

# SOCIO ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN ARUBA AND LA GUAJIRA SINCE THE PRE-COLUMBIAN PERIOD

## LAZOS SOCIO-ECONÓMICOS ENTRE ARUBA Y LA GUAJIRA DESDE EL PERIODO PRECOLOMBINO

Harold Kelly<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Strong socio economic relations between Aruba and Colombia have existed since the Pre Columbian and its extent can be traced to the Preceramic Period. Specific burial activities in the form of red dye on skulls suggest the continuum of a Preceramic belief system that through La Guajira reached Aruba. The expansion of the Caquetio polity towards la Guajira and settling in Cabo de la Vela beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century intensified the relation between La Guajira and Aruba during the Ceramic Period. The socio economic relation with groups of Rancheria valley and Sierra Nevada was not only based on advantageous trade but on the diffusion of ideas, techniques and religious concepts that got assimilated by the Caquetio of Aruba. The Spanish colonization of the region during the Historic Period and influx of European settlers thereafter brought forth a tremendous increase in traffic to and from La Guajira as a result of an exponential growth in commerce and social relations within the region. Commerce and trade continued after the 1920's. The recent advent of air travel between Aruba and La Guajira brought forth continuity and further diversification of the existing socio economic ties whereby more people and goods were able to traffic back and forth than before. The socio economic ties between Aruba and La Guajira are expressed nowadays in a close familiar, economic and political relation whereby emphasis is laid on mutual cooperation.

**Keywords:** Trade, economic relations , history

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### Resumen

Las relaciones socio-económicas sólidas entre Aruba y Colombia han existido desde el precolombino y su extensión se puede remontar al periodo Precerámico. Actividades funerarias específicas en forma de tinte rojo en cráneos sugieren la continuidad de un sistema de creencias Precerámico que a través de La Guajira alcanza Aruba. La expansión de la organización política Caquetío hacia la Guajira y establecerse en el Cabo de la Vela, comienzo del siglo 15, se intensificó la relación entre La Guajira y Aruba durante el Período de cerámica. La relación socioeconómica con grupos de Ranchería valle y Sierra Nevada no sólo se basaba en el comercio ventajoso, sino en la difusión de las ideas, las técnicas y los conceptos religiosos que consiguió asimilables por el Caquetío de Aruba. La colonización española de la región durante el período histórico y la llegada de colonos europeos a partir de entonces sacó un enorme aumento en el tráfico hacia y desde La Guajira, como resultado de un crecimiento exponencial en el comercio y las relaciones sociales dentro de la región. El comercio e intercambio continuaron después en los comienzos del siglo 20. La reciente aparición de los viajes aéreos entre Aruba y La Guajira sacó la continuidad y la diversificación de las relaciones socio-económicas existentes por lo que más personas y bienes fueron capaces de tráfico de ida y vuelta que antes. Los vínculos socioeconómicos entre Aruba y La Guajira se expresan hoy en día en una relación familiar, económico y político cercano por el que se pone el acento en la cooperación mutua.

**Palabras clave:** Comercio, relaciones económicas, historia

1. Maestría en arqueología experimental y analysis de rastro de uso, National Archaeological Museum Aruba, *E-mail:* harold.kelly@gmail.com



## Introduction

Aruba is an autonomous part of the kingdom of the Netherlands, and formed part of the Netherlands Antilles (1954-1986), until 1986 when it got its Status Aparte. The island is located in the southern Caribbean and is situated approximately 30 km north of the Paragauna Peninsula of Venezuela. Aruba measures a total of 31 kilometers at its maximum length and roughly 10 kilometers at its maximum width (Dijkhoff and Linville, 2004).



**Figure 1.** The island of Aruba in Geographical context (Modified after Dijkhoff & Linville, 2004:2)

The close location of Aruba to the mainland of South America was ideal not only for the peopling of the island from the Paraguana Peninsula of Venezuela but also for the social economic interaction between Aruba the mainland and the surrounding islands. From the Pre Columbian people who arrived and settled on the island onwards there has always been a close interaction between Aruba and the region in both material and immaterial form. Aruba formed part of a large interaction sphere that included not only the adjacent islands of Bonaire, Curacao, the coastal Caribbean areas of Venezuela and Colombia. The nautical trading routes played a very important role from the Pre-Columbian time onwards and where the means by which not only exchange of goods and techniques took place but also the diffusion of religious concepts, ideas that influenced and shaped the cultures on both sides. During the Historic Period there was the development of a greater connection between the coastal region of Colombia and Aruba. During this period Aruba was ruled by different powers that brought forth diversification in the socio economic relation. The spanish period brought forth a new type of socio economic relation between Aruba and La Guajira based on the economic necessity of the Spanish rulers. Although Aruba was mostly neglected during the West Indian Company (W.I.C.) rule it still played a role in the trade route (illicit trade) between Curacao and La Guajira as a resupply post of ships. The taking over of Aruba by the Kingdom of the Netherlands diversified the socio economic relation whereby Aruba traded on behalf of Curacao with La Guajira. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought forth a different type of diversification wherein besides familiar and economic ties there was also a strengthening of relations on a governmental level. Furthermore it is within this century that

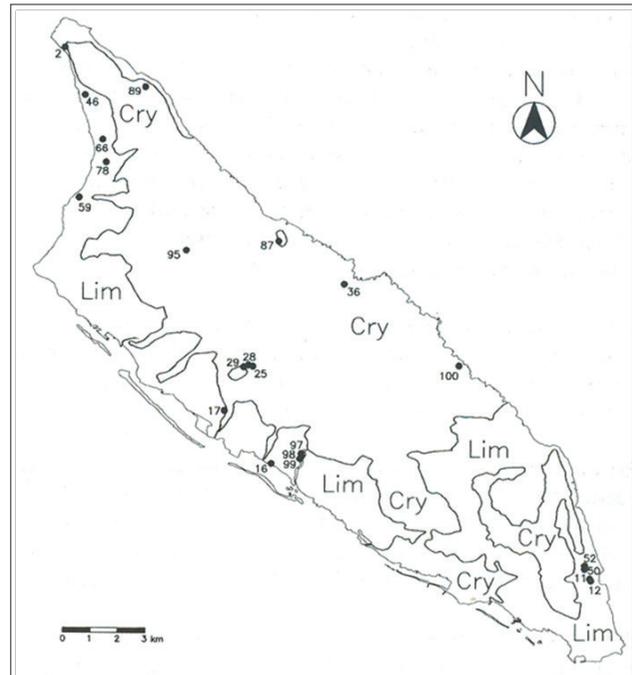
La Guajira natives brought to Aruba as slaves where declared as free people. People that trough time settled both on Aruba and the coastal region of Colombia came with their traditions that ended up influencing the “landscape” on both sides. This resulted in a stronger bond between the two areas where people where not only connected through family ties but also through architecture, goods and services. A strong feeling of social cohesion developed where the traveller feels right at home on arrival at either side.

### The Preceramic Period

The first inhabitants of Aruba are referred to as the Preceramic consisted out of small groups ranging from 10 to 15 people who were fishers/hunters and gatherers and lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle (Dijkhoff & Linville, 2004:5). Due to their lack of use of pottery it is not totally evident where they originated from. Nonetheless, there is still evidence that these people came from the South American Mainland and arrived on the island around 2500BC and lived till 900/1000 AD when the Ceramic People arrived (Versteeg, 1991:16-17). The skeletal traits of the Preceramic burials indicate that these people had relatively high narrow and long skulls and differed from the Ceramic people who had wider shorter skulls. As is suggested by Rouse it is very well possible that these people might have migrated eastward along the coast of northern South America which led to the colonization of Aruba prior to the arrival of the Ceramic People (Rouse in Dijkhoff, 1997: 32). In other words the similarity in skeletal characteristics (i.e. long narrow cranium) between the archaic people along the northwestern coast of South America (i.e. Colombia) and those found in burials on Aruba could be indicators of the continuum of Preceramic cultural practices that spread through vast and periods of time and space.

The Preceramic people although “less developed” compared to the Ceramic people were very skill full at sea faring and well organized and

even with the lack of agriculture it was possible for them to adapt and thrive on the island. Their diet was made up of mostly marine food that included shell fish, fish, sea turtles but also consumed herbs seeds and small game available on the island (Dijkhoff & Linville, 2004: 6)



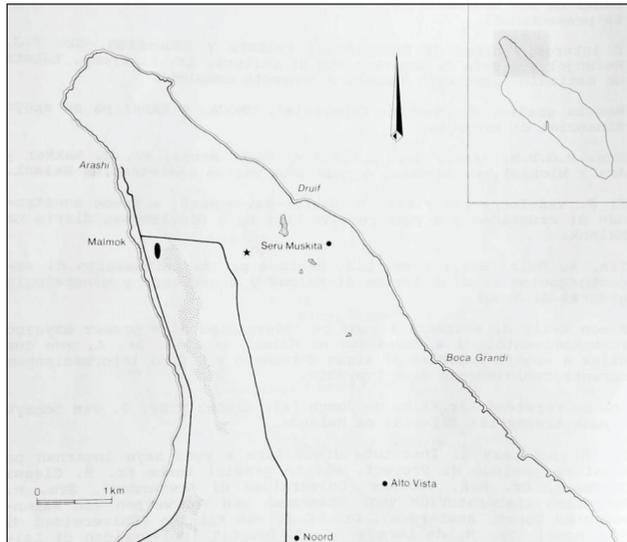
**Figure 2.** The Preceramic Period sites (after Versteeg and Ruiz, 1995:17)

The Preceramic people lived mostly on limestone areas on the island and sites are located either along the coast or inland of which the majority of them are in the form of shell middens.



**Figure 3.** Malmok shell midden.

Almost all the Preceramic sites are in the form of shell middens that contain remains of marine food exploited in the area except Malmok and Canashito sites that functioned primarily as burial sites (Versteeg & Ruiz 1995: 16).



**Figure 4.** The Malmok Burial site (after Versteeg, Tacoma & van de Velde, 1990: 4)

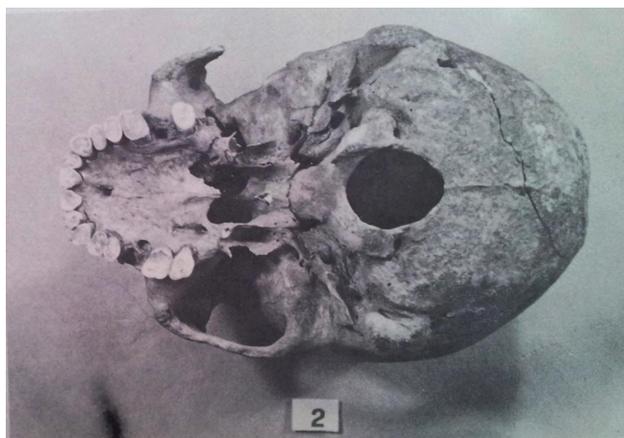
The Malmok site lies in the north northern part of the island and consists of a burial ground and a small shell midden and has been dated between 500-800 AD (Versteeg, 1991: 11). The burial site consists out of 60 to 70 buried individuals out of which 15 family groups were distinguished. The dead were buried in three different postures namely: a crouched position on the right side, 19 burials were found in this position. A crouched position on the left side, sixteen dead were found in this position. A supine position with the legs flexed, one child and one adult was found in this position. Furthermore the use of a red dye at the top or back of the skull was also common occurrence within the burials and at least 19 individuals had red dye on their skulls. The skulls of these individuals were relatively narrow and high compared to the skulls of the ceramic people which were low and wide. A striking characteristic of dental apparatus of the Preceramic people was the occurrence of shovel shaped incisors in both male as female burials.



**Figure 5.** Shovel shaped incisors of the Malmok burials (after Versteeg, Tacoma & van de Velde, 1990: 56)

Most graves were covered with either a large or small stones that functioned as grave markers. The burials at Malmok are thought of representing successive generations of one band that buried their dead (Versteeg, 1991). The Canashito site dated between 100BC-500AD is located inland on a Limestone outcrop and consists of five burials which were excavated. Of these 5 burials 4 formed a cluster that share many similarities such as posture of the dead, association with limestone, high skull shape occurrence of shovel shaped incisors with the burials of Malmok and represents a one family burial with a central male of high status with lesser status individuals buried around him (Versteeg, 1991). Similarities in characteristics within different Preceramic burial sites on Aruba is not merely a local development but has a more widespread occurrence within the region. The Preceramic burial sites of Malmok and Canashito share similar characteristics not only with sites in Curacao, Ecuador, Cuba and Peru but also Colombia. A very interesting aspect is the lack of occurrence of Preceramic burial sites with similar characteristics in Venezuela (i.e. as far as is known). In Colombia, however, three Preceramic burial sites located in the Sabana de Bogota, despite being much older, share similar characteristics to the burial sites in Aruba (Versteeg, 1991: 37). The Tequendama rock shelter site located in the Sabana de Bogota (high plain) represents a very ancient sequence

of Pre-ceramic occupation and is dated between 9000BC-2000BC. A total of 26 burials were excavated there of which 21 burials were found at Tequendama I and 5 at Tequendama II. The burials at Tequendama I were not all complete and thus only 13 burials provided information concerning the posture, hand placement and use of red dye. The postures of the Tequendama I burials varied from crouched on their right side, lying on their back or squatted/crouched. A total of 4 burials lay in a crouched position on their right side and were equally divided between man and woman and another 4 lay on their back and were also equally divided between men and women. Of the 5 burials in a squatted position only 1 was unidentified and the rest were child burials.



**Figure 6.** Cranium no;2 Tequendama burial showing shovel shaped incisors ( after Urrego & Van der Hammen, 1977:130)

The Tequendama burials had strongly developed masticatory apparatus and occurrence of shovel shaped incisors (Urrego & Van der Hammen, 1977:182-184). The difference in dating (i.e. more than 2000 years of difference) together with similarities in burial practices (i.e. crouched position, hands on forehead and red dye on skull) and skull features (i.e. long narrow skull and shovel shaped teeth) between the Preceramic burials of Aruba and Tequendama provides a very interesting perspective of a Preceramic lifestyle

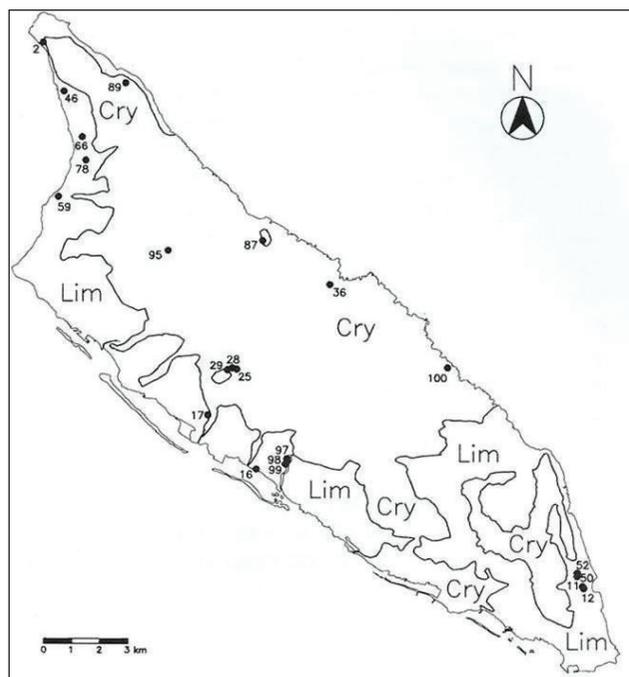
that stayed consistent through time and space. The hunter and gatherer way of life involved the consumption of a non-domesticated diet (i.e. non refined foods) to which their masticatory apparatus was best adapted (Boyd, 2011). As the Preceramic people colonized and settled across South America and the Caribbean they continued consuming non domesticated food sources and thus were not subjected to refined foods (i.e. maize) which could have influenced their jaws and teeth. As a result characteristics such as shovel shaped incisors typify Preceramic people at locations such as Aruba and Tequendama Colombia that are vastly spread apart in time, space, physical bio diversity and available food resources. These similarities reflect a continuity of a lifestyle through time and space but on their own don't necessarily represent a possible relation between the two. However the mentioned similarities and occurrence of red dye found on skulls of burials might together be more indicative of a possible relation. The placing of red dye on the skulls involved a conscious act (i.e. related to a belief system) of great importance that was continued through generations, time and space. The occurrence of red dye on the burials of Colombia and Aruba represents the continuum of a belief system and thus a possible relation though a contact with La Guajira.

## The Ceramic Period

The Preceramic Period comes to an end with the arrival of the ceramic producing agriculturalist group from North Western Venezuela and is dated between 900/1000AD- 1515 AD (Versteeg and Ruiz, 1995:21). These Ceramic people belonged to the group historically known as the Caquetio whom exploited and thrived on the island in a different manner compared to their predecessors. The Caquetio settled on the crystalline areas of the island due to the better hydrological and soil conditions which better suited their agricultural lifestyle. They formed three main villages that were located in Savaneta, Santa Cruz and Tanki Flip and two smaller sized villa-



ges located in Parkietenbos and TankiLeendert that were each inhabited by 100-150 people. The three large villages were inhabited permanently for a prolonged period of time and were located either inland at the confluences of gullies (i.e. Santa Cruz and Tanki Flip) or near the sea (i.e. Savaneta). The two villages categorized as medium size villages were compared to the large villages permanently inhabited for at least a couple of decades but by a lesser amount of people (Versteeg & Ruiz, 1995:64



**Figure 7.** The Ceramic Period sites (after Versteeg and Ruiz, 1995:23)

The Ceramic Period people exploited the island in its entirety and thus had besides their permanent villages several activity areas spread throughout the island. These activity areas were compared to the villages much smaller in size, some only a dozen of meters wide, and were related to food acquiring and or processing activities, agriculture, raw material extraction and or tool manufacture and ceremonial activities (i.e. rock art sites) These activity areas had as primary purpose to sustain the village and were in some cases located several kilometers from it. The ar-

chaeological site with the largest area subjected to prolonged habitation was St Cruz, located in the center of the island, with a habitation area spanning approximately 10 hectares in diameter (Versteeg & Ruiz, 1995:94). The first remains of a structure in a large scale village was found during archaeological investigations carried out by A.J. Boerstra during the seventies at St Cruz. The structure had a horse shoe shape and measured 8 meters at its greatest length and 5 meters at its greatest width (Boerstra, 1982:23). The St Cruz site was revisited during the nineties by archaeologist A.H. Versteeg where he encountered two house floor plans. The large structure was interpreted as a maloca where several families or an extended family resided and the smaller circular house was inhabited by less people. There were several burial clusters with deep hearths nearby that occurred within the maloca. The deep hearths near the burial clusters were thought to have a ceremonial function within the funeral culture and are indicative of complicated rites de passages of the Caquetio society (Versteeg, 1991: 27-28).

Settlement pattern research of a large scale village was thereafter carried out more extensively at Tanki Flip which made it possible to obtain a comprehensive representation of spatial organization and characteristics of large scale Caquetio villages on Aruba. The Tanki Flip site was extensively investigated during the seventies by A.J. Boerstra where he found burials, ash and hearths and a wide range of materials such as pottery, shell, stone and animal bone objects (Boerstra, 1983:173). Excavations carried out by A.H. Versteeg during the nineties yielded besides features and materials above mentioned also structures, and man-made alterations which were made to the landscape. The patterns found within the feature record represented a total of thirteen structures ranging in size and shape were the majority represented houses where the inhabitants lived and slept. The large oval structures were interpreted as malocas inhabited by and extended family, a nuclear family of in-living family mem-

bers or several families and the smaller houses where inhabited by a nuclear family (Versteeg, 1997:101-106).

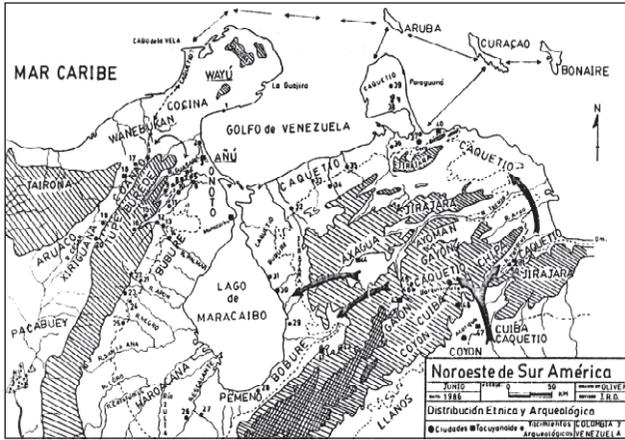
The burial features, seven in total, were spread out in two distinct patterns of which one was situated centrally in the excavated area and the remainder six were located in the southern part in two groups. These burials reflect nonetheless some striking differences that include, one child under an inverted urn two burials one containing an adult without urn and the other a child with urn located at the outer wall of a house structure and multiple urn burials with the remains of twelve individuals all located within a maloca. The hearths found in the vicinity of the burials consisting of several layers of stone probably served a ceremonial purpose related to burial practices. Ethnographic information of Caquetio burials practices where the use of slow fires for the desiccation of bodies is described corroborates this further. Hearths found in the near vicinity of the burials consisted of layers of stone and were excellent for slow burning purposes and thus might have very well served the mentioned purpose (Versteeg, 1997:454).

The funerary practices of the Caquetio of Aruba was very diverse and they buried their deceased in different ways that ranged between burial in a pit with or without grave good, primary urn burial, secondary urn burial and cave burial (Dijkhoff, 1997:71). The secondary urn burial represents the most common burial method used by the Caquetio of Aruba since it has been found the most during archaeological investigations. The usage of secondary urn burials are commonly found throughout South America and it is a widely practiced form of burying the dead (Gallagher in Dijkhoff 1997: pg72). One such place where secondary burial practices have taken place until recently is La Guajira, located in the most northern region of South America. The inhabitants of La Guajira have a very rich history in the practice of secondary urn burials that has been elaborately documented and is therefore a

very valuable source of information regarding this particular burial practice. Although there is no direct link (i.e. as far as is known) between the inhabitants of La Guajira and the Caquetio of Aruba the burial record of the inhabitants of La Guajira still share several aspects with those of Aruba. In the publication of the Archaeology of Aruba: The Tanki Flip site by Versteeg the author included a chapter of an Anthropological research about the Guajiro culture of death carried out by M Perrin (Versteeg, 1997). This chapter describes the "Guajiro death" in detail and gives a thorough explanation of the different rituals, practices and traditions that form part of a secondary urn burial customs in La Guajira. The research on Guajiro culture of death done by M Perrin provides very valuable insights into the burial customs of La Guajira and gives an idea of what might have possibly happened during Caquetio secondary urn burial practices on Aruba.

The Caquetio of Aruba originated from the Paraguana Peninsula of Venezuela and belonged to the social and political interaction sphere of the Coastal Falcon polity. The Coastal Falcon Caquetio formed the largest and most complex of the Caquetio polities and was characterized by a hierarchical organization of power ultimately controlled by a supreme chief. There were local caciques, the chief of several local caciques, and the overall paramount chief who was the top of the hierarchy and controlled the whole polity (Oliver, 1989:424).

Since Aruba was a frontier settlement it fell directly under the paramount chief of the coastal Caquetio Falcon polity and had a local hierarchical organization in the form of a chief cacique located in the largest village and local caciques located in the remaining large and medium sized villages. The chief cacique of Aruba was located in the Santa Cruz village (i.e. considered to be the largest and thus most important) and the local caciques were located in the villages of Tanki Flip, Savaneta, Tankileendert and Parkietenbos.

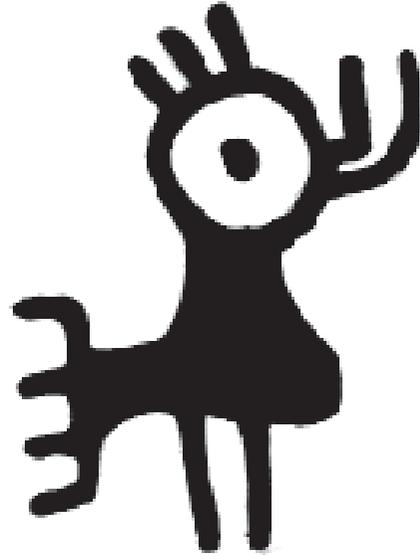


**Figure 8.** Caquetio expansion towards Aruba, Curacao and La Guajira. (Modified after Oliver, 1989:187)

Besides having frontier settlements on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao the Caquetio also had trading outposts located as far as the Peninsula of Guajira. In the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Caquetio had settled in two areas, one was Cabo de la Vela and the other an area situated between Punta Espada and Punta Chichibacoa. The Caquetio that settled in these areas of the Peninsula of Guajira established relations with groups such as the Guanebucan which became their trading partners. Their presence in the Peninsula of Guajira was the result of advantageous trade whereby their location at an intermediate point between the Rancheria valley and coastal Falcon areas, made trade with groups of Sierra Nevada, Tamalameque and Zapatosa possible (Oliver, 1989:476).

Aruba being a frontier settlement of the Caquetio polity of Falcon played a role within this vast maritime trading network whereby all the goods that went to or came from the Peninsula of Guajira and the Peninsula of Paraguana passed through Aruba. This brought forth a strong tie between the Caquetio of Aruba and groups of the Peninsula of Guajira with which the Caquetio of the Falcon polity traded with. This socio economical tie was not only related to exchange of goods but also the diffusion of ideas, techniques and religious concepts that influenced and eventually got integrated into the Caquetio culture. Remnants of

this found in archaeological context are in the form of an avemorphic motif painted on pottery excavated at the large Caquetio villages of Santa Cruz and Savaneta.



**Figure 9.** Hollow Avemorphic Motifs on Aruban Bowls (after Dijkhoff, 1997:78 )

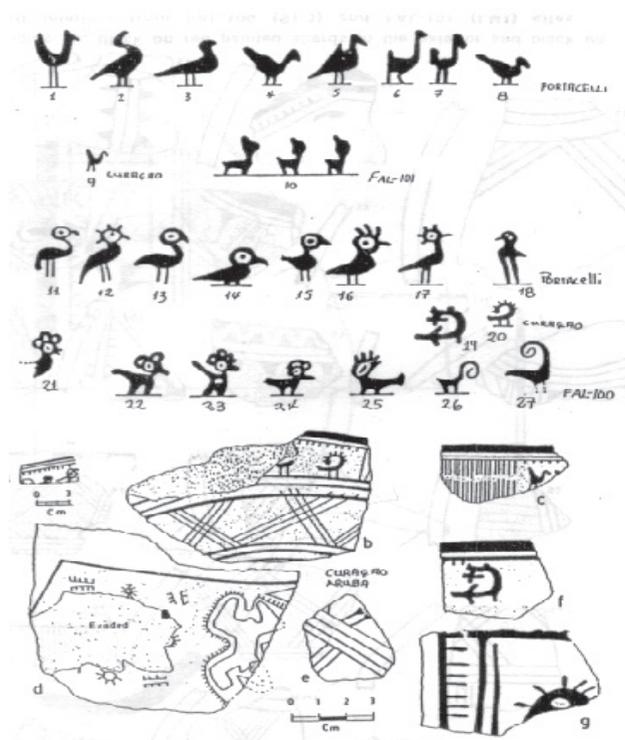


**Figure 10.** Avemorphic motif on bowl found at Santa Cruz (after Dijkhoff, 1997:78)



**Figure 11.** Avemorphic motif on bowl found at Savaneta (after Bongers, 1963:5)

This specific type of avomorphic decoration on pottery found at these villages represents a direct link to Portacelli located in the Rancheria valley of La Guajira. This type of avomorphic motif occurs only at the Portacelli complex where there was a change from solid depictions of the avomorphic motif to hollow avomorphic depictions of which the latter is categorized as Portacelli phase 2 and is dated 1050 AD-1450AD (Oliver, 1989: 473).



**Figure 12.** Zoomorphic Motifs of the José Gregorio and La Maternidad Sites, and Portacelli (# 1-27) (after Oliver, 1989:466).

The avomorphic depictions found on pottery at both St Cruz and Savaneta although with variations in color are still in the form of hollow motifs. This type of hollow motif corresponds to the Portacelli phase 2 avomorphic depictions that according to J.R. Oliver are indicative of a direct relation from 1300AD onwards between Aruba and Portacelli. Furthermore this type of depiction on pottery not only influenced the style of decoration on locally manufactured pottery but also the customs and ceremonies related to its use

which altered a range of ideas related to the presentation social and religious representation of food and its consumption (Oliver, 1989).

Another example is a shell artifact found at the large Caquetio village of Santa Cruz made from the outer lip of a large *Strombus gigas* shell and has an elongated shape with what seems to be the head of an animal.



**Figure 13.** Zoomorphic shell staff found at St Cruz

This artifact is singular for Aruba and as far as is known Venezuela and until recently not much about its use and provenance was known other than its possible use in ceremonial activities of shamans (Boerstra, 1982). Displayed in the Museo del Oro of Bogota are similar artifacts that occur generally in stone with examples made of gold and shell (i.e. one artifact).



**Figure 14.** Tairona pendant mortar (after Lleras Pérez & Sánchez, 2011:91)

They are thought to be pendant mortars used by shamans for the preparation of mind altering substances to aid them during their ceremonies and “vision quests” (personal communication J. Saenz Samper, 2012).

These types of stone artifacts were described as ceremonial “staffs” made of highly polished stone and ornamented with zoomorphic heads which belonged to the Tairona culture. The Tairona culture, most renowned for their extensive gold work, covered a vast region that ranged from the dry coast to the forest mountain of the Sierra Nevada. Although the influence of the Tairona extended over a large portion of the lowlands it was on the slopes of Sierra Nevada where its maximum socio political development was achieved (Quintana, 1979:101). The Tairona was a very complex culture that consisted out of several groups spread over a large area of the Sierra Nevada and is dated between 600AD-1600AD (Oyuella & Caycedo, 2002:4). The Tairona culture was composed of several phases and had a hierarchical socio political organization in the form of a major chiefdom (Dolmatoff, 1981: 3). The complex social structure of the Tairona consisted of different social classes that included the civil governors, the military and the priests of which the latter played an important role within the culture. The Tairona established a very intricate trading network that included groups situated on the atlantic coast (i.e. Caribbean) with which they acquired besides a range of goods a constant supply of animal protein. One of these trading groups was the Guanebucan which supplied the Tairona with fish in exchange for their mais (Dolmatoff in Bischof, 1982-83:75-124).

The Guanebucan had trade relations with both the Tairona of Sierra Nevada and the Caquetio of Falcon (i.e. which settled on la Guajira) and thus played the role of an “indirect” socio economic connection between the Tairona and the Caquetio. It was through this “indirect” socio economic connection that the diffusion of goods and or religious concepts and idea ultimately made their way to the Caquetio of Aruba. The shell artifact found at St Cruz similar (i.e. shape, length and ornamental zoomorphic head) to the stone ceremonial staffs of the Tairona is a remnant of the mentioned “indirect” socio economic relation. The ceremonial staffs (i.e. pendant mor-

tars) were very important and powerful objects related to religious ceremonies that were owned and used by shamans who had a high hierarchical status and exerted great influence on the Tairona culture. The shell artifact at St Cruz might represent either the trade of a highly valued and powerful object of status and prestige or the diffusion of religious concepts and ideas related to the owning and usage of this artifact. In the case of the latter this would imply the integration of shamanistic religious concepts ceremonies and rituals of the Tairona within the Caquetio’s own shamanistic traditions.

There is furthermore a distant relation between the Caquetio of Aruba and la Guajira in the form of a similar ancestral Arawakan language. The Arawakan Language stems from the Proto Arawakan that arose around 1500BC in the Amazon Basin from where it moved northwards along the streams of Rio Negro and the Amazon River and through time changed into new speech communities. These different sub groups migrated into different directions of which some moved westward into Venezuelan Andes and Colombia that eventually formed the basis for the Guajiro and Parujano languages. The Caquetio language group on the other hand split away around 500 BC and moved upwards into Northwestern Venezuela and spread into Falcon and eventually reached the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Both migrations resulted in a wide representation of Arawakan speech communities in Northwestern Venezuela and Colombia that spread from coastal region of the Falcón State to the Peninsula of Guajira. Of these only two survived, the Guajiro and Paraujano spoken by the Wayú and the Añú (Oliver, 1989)

## The Historic Period

The Historic Period brought forth a great influx of people, commodities and livestock from Europe that colonized and settled throughout the America’s. Similar to the Pre-Columbian period the colonies included territories on both

the mainland as islands in the Caribbean but on a larger scale and with a much more intensified contact and socio economic relation.

The Caquetio life way came with the arrival and colonization of the South American continent by the Spanish. During this period Aruba was under control of different powers whereby it was ruled by the Spanish, Dutch and British until it finally until it finally fell back under Dutch control during the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hartog, 1953).

The Spanish Period starts around 1500 when they first visited Aruba (i.e. accredited to Alonso de Ojeda) and ends in 1636. During this period Aruba was first under control of Alonso de Ojeda where after it was ruled by Juan de Ampíes who brought back Amerindians to Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao that were taken to Hispaniola in 1515 to work as slaves. Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao are labeled as *Isla inutiles* and Aruba is converted into a ranch by Ampíes who brought people and livestock and introduced Christianity to the native inhabitants and exported wood (i.e. Brazil wood) of the island. During this period there was not much change in the way of life of the natives and their relation to the mainland (Hartog, 1953:33-39).

Although Aruba and la Guajira fell under different rulers they both formed part of the Spanish colony and so a more intense and diverse socio economic relation developed compared to the Pre-Columbian period. One example of the diversification of socio economic relation is related to the pearl diving economy on La Guajira during this period.

One of the most lucrative economic activities on la Guajira during this period was pearl diving which required a constant flow of manpower. This resulted in a new type of socio economic relation between Aruba and La Guajira which was based on an economic necessity of the Spanish rulers. The brother in law of Juan de Ampíes

Lazaro Bejarano got interested in the diving of pearls and took 20 natives from Aruba Curacao to Cabo de La Vella to dive for pearls. These natives however were not slaves and thus could not be forced to work so they deserted. The taking of natives from Aruba and Curacao for use in pearl diving was also tried by the Chancellor Diego Caballero from La Guajira but which was not possible since the natives fell under de control of Ampíes (Friede, 1955, Tomo IX, Doc.2004 in: Guerra Curvelo, 1997).

The taking over of Aruba by the Dutch in 1634 brings forth a period of change for the island and its socio economic relations with La Guajira. Aruba together with Bonaire and Curacao were under the rule of the West Indian Company (W.I.C.) which lasted from 1636 to 1792 (Hartog, 1953: 40) The W.I.C. had an economic plan for the islands whereby Curacao was destined for agriculture, Aruba as a cattle ranch and Bonaire as salt producer and for maize cultivation (Versteeg& Ruiz, 1995:55).

Of the three islands under the W.I.C. control it was Curacao who got a prominent role and became the center of the W.I.C. operations and a free port after 1675. Curacao a free port for the distribution of a wide variety of European commodities such as wines, cloth and spices which were sold to Spanish, French and English merchants became very prosperous. A very important aspect of this prosperity was the illicit trade with the Spanish mainland which included Venezuela as well as the Peninsula of la Guajira. The Dutch merchants established in Curacao not only traded with the native Guajiro but also lived among them for a part of the year and exchanged gunpowder and fire arms for products such as logwood (Klooster in C. Williams, 2009:15).

Aruba was mostly neglected by the W.I.C. and became an unofficial Indian reserve and could be only colonized when permitted by the director. Some Curacao merchants were allowed to tra-

de on the island but were not permitted to settle (Versteeg and Ruiz, 1995: 56).

Nonetheless its location within the trade route (i.e. illicit trade) between Curacao and La Guajira meant that Aruba was still influenced by the commerce between Curacao and la Guajira whereby besides trade it also served for the resupplying of ships (i.e. goat meat). The Curacao merchants where only allowed to trade and not settle so they must have traded on the island en route to La Guajira and back.

Aruba during this time (i.e. prior to 1754) was scarcely populated and only a few hundred people lived on the island of which the majority where natives who took care of the horses, goats and sheep. This all changed when in 1754 Mozes Maduro was permitted to settle on the island and thus made it possible for immigrants, mostly Jew merchants from Curacao, to establish on the island after 1785 (Hartog, 1953:71,73). The settling of these merchants on the island changed the island from a passerby/resupplying location with some trade to an actual trade destination with a greater demand for goods from La Guajira and Europe compared to before.

The bankruptcy of W.I.C. in 1792 and the taking over of its assets by the Republic of the United Netherlands marks the end of an era of Dutch control on Aruba (Hartog, 1953:75). The following years until 1816 termed as the years of confusion whereby Aruba repeatedly changed hands between the Dutch and the English. During this period the island was totally neglected and there was scarcity of food on the island whereby food had to be imported from Coro and Curacao (Hartog, 1953). The scarcity of food was the result the island being totally neglected and the prohibition of trade with the Spanish mainland decreed in 1808 by the English Commander on Aruba (Hartog, 1953:110).

The taking over of Aruba in 1816 by the Kingdom of the Netherlands brought forth a time of stabi-

lity with increase in population and the introduction of new economic activities such as gold and phosphate mining. Most of the new emigrants where merchants who settled in Oranjestad close to the *Paardenbaai* harbor (Hartog, 1953:175). This resulted in an increase of trade and economic activities between Aruba, Curacao and the Spanish mainland whereby Aruba traded on behalf of Curacao with the different native groups in La Guajira. The government of Bogota felt that La Guajira was under their jurisdiction and so decided to regulate the trade between Aruba and La Guajira. They proposed a 5 % tax on all ships above a certain tonnage but all the ships that came from Aruba where small and fell below the proposed tonnage and so could not be taxed. At the end the regulation proposition did not work out as was planned by the government of Bogota (Hartog, 1953:229)

The trade not only included food but also slaves which was not limited to slaves brought from Africa but also natives captured from the mainland (Hartog, 1953:222). Governor Platts ordered that the imported slaves had to be treated as free people and so had to be baptized (Hartog, 1953:223). Some of the slaves between 2 and 20 years old are mentioned in baptize books as originating from La Guajira (Nooyen, 1965:35-36). The baptized slaves could not return because they would be killed and where found on the island well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hartog, 1953:223).

The socio economic relation between La Guajira and Aruba grew and diversified during the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a strong relation not only to commerce (i.e. also contraband) and familiar ties but also governmental institutions. Aruba during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was still neglected by the Kingdom of the Netherlands even for things as simple as office supplies for official use. Instead of getting these from Curacao Aruba preferred to import them from Colombia. The book wherein the governor of Aruba from 1906 to 1911 wrote his journal came from Colombia and had on each page the stamp of the Republic

of Colombia and the Colombian shield (Hartog, 1953: 246).

The socio economic relation with Colombia and specifically La Guajira developed and diversified further throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the advent of air travel it became much faster and easier to travel back and forth from La Guajira. More people were now able to visit their relatives and do commerce and even go on vacation to either Aruba or La Guajira. In 2012 Aruba celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> years of *Status Aparte* within the Dutch Kingdom. This achievement was commemorated with several activities carried out through the year. One of these important activities was the fortification of the socio economical and historical ties between Aruba and La Guajira. The Prime Minister of Aruba together with the Dutch ambassador in Colombia and a delegation traveled to Rio Hacha. Besides official meetings with the Major and government officials the delegation also had the opportunity to get to know more about the history of Rio Hacha and the Wayuu. The visit to La Guajira was not only successful in terms of fortification of relations and establishing of partnerships on economical and official levels but also for the establishing of cooperation on a social cultural level.

## Conclusion

There has always been the notion of a strong historical socio economical relation between Aruba and Colombia, specifically La Guajira, but the extent and type of relation is not common knowledge. Generally strong historical socio economic relations are related to ties with Venezuela instead of La Guajira. As it turns out Aruba had a much stronger connection than was previously thought that goes back to the Preceramic People who inhabited both Colombia and Aruba. Similarities in burials found both in Colombia and Aruba not only reflect similarities related to general characteristics of a Preceramic lifestyle. They also suggest a possible link between the Preceramic

People of Aruba and Colombia related to the transfer of burial practice traditions (i.e red ochre in burials) through generations and time.

The socio economic relations become stronger through the Pre-Columbian time whereby archaeological remnants give indications about the type and scope of relation that existed between Aruba and La Guajira. A socio economic relation that besides coastal groups of La Guajira extends all the way to the Tairona of the Sierra Nevada that not only includes the exchange of goods but also the diffusion of ideas and concepts that influence local developments and practices. The influence of local developments and practices not only related to techniques and ceremonies but also to status and religious concepts which are accepted and incorporated within the Caquetio culture on Aruba. With the conquest of the Americas by the Spanish the socio economic relation becomes even greater and new economic possibilities develop. The Spanish bring forth a new form of socio economic relation which is not always in the benefit of the native populations of both Aruba and La Guajira. The increase of maritime traffic by the Spanish vessels connects the different colonies in a much faster way than before and a faster connection between the islands and the mainland (i.e. La Guajira) becomes possible. Although the Spanish neglect the island of Aruba the socio economic relation of the Ceramic Period endures.

With the advent of the Dutch and the taking over of the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao a new type of relation develops which was mostly based on commerce and illicit trade. An economic relation not only destined to the Spanish inhabitants of La Guajira but also the native populations that until recently played an important role in the prosperity of the illicit trade. Aruba develops a more direct economic relation through time and eventually trades on behalf of Curacao with La Guajira. A trade relation not solely based on commerce of goods but also in some cases the capture and smuggling of underage Guajiro na-

tives used as slaves in Aruba. With the abolition of slavery these Guajiro are able to live as free citizens of Aruba.

The socio economic relation gets even more diversified and stronger towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and with the advent of air transport the flow of goods and people to and from Aruba and La Guajira increases tremendously. With the fortification of official and historical relations in 2012 as a result of the travel of the Prime Minister of Aruba to La Guajira a new chapter has begun in the dynamic socio economic relation between La Guajira and Aruba

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