Aruba***

An interesting point of discussion is that Bonaire and Curaçao (indirectly Aruba?) were named *Islas de Los Gigantes*. Presumably, the Amerindians, living on these islands at that time, were "the stature of giants in their size", yet their bodies were proportionally normal. Some of the references include mention of "giant footprints" seen on the island of Curaçao. These fantasies were written a.o. with the intention of selling books, as in the early 16th century New World adventure accounts were best-sellers. Furthermore, in that period, when Columbus met the New World in search of a short cut to India, especially China, Japan and India formed the focus of medieval conceptions of inexhaustible wealth, cities with golden-roofed houses, islands with infinite amounts of expensive spices, pearls and silk. The Roman myth of the Golden Age (or the Greek Atlantis) and the biblical accounts of the Paradise on Earth flew together in that time in what is known as the legend of *El Dorado*. Supernatural creatures like amazons, giants and half-human, half-animals were part of the reality and blurred the perception of the events the explorers were encountering in the New World. The historical accounts were biased towards the European perspective, so we must be cautious in accepting these descriptions of the lands and indigenous peoples whom the Europeans encountered as objective or completely accurate. Archaeological and historical data show that the stature of the Caquetio at the time of European Contact ranged between 1.55m and 1.65m, while later invaders never confirmed the supposedly gigantic stature of these Amerindians. Important to mention is that the average stature of Spanish males at that time was smaller than 1.55m, meaning that the Amerindians could have looked like 'big people' to the Spanish. In the archaeological record of the ABC-islands only one skeleton has a relatively high stature in comparison



with the Spanish, which is a skeleton from Bonaire dated at  $760 \pm 2.5$  years B.P. (ca. 1220 A.D) and measured between at least 1.70m and 1.76m.

A common historic misconception is the use of the word Caiquetio for the Amerindians who lived a.o. on our island at the time of European Contact and for some extended length of time prior to that. The common misspelling of this tribal name as "**Caiquetio**" comes from a single source early Spanish document, whereas the majority of early documentations of this tribal name are more in the form of "**Caquetio**". On our island, this is also a consequence of 20th century authors who always used the name Caiquetio instead of Caquetio. The consequence is that there are even a club and school on our island which are named Caiquetio, because the population is educated with the name Caiquetio and not Caquetio which makes it difficult to (mentally) change the wrong name Caiquetio into Caquetio.

Another very common mistake people make is calling the Caribbean Amerindians "Caribs" and "Arawaks". This is very wrong, as a lot of different ethnic, racial and cultural groups together were part of the Arawakan linguistic group, including Carib speaking groups, but all were different. This mistake is also made when referring to the Caquetios, as a lot of times they are referred to as "the Arawaks". Correctly is that the Caquetio Amerindians spoke an Arawakan language also called Caquetio, which presently is an extinct language. Fortunately, original Caquetio terms available in toponyms, anthroponyms and words relating to the flora and fauna have survived on our island and in Papiamentu, although of most of them we don't know the meaning, as they were never defined in the chronicles. The vocabulary items from the various 16th century sources show that Caquetio is without any doubt an Arawakan, almost certainly Maipuran, language. The term *kakitho* of the Lokono glosses as 'people' or 'living beings' (the name of the Arawak linguistic group is derived from the Arawak of the Lokono, an Arawakan language spoken in Guyana). The Lokono term *kakitho* is obviously a cognate of the Caquetio term *kaketio* and both are cognate to Pre-Andean terms for 'person'. This means that not the Arawakans lived on Aruba in the Ceramic Period and the early years after the arrival of the Spanish, but an Amerindian group that spoke an Arawakan language called Caquetio and called themselves 'people/persons' or 'living beings' (Caquetio).

The name Aruba is probably an Arawakan name, certainly of an Amerindian origin. When the Spanish occupied our island they named it Orua, Oruba and Ouraba. Names they used later were Curava, Uruba, Arouba and Aruba. The first time the name Aruba appeared as such in a historical document is in 1526, in the 'Historia Natural y General de las Indias' lib. XX from Gonzalo Fernández Oviedo. Many authors have tried to find the explanation of the word Aruba and its linguistic or geographic origin. Some of them link it to a.o. Tupi-Guaraní (Oirubae means 'companion'), Carib (Oraoubao means 'shell-island'), Spanish (Oro Hubo means 'there was gold'), the Gulf of Maracaibo (Aruba would come from Oruba which is a name in this Gulf), an Amerindian word ('well located'), Taino



('Aruboa' is a 16th century anthroponym) and the Gulf of Darien (originally Gulf of Uruba which means 'Gulf of Canoes'). The latest theory is that Aruba would have been named after the Amerindians who lived here, called the *Arubaes* (1607) or *Arubanas* (mid-18th century). On the first look the last theory seems most probable, but a big problem is that the name Aruba appeared as such for the first time in 1526, which is way before the name Arubaes or Arubanas appeared in historic documents, leaving us in a doubt if Aruba was named after the Amerindians, or that the Amerindians were named after Aruba. Furthermore, we don't even know for sure which Amerindians are referred to when talking of the Arubaes or Arubanas (Caquetios or Amerindians of the later Historic Period?). So it still remains an unanswered question from where the name Aruba came and what it means.

#### ***The First Years of The Encounter of Two Cultures (until 1515 A.D.)***

In the first years, the Spanish didn't worry too much with the colonization of the islands, because the second expedition of De Ojeda in 1502 ended in a fiasco. Because of numerous judgment mistakes and cruelties the loan was withdrawn, reason why the islands were put again under the *Audiencia Hispaniola* (Haïti/Sto. Domingo). De Ojeda, who in the early years was the governor of a.o. supposedly Aruba, never put a step on our island. By this time the Caquetio Amerindians of Aruba probably lived in two main centers, namely Savaneta and (the majority) between Piedra Plat and Noord. Their number is estimated to have been between two to three hundred, maybe even four hundred Amerindians. The cacique dominating Aruba was called Simas and when the Spanish first settled, they brought an Amerindian cacique of the mainland called Golmir whom they left behind with two Spaniards. Golmir's main goal was to talk the Aruban Amerindians over to convert themselves to Christianity. After some time more Spaniards came to the island and probably settled at Sero Cristal. Exploration and exploitation were encouraged with Rodrigo de Bastidas exploring the area in 1500, Juan de la Cosa "revisiting" the islands in 1504 for Brasilwood and Cristóbal Guerra conducting more slave raids up to until his death in 1504. In 1503 the Spanish Crown made it possible for the Spaniards to export rebelling Amerindians from the islands to work in the gold- and silvermines in behalf of the *encomiendas* of the Spanish colonists on Hispaniola. The Amerindian population on Hispaniola, working in the mines, quickly decreased and already in 1505, the first African slaves were imported. However, in 1513 the shortage of labourers was so big that king Ferdinand gave permission to use the Amerindians of the *Islas Inútiles* (Useless Islands) as labourers in the mines. Because of the absence of precious metals and pearls the underking of Hispaniola, Diego Columbus, son of Christoffer Columbus, declared Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao as *Islas Inútiles*, making them suitable for slavehunting by the notorious *indieros* or slavehunters. In 1515 Diego Salazar, by order of Diego Columbus, took about 2000 Amerindians of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao to work as slaves in the mines in Hispaniola. Probably Martín Baso Zabala had also raided a number of Caquetio out of a.o.



Aruba. A few Amerindians escaped from deportation fleeing to the Venezuelan mainland, while others probably remained hidden in the Aruban forests and caves. The rest was directly killed by the Spaniards, while during this early Spanish period a large number died because of 'new' diseases like the measles. Aruba remained almost uninhabited, until in 1526 a number of Amerindians (200) was brought back to the ABC-islands from Hispaniola.

In this early period, there was no Spanish fortification and how the Spanish government was exactly organized is not known. Some government officials with the titles of *justicia mayor* and *mayor domo*, together with a clerk and possibly a lay brother with their families, could have formed the handful Spanish population, while the Amerindians were under direct supervision of a cacique baptized with a Spanish name.

### **Synthesis**

This year Aruba is commemorating 500 years of written history and the encounter of two cultures, being the European (Spanish) and the AmerAmerindian (Caquetio) culture. But do the first written accounts of Aruba stem from 1499, the year in which supposedly the European and AmerAmerindian culture first met on our island? Many authors have tried to reconstruct the first voyage of the Europeans along the ABC-islands and have come up with different theories. Although all have their own points of view, on one point all agree: there are no evidences whatsoever that Aruba was visited or seen during the De Ojeda expedition in 1499! Why then did we make such a fuss this year to commemorate '500 years' if we all know that evidences are lacking? Clearly Curaçao and Bonaire, which for sure were visited in 1499 and whom blew this event this year in such a way that it became a "touristic issue", played a big role in this. Important for us is to know our history as it really is and not invent things that are not true. Our history is rich and interesting enough to make it a touristic and Aruban issue without inventing facts. Maybe the concerning authorities should have searched deeper to get to the real facts! The exact year the Spaniards knew of the existence of Aruba and set foot on our island is not even clear yet, but this probably must have happened somewhere between 1502 and 1505.

As little by little the Arubans are getting more interested in their island and its history, more people are searching to get to know more about this "mysterious unknown territory". This is partly due to the fact that in 1999 we were commemorating Aruba 500 years, but more so because Aruba is rapidly changing and evolving into a multi-cultural society. The consequence is that we want and need to know what our own culture is and was and what the history and origin of our people is. In this context it is important that we become conscious of historic misconceptions, such as that Bonaire and Curaçao (indirectly Aruba?) were named Isla de Los Gigantes, but which is more based on fantasies, or that we call the Aruban Amerindians (Caquetios: Ceramic Period) the Arawaks, whereas they spoke an Arawakan language called Caquetio and when they are not called the Arawaks,



we call them the Caiquetio, whereas the correct name is Caquetio. Last but not least there are persons who think they know the meaning and origin of the word Aruba, but frankly spoken there is still no 100% proof for this. The only facts that we have is that when the Spanish came to Aruba, they premeditatedly destroyed an Amerindian culture that was on the verge of developing into its highest peak. By eliminating the religious beliefs and the native language, introducing unknown sicknesses causing death, slavehunting, killing and ultimately deportation to slavery (1515), the Spaniards wiped out the Caquetio culture of our island, an irreversible process which changed the cause of history of the natives, but most of all, of our island. To understand these events they must be seen in the context of the time period and cosmovision of the Europeans. With the arrival of the Spanish, the first step was set towards a new kind of life on our island, which strongly influenced the centuries that followed and which was the beginning of our European roots, to some extend mixed with Amerindian cultural traits. Even though centuries have past and the Amerindian culture was oppressed, still we have Amerindian influences on our island, mostly in our native language, as today some 350 Amerindian words are still used in Papiamentu of which some 150 are original Caquetio words!





## The Amerindian Historic Period

### ***Introduction***

With the arrival of the first Europeans in or around 1500, the Amerindian Historic Period begins which we officially let begin in 1515 with the deportation of (probably most of) the Amerindian population of Aruba (after been declared “Isla Inútil”) to Hispaniola, ending the Ceramic Period and the Caquetio culture.

We divide the Historic Period of Aruba in 3: 1. The Spanish Period (1515-1636), 2. The West Indian Company Period (1636-1791), and 3. The Colonial Period (1792-1924). Of this period we have at this moment, more or less 25 sites registered. Most of these sites are two- or multi-component sites, and are situated in the crystalline part of the island. This corroborates with the historical documents that the Amerindians of the period were dependant on agriculture (horti-culture).

### ***Spanish Period (1515-1636)***

During the Spanish Period, the Amerindians were converted to Christianity and had/learned to talk Spanish and got Spanish names. The Spanish also introduced grazing animals, fruit trees, and cut lots of Brasilwood (*Haematoxylon Brasilleto*), the most interesting economic use of Aruba for the Spaniards. Aruba at that time already began becoming deforested. Aruba became a kind of ranch, where the animals were roaming freely over the island in search of food, although it was already much deforested. Spanish government was very weak and from time to time, a small group of Spanish men came to the island, but Aruba was generally neglected. Most of the Amerindians lived at Santa Cruz, Sabaneta and Fontein, some kilometres inland between Sabaneta and Oranjestad. The Amerindians were under supervision of a cacique, which had been baptized and given a Spanish name.

### ***West Indian Period (1636-1791)***

During the West Indian Period, which is the first period of the Dutch on the island, Aruba became a cattle ranch for horse breeding to feed the population of Curacao, but also functioned as a provision depot in actions against the mainland during the 80-year war between the Dutch and Spanish. Although Aruba was in hands of the WIC (Lieutenant Governor), the free Amerindians were under the supervision of a so-called (Amerindian) captain, and not being labourers of the Company, they were assigned a piece of land to maintain themselves (garden cultivation). The WIC didn't do anything to convert the Amerindians to Protestantism (religion of Dutch) and although Catholicism was forbidden, it didn't stop the yearly visits of Spanish priests from Coro.



In 1674, the second West India Company took possession of the old one, which didn't change the situation for Aruba; it remained neglected and undefended. Aruba became a big plantation of the W.I.C., a *de facto* Amerindian Reservation (ca.1640-1754), only to be colonized with the permission of the director; some Curaçao traders were allowed to trade on Aruba, but not to settle.

Old Lieutenant Governors often stayed on the island with their families and became the patriarch of the oldest families on Aruba. Besides the Amerindians living on the island, red slaves (minor girls and captive boys) were raided or bought by the Aruban Amerindians on the mainland and brought to the island, but there were still no black slaves (officially) living on the island, as they were not mentioned in documents between 1697 and 1758.

The Amerindians had a better legal position under the Dutch than under the Spanish, as they could not be enslaved and lived under the same laws as the white colonists, what didn't mean that in practice this was true. The Dutch had to civilize the Amerindians, and through education of their children, they had to convert them to Christianity. The adults had to exercise a profession, preferably being an agriculturist, or else something they were good at. The W.I.C. didn't do anything to convert the Amerindians to Protestantism, which was the religion of the few Dutch living on the island, while Catholicism was forbidden, but despite this, it didn't stop the yearly visits of Spanish priests from Coro. The free Amerindians were under the supervision of a so-called captain, and as they were not labourers of the Company, they were assigned a piece of land to maintain themselves (garden cultivation). In the captainship, it was guaranteed that a third party couldn't take advantage of the Amerindians. The Amerindians kept an eye on the cattle and caught it when requested by officials of the W.I.C., while they cut and sold wood and exploited marine resources.

The cacique at that time was Antonio Gonzales, and from time to time he invited a priest from Coro to come to Aruba to do the baptizing. In addition, other special feasts and occasions (e.g. Carmel-devotion) where a priest was needed for, a priest from Coro was invited. The Amerindians were illiterate, so they could only say their rosary.

In 1750, the first chapel was built on Aruba at Alto Vista, functioning primarily for the Amerindians. The profession of the Amerindians living in this area was woodcutting. Of this year, the first document is known officially mentioning black slaves living on the island, who were three 'Elminasic' slaves who murdered four persons.

Things changed radically in 1754, when Europeans/colonists from Curacao and Bonaire (Dutch, Belgians, Germans, Italians, French, English and Spanish), were permitted to



settle on Aruba, but under strict conditions. These white men came directly from colonial islands/countries or directly from Europe, and with them, they brought the first black slaves, also introducing the language Papiamentu to Aruba. They settled principally in the flat northwestern part of Aruba, at places like Buena Vista, Daimari, Parkietenbosch, Ponton, Tanki Lender, Shiribana, Tarabana and Santa Marta, where they had small plantations especially for the breeding of sheep and goats.

Before this the whites/Europeans settled in the south-west coast of Aruba (Commandeursbaai), and in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Amerindians living at Spaans Lagoen, moved to Sero Plat, from where they scattered to northern Aruba. They lived in three centres, namely Sero Cristal, Moko and Alto Vista. They tried to live as far away as possible from the Europeans, on strategic places, like on hills or hilly parts, also in areas between Noord and Piedra Plat, far away from the easily accessible south coast, as Europeans and buccaneers still hunted for red slaves.

Mozes de Salmo Levy Maduro was the first white colonist allowed to settle on Aruba in 1754, but under strict conditions as mentioned before. Between 1754 and 1767 some colonists from Curaçao settled on Aruba under the same strict conditions<sup>1</sup>, while they were also obliged to carry out 'gentlemen services' (*herendiensten*), like cleaning tankis. In 1772<sup>2</sup> the second church was built on Aruba at Noord, and was called the Santa Ana Church. A year later, in 1773, the first (black) land slaves came from Bonaire to Aruba; two old and two young slaves who from then on would watch over the sheep flock.

In 1775, in an official declaration between the Captain of the Amerindians and the West India Company, it is stated that the Amerindians had to cut wood and catch cattle when required by the Company, in return for the piece of land given to them. Nooyen (1965:26) thinks that at that time there lived some five hundred Amerindians on the island, settled in Northern Aruba, while a small group of Europeans lived at Savaneta. However, in 1779 J.H. Hering mentions that only a few Amerindians, a Lieutenant Governor and a vice-Lieutenant Governor lived on Aruba. Aruba was still practically uncultivated, while the trade with the mainland went on.

From ca. 1780<sup>3</sup> white colonists began to settle on the island, coming mainly from Curaçao and Bonaire (Dutch, Belgians, Germans, Italians, French, English and Spanish), of which some were born in Europe. This was the result of land tax, which was introduced in 1785, what made it easier to get a licence to settle (domiciliation permit). The colonists settled principally in the flat northwestern part of Aruba, at places like Buena Vista, Daimari,

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<sup>1</sup> Trade, selling land and breeding cattle were prohibited, or very restricted.

<sup>2</sup> In 1777 and 1778 in other sources (Alofs & Merckies, 1990:19).

<sup>3</sup> From 1770 according to De Palm (1985:192), and from 1785 according to Alofs (1996:9).



Parkietenbosch, Ponton, Tanki Lender, Shiribana, Tarabana and Santa Marta, where they had small plantations especially for the breeding of sheep and goats.

With the arrival of white colonists, little by little integration with the Amerindians took place, with the Amerindian element forming the basis of the Aruban population of today. Although the Amerindians tried to live as far away as possible from the white colonists, this was an irreversible process. The exportation of horses to Cuba and Jamaica remained one of the most important sources of income on the island.

### ***Colonial Period (1792-1924)***

On January 1, 1792, the second West Indian Company was liquidated (bankrupt), and her possessions were taken by the Republic of the United Netherlands (the State), what meant the end of a strongly Dutch controlled period.

In 1789, the French Revolution began, while in 1793 France and Holland ('The Republic') were at war with each other. In 1796, an English attempt to take away some ships in the Paardenbaai of Aruba failed. Curaçao was even attacked by French ships, but all of this went unnoticed for Aruba. In 1796, a small fortification with four guns was built at the Paardenbaai, but this wasn't enough to protect the island against enemy attacks. In that same year, governor Johan Rudolf Lauffer and the persons living at Paardenbaai, were allowed to trade under certain restrictions, which would disturb the calm way of life of the Arubans. In 1796 or 1797, Fort Zoutman was built<sup>4</sup> in order of governor Lauffer, being the first real fortification of Aruba. In 1799, three ships with ammunition were sent to Aruba for its defense. There was a scarcity of food in this year, and food was sent for by Lauffer. In that year, Aruba (Fort Zoutman) was attacked by the English captain Edward Hamilton on the frigate Hermione, but the attack was beaten off. It was the only enemy attack in history against Fort Zoutman.

In 1800, Aruba was threatened by a famine because the harvests failed due to the drought, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April a ship full of flour was sent for the approximately thousand inhabitants of Aruba. Three more shipments were sent to Aruba on 15 May, 13 June and 27 September, while an English cruiser left a ship full of French fugitives behind on the island. In this time, Aruba was sometimes used as a deportation place for people who behaved badly, like soldiers. In that same year, the Curaçaoon government decided to put itself under English protection, in order to protect itself against a French fleet in their harbour. In 1802, the 'peace of Amiens' put Aruba and Curaçao back under Dutch control. In 1803, the three Dutch Leeward islands were taken over from the English, but on Aruba nothing changed. On The 28th of June 1803, a new war broke out between England, France and Holland. In 1804, the English frigate Diana, under captain Mahling (or

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<sup>4</sup> At a place which later would become Oranjestad, the capital of Aruba, founded in 1824.



Maling), came to Aruba, and Aruba capitulated directly because of the bad defenses (they even offered the four guns of Fort Zoutman as land's cattle). The English flag flew only a week, and when the English left, the Dutch flag was run up again. These short visits went on for some time; the English always put some men on land, after which the British flag was run up, and soon the British left again. Usually the Lieutenant Governor was not even replaced, until in October 1805 the first English Lieutenant Governor was placed, namely W. Doran. In November, Changuion made a plan to recapture Aruba from the English (estimated to be some 25 men), and accompanied on the ship Suriname by amongst others Balfour, Quast and the famous Luís Brión, they attacked on land and on sea. They tried to take possession of Fort Zoutman, which for the second and last time came into action but this time manned by the enemy (the English), in a battle that lasted two days. On land two Amerindians showed the best way to come to the fortress, while fifty Amerindians offered their help to (re)capture Fort Zoutman, but by this time the English surrendered. In December 1805 some English came to Aruba who were beaten off after a short battle, but in January 1806 hundred and fifty English came on the island, and the inhabitants escaped to the woods. After destroying the Lieutenant Governor's home and taking some animals, they sailed away two days later promising to return.

In 1806, the Venezuelan rebellious general Francisco de Miranda took two times possession of Aruba in his battle against the Spaniards (helped in his battle by the English), from the 10<sup>th</sup> until the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> of August till the 25<sup>th</sup> of September. On these occasions no Amerindians or other inhabitants helped him, because they were very afraid, so De Miranda had to force some men to help him with his needs. In May, a few English ships were again on Aruba, this time for twelve days. A proclamation of De Miranda for the Aruban inhabitants was written in Spanish, because nobody could speak Dutch. After leaving the island, De Miranda soon returned to England. In 1807 Curacao fell in the hands of the English, what meant that Aruba automatically also fell in English hands.

Of the period 1807-1816 not much is known, and also about the English government we don't know much. The food supply was a big problem in those days, and when in 1808 it leaked out that Aruba was trading with the Spanish coast and Jamaica, trade was prohibited on the island. These were difficult years, and constantly food had to be asked for from Curaçao and the mainland.

Almost all the goats and sheep were gone (between 1790-1813), and only a small amount of usable wood was left on the island, while there were no teachers or priests. On The 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1816, England officially capitulated, and again Holland took possession of Aruba, this time for up until now, and tranquillity returned to the island. England didn't do anything for the progression of the island, they destroyed part of the infrastructure, while trade, cattle-breeding and agriculture were neglected.



Little by little, the Amerindian element disappeared, as a result of mixture with the other races (Negroes and Whites) living on Aruba. On Aruba, there was a feudal system, and most of this mixture took place in the lower classes. The Amerindian language was slowly pushed away by *Papiamentu*, while the Amerindian language was already gone on the other islands by this time. Probably around 1800 the old Amerindian language disappeared. According to Bosch, around 1830, Amerindians, Whites and Negroes were even intermarrying, and little by little, they forgot their own languages and began to talk the White men's language, namely Papiamentu. Bosch mentions hearing the Amerindian language only when people got angry or drunk in far away places.

Despite this mixture of different races, the Amerindian element dominated the Aruban population, more than on Curaçao and Bonaire, and there were minor differences in the customs between the different races on the island. The Amerindian element was strengthened by the constant contact between the mainland and Aruba, and the family ties between these two nations through marriages. Amerindians and half-blooded Amerindians even converted to Protestantism, the religion of the upper classes, between 1780-1816.

In 1816 there were 546 full-blooded Amerindians living on Aruba, of the total population of 1732 of which 1396 were free people, and 366 were slaves. On Curaçao the last full-blooded Amerindians (five) are recorded in 1795. In 1806, 30 % of the population on Bonaire was Amerindian, while in 1816 there were no more full-blooded Amerindians living on that island.

In general, the Amerindians of Aruba never really caused any serious trouble to the government of the island; only in 1740, in 1792 and in 1826/1827. They were described to Bosch as being very obliging to Whites when asked for voluntary help.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of red slaves (wild Amerindians) increased on the island. These red slaves were often underaged girls or boys who were prisoners of war, and were bought on the mainland from the cacique. Probably these red slaves were Guajiro Amerindians. They were smuggled into Aruba, even by their own congeners<sup>5</sup>, which ultimately resulted in human kidnapping, and from time to time this developed a hostile relationship between Aruba and the mainland. Bosch wrote that these Amerindians were the ugliest Amerindians he saw in America; they were small, ugly and fat,. Often these Amerindians ended up as housemaids with rich families, or they wandered around on the island, changing from boss to boss.

In 1827 the Lieutenant Governor of that year Plats, ordered that all employers had to treat these Amerindians as free persons and give the children a Christian education, teach them and learn them a profession. A problem was that after being baptized, the Amerindians couldn't return to the mainland, because they would be killed. For this reason and because

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<sup>5</sup> Aruban Indians who in the course of the years worked themselves up on the social scale (Hartog, 1953:113).





they had a much better life on Aruba, these ‘wild Amerindians’ could be found on the island until the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of these red slaves (35) are mentioned in baptism books from 1823 until 1830, and all were between 2 and 20 years old. They are always mentioned by their first name without their last name, but as being ‘from Guajira’ or sometimes ‘red slaves’. According to an oral tradition of which there’s no evidence, the last full-blooded Amerindian on Aruba, Nicolaas Pycclas, died at Savaneta in ca. 1862. According to Koeze and Wagenaar Humelinck, he died around about 1840. However, L. Alofs recently found the death certificate stating that this Amerindian died at Sabaneta in 1843. Tacoma investigated the skull of this Amerindian, and estimated the age at death at approximately fifty years. In 1863, slavery was officially abolished in Aruba, putting an end to this inhuman practice.

At the end of the nineteenth century, an old man from Savaneta told Father Van Koolwijk that as a child he witnessed the funeral of an Amerindian woman, which was an urn burial. At this occasion, many people were invited, and several sheep and goats were killed. Van Koolwijk mentions in a letter to C. Leemans, dated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1883, that several persons have told him that an Amerindian named Uncle Kaus (Kausie), who lived at Tanki Flip, was a fisherman (caught fish by hand!) and donated most of his catch to bystanders, which is a typical Amerindian behaviour. In the 1880’s, Van Koolwijk made a word list of Amerindian words that were supposedly still used at that time, although he compiled this list with great difficulty.

The Amerindians were described by him as being strongly built, copper-coloured men and women, having wide shoulders, round faces, wavy pitch-black hair, an erect posture and gait, possessing innate pride and dignified manners. Despite all this information, the exact origin of the Historic Amerindians is not known and based on the above-mentioned cases, we let the Amerindian Historic Period end in 1880.

Some important facts to know of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are that the capital of Aruba, Oranjestad, got its name in 1824, while people began to live there in 1821. There were two “gold fevers”, the first from 1824 until 1832 and the second one from 1868 until 1915. In these periods 1.343.816 kilos of gold were found. Phosphate winning was the most important source of income between 1881 and 1915. In between these periods, agriculture was focused upon, aloe being the most important exportation product. In 1924 a new era began for Aruba with the Lago Oil refinery, being the most important source of income until 1984, when it was (“temporarily”) closed. In 1986 Aruba got its “Status Aparte” and since then tourism has been the most important source of income.



## Rock Paintings

### *Introduction*

There are 22 sites with rock paintings, with in total ca. 300 pictographs (painted representations), including 2 petroglyphs (representations ground into the rock). They amount between 270 and 330 separate representations. Generally, there is no clear relationship between pictographs and petroglyphs, neither chronologically, nor with regard to their possible meaning.

The colours of the petroglyphs are white, red and brown (one occasional black one), and are done on diorite or on limestone in an inland or coastal location. The red paint's red component is iron-oxide, and the white one is chalk.

### *Interpretations*

There are numerous explanations for the meaning of rock paintings and their relationship with the place where they are found; they are boundary markers of a social-political territory; they are religious symbols and centra; there is a specific worship relationship with freshwater at rock painting sites; there is a relationship of these sites with astronomical calculations. However, as Dubelaar stated, petroglyphs/pictographs are possibly predominantly meaningful figures, but they don't contain an explicit message.

At the rock painting sites of Aruba, often sherds, stone tools, and shell refuse are found, but in small quantities; this doesn't reflect habitation, as also in the soil very little is found. Pictographs within ten meters of distance between each other are considered one site, while sites situated nearer to each other than 500 meters are considered one cluster. At Arikok four clusters of petroglyphs are situated on a north-south line over a distance of 415 meters, while the distance between the groups are 50 to 100 meters. Two other groups are situated ca. 50 meters west of this line, and straight or slightly curved lines interlink 2 to 5 sites. The positions of the pictographs were not randomly chosen, but were meant to be in those locations, however it remains a question how their makers did this.

Rock paintings reflect the thoughts of the Amerindians, e.g. their vision of this world and that of their gods (cosmovision) or the origin of the existing order (story of the Creation). For this reason, their vision was not simply expressed at any place, but there where they could be stored and protected for a long time. The distribution and location of the rock painting sites are therefore carefully chosen, while they also reflect great elaboration and specialization. The individuals most likely to have executed this delicate work within an Amerindian group are the shamans, who had central roles within the society and were in direct contact with the ghost world that surrounded them. It is almost certain that these



individuals were frequently under the influence of intoxicating/hallucinogenic products while producing the rock paintings, having divine inspiration.

### ***Preceramic or ceramic?***

The pictographs have not been ascribed to the Preceramic or Ceramic Period, but in 1996, Versteeg and Van Leeuwen collected organic material and through the A.M.S. technique (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry), two dates were obtained. Both dates indicate an age of 1000 years B.P., not solving the main question of which culture or cultures produced them, as the dates fall exactly in the transitional period between the Preceramic and Ceramic periods.

Pictographs are found on Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, and the Greater Antilles, while none has been found in the Lesser Antilles. The opposing mainland has few pictographs, which distinguishes the Dutch Leeward islands from the mainland in their archaeological record. Bonaire and Curaçao, which have a smaller number of rock painting sites than Aruba, share many motifs with those found on Aruba, but petroglyphs and white painted pictographs are only found on Aruba. There's a possible link with Venezuela where there are concentrations along the Orinoco River north to the Apure River junction, into northwest Venezuela via the Portuguesa or Guanara Rivers, via the Tocuyo River into the Dutch Leeward islands. This distribution pattern resembles the migration route of the Caquetio out of the Llanos into Northwestern Venezuela, suggesting a Ceramic Period background.

On the other hand, common cultural components have been found in burial parameters of late Preceramic groups on Aruba and on Cuba, suggesting that the rock paintings could have a Preceramic origin, but the evidence supplied by the archaeological record is scanty. Van Heekeren suggested that the rock paintings were made by the Meso-Indians. According to Nuñez Jimenez, Aruba and Cuba share pictographs; they share motifs, and one of the petroglyphs shows similarities with those from Cuba. Lately, a new hypothesis is being developed for the origins of rock paintings found in the Greater Antilles (e.g. Sto. Domingo and Cuba), where similarities between pictographs found on these islands and Aruba are not being interpreted as an influence that came to Aruba from "north-to south". Facts and observations are showing that possibly the influence on the Greater Antilles came from Aruba, meaning that the origins are to be sought in Venezuela, while Aruba functioned as a stepping stone of diffusion and migration to the Greater Antilles.

However, we know that in South America and the Caribbean area various motifs are shared by different cultures. In Nevada and California, and even Northern Rhodesia there



are similarities with the rockpaintings of the Dutch Leeward islands, but that's because the expression possibilities of men are unlimited, and figures we think are characteristic, are simply universal.



## **Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba**

*E Indiannan di Aruba.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 1

*Archaeological Investigations on Aruba: The Malmok Cemetery.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 2

*Investigacionnan Arqueologico di Malmok. E Santana di Indiannan.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 2

*Toen Woonden Indianen op Aruba.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 3

*The Indians of Aruba.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 4

*Bibliography of South American and Antillean Petroglyphs.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 5

*Reconstructing Brasilwood Island: The Archaeology and Landscape of Indian Aruba.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 6

*Indianen op Aruba/Indian na Aruba.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 7

*The Archaeology of Aruba: The Tanki Flip Site.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 8

Publication of the Foundation for Scientific Research in the Caribbean Region, no. 141

*Proceedings of the XIX International Congress for Caribbean Archaeology.*

Publications of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba 9