

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In this study I will present the key factors determining the social and cultural life of Afro-Curaçaoans during the first fifty years after the abolition of slavery in 1863. I will do so through a socio-cultural analysis of the social system of which they formed part. Their position within slave society will be the starting point, followed by an evaluation of the two principle elements of social control after emancipation: the State and the Roman Catholic Church. Rather than viewing Afro-Curaçaoans as mere objects to be acted upon, in this analysis I cite them as resilient agents, rising to – and often resisting in a variety of ways – the challenges and restrictions they faced in a free society. Their resilience and resistance are best demonstrated through the factors from which they drew their sustenance; these being mainly their social networks – such as families, peer groups, co-workers, local communities – and their culture, brought to the fore, for example, in their songs, stories and rituals.

This thesis will put forward a historical study of post-abolition social and cultural life of Afro-Curaçaoans within the context of the late nineteenth-century Curaçaoan socio-economic system. It thus looks at their social and cultural life from a historical perspective and in doing so it combines history and anthropology. Anthropologists have been known to study the culture of non-western people through extensive fieldwork, documenting the ethnographic present of societies.¹ Anthropology has therefore often been criticized for its a-historical approach. At the moment historical anthropology, an interdisciplinary exchange between anthropology and history, tries to fill this void. And there are more studies focusing on social change within society and on the role socially marginalized people play in these processes of change (Burke 1996:49). In the past three decades anthropologists studying the Caribbean have joined historians and specialists in creole languages and literature to analyse how ordinary people in this region have experienced the processes of culture brought about by colonization, slavery, indenture and neocolonialism (Besson 2002:5-6).

The title of this thesis, *Di Ki Manera?* (In Which Manner?), is also the title of a traditional song in which an enslaved person contemplates a world which denies him any respect. In this context I use it to analyse how Afro-Curaçaoans struggled in their day-to-day lives after emancipation. Here, the lives of ‘those without history’ will be told (Wolf 1982). Due to the lack of written documents on this subject, I will also utilize oral information. In addition I hope to illustrate through this approach how oral sources can be applied to historical studies. Thus my goal is partly of a methodological nature.

In attempting to gain insight into Afro-Curaçaoan life after slavery, it is important to look at change and continuity over time with regard to culture and to examine the role

Afro-Curaçaoans played in this process of change. Of major significance to this study is the view of culture and society as dynamic and subject to change. Curaçaoan culture has changed in complex ways over time, the abolition of slavery being a pivotal point in this process. At the time of abolition freedmen and their offspring constituted around fifty per cent of the island population.² They were joined by a group of roughly 35 per cent of the population who experienced life for the first time as free citizens (Oostindie 1995b:158; 1997:56). In this respect, Curaçao differed from the rest of the Caribbean, where the proportion of freedpeople was much lower prior to emancipation.³

Caribbean historiography has rarely focused on life following this transformation. Most studies have concentrated on slavery and have neglected freedom. With this they have also neglected the role played by those manumitted in the processes of change (Eudell 2002:7; Cooper et al. 2000). This also applies to Curaçaoan historiography. This study follows the cultural path through slavery and into freedom, and in this way aims to give a more complete history. It examines the everyday life of Afro-Curaçaoans in the period between 1863, the year of emancipation, and 1917, the year of the first mass labour migration of Curaçaoans to Cuba, with profound effects on the social structure of the island. The end-date of my research is thus not 1915, the year in which the establishment of Shell on the island triggered the beginnings of an industrialized society. The oil-refinery did not have an immediate effect on the daily life of a large group of Afro-Curaçaoans (van Soest 1977; Paula 1973).

In this first Chapter I will lay out the theoretical framework of this study. After an analysis of the way in which previous historical studies have viewed the lives of Afro-Curaçaoans, I will advocate a more historically oriented anthropological approach. 'Culture' will be a key concept in this socio-cultural analysis of life in post-emancipation society. As this study aims to combine anthropology and history, I will look at several theoretical concepts that have shaped the understanding of Caribbean culture and society.

This analysis of Afro-Curaçaoan culture and daily life during the first fifty years following emancipation necessitates the use of a wide range of sources. The complexity of the Afro-Curaçaoan past will be interpreted through oral testimonies, archival documents and secondary sources. In Chapter II, I will assess the methodology and sources, both oral and written, utilized in this study.

Chapter III will examine and describe the daily life of Afro-Curaçaoans before 1863. Since this pre-emancipation period has determined many of the group's characteristics, it is vital to study this group before 1863. Here the main question is: 'Who are we referring to with the term "Afro-Curaçaoans"?' This social category is complex and varied. Afro-Curaçaoans have been distinguished according to their ancestral origins, gender, age, occupation and area of domicile. But distinction has also been made according to whether a person had been born on the island or had been transported there, and to whether they were freed or enslaved. All these factors would determine their place in slave society and how this was to continue or change in the post-emancipation period.

Chapter IV focuses on the manner in which emancipation was perceived by those in control and by those gaining freedom. I will analyse how the perceptions of both groups would influence the lives of the manumitted former slaves. Central in gaining an insight into these perceptions are the speeches made and the songs sung on the day of emancipation.

In Chapters V and VI I will identify the different roles played by the authorities in their attempts to mould the life patterns of Afro-Curaçaoans during their first few decades of freedom. Chapter V places emphasis on the key concept of ‘civilization’ and on how this has been interpreted and applied by the State in its attempts to shape the Afro-Curaçaoans as free citizens – including those manumitted before 1863. Chapter VI will approach this issue from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church, with its emphasis on ‘civilization’ and ‘respectability’ and its attention directed to social spheres such as sexuality and family life.

Chapters VII, VIII and IX will examine the range and complexity of the actual lives of Afro-Curaçaoans arising from the interventions by the State and the Church. In this thesis I will approach Afro-Curaçaoan culture empirically, by examining three central aspects of their everyday lives: the economic, the social and the spiritual. Using the concept of *bida* in these three Chapters, I will focus on the dynamics of their material, social and spiritual lives. *Bida* simply means life. This concept is, however, often used in connection with the different aspects of people’s daily lives.

In Chapter VII I will first address the material (economic) dimension, as expressed in the term ‘buska bida’. In 1863 Afro-Curaçaoans had the option to either continue or change their socio-economic situation. The possibilities open to them were similar to those freed before emancipation; they could continue in certain types of work, to which other jobs were added. Although ‘buska bida’ encompasses all economic modes undertaken by people in order to make a living, it is not restricted to material existence. It is also associated with the struggle for survival in a rigid hierarchical society where Afro-Curaçaoans, being the descendants of slaves, have inherited an inferior social status. In that sense the term ‘buska bida’ also embodies the search for acceptance and recognition.

Chapter VIII, *Biba un Bida Drechi* (Living a Respectable Life), addresses the Roman Catholic Church’s quest to civilize Afro-Curaçaoans, as described in Chapter VI. It focuses on the ways in which people responded to the goals set by this institution. I will examine how Afro-Curaçaoans lived together and interacted as a couple or as individuals of either sex.

Finally, in Chapter IX, *Tambú di Bida* (Drum of Life), I will analyse the beliefs through which people attempted to explain their place in the world and their outlook on life. These beliefs also determined the decisions people made on a day-to-day basis. Although initially I will address each of these three aspects of life in separate Chapters, they are related in the Afro-Curaçaoans’ struggle to make life bearable – there is thus an interrelationship between material, social and spiritual life.

In Chapter X I will summarize and conclude this thesis and reflect on the fundamental underlying ideas with regard to the life of Afro-Curaçaoans in post-emancipation Curaçao. Emphasis will be placed on the model of cultural complexity and its manifestation in the Afro-Curaçaoans’ everyday lives.

Historiography of Post-Emancipation Curaçao

In a review of the historiography of the British Leeward Islands’ post-emancipation era B.W. Higman (1995:10) divided this period into three main phases. During the first phase the historiography was recorded by the writings of amateurs, who were either local

inhabitants or visitors. These amateurs were superseded in the second phase (first half of the twentieth century) by professional historians from metropolitan Europe and the United States. The last phase began in 1950 and was characterized by the work of West Indian professionals as well as by contributions from British and American scholars. Most of the West Indian historians had studied at universities in their respective countries and offered interesting alternatives to mainstream historical writing of the time, both in their perspectives and methods.

In some ways the historiography of Curaçao runs parallel to that of the Anglophone Leeward Islands, as they both evolved from amateurism to professionalism in this period (Oostindie 1987; 1997:27).⁴ Yet in other ways it presents a different historical panorama. In contrast to the British Leeward Islands – where there has been a greater involvement by local scholars – a large part of the studies on Curaçaoan history is still produced by Dutch historians (Oostindie and Hoefte 1999). The relatively small number of inhabitants when compared to the British West Indies and the lack of an appropriate infrastructure on the island impede local initiatives in this area.

Nevertheless, the body of historical literature of Curaçao has been growing steadily over the past decades. The late twentieth-century developments in historiography in general have been supported by scholars studying the history of Curaçaoan society. Their writings show a new orientation in the areas, the time covered and the subject matters. There has also been an expansion in the fields of studies. This manifests itself particularly in the focus on the manner in which the populace thought and behaved.

Within the context of this new orientation, a more comprehensive study on how the former slaves dealt with their lives after emancipation has become necessary. While in other areas of the Caribbean studies of everyday life in the post-emancipation era are slowly shedding their outdated interpretations, this is not yet the case for the Netherlands Antilles. Here I will therefore seek to situate these studies within the context of the general historiography of Curaçao.

First of all I date the beginning of the post-emancipation historiography at 1863, the year in which, as previously stated, the enslaved on Curaçao were freed. Around the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, post-emancipation literature matched a current of thought in historiography which was overtly Eurocentric or, as the historians De Jong, Prince and s'Jacob (1998) called it, 'Netherlandocentric'.⁵ Historiography was essentially a narrative on Dutch activities in the Caribbean: it focused primarily on Dutch explorations, the subsequent struggles and rivalry between the Netherlands and other European powers, and the Netherlands' final conquests in this area. This Eurocentric approach was not only visible in the areas of study, but also in the questions raised and in the interpretations made. At that time the model of the law of evolution, which sees social change as a development in the stages from savagery to barbarism to civilization, was applied to all areas of science. Differences in technological development were linked to differences in intellectual capacities between races. In this concept of a racial hierarchy, blacks were placed at the lowest level of development. The race issue was also applied to the historiography of Curaçao and several scholars interpreted themes such as slavery and its abolition from this particular philosophical viewpoint (Oostindie 1995b:153-69).

These ideas are clearly present in the works of J.H.J. Hamelberg. Although not a professional historian, Hamelberg was considered a leading light of his time. He lived on the island at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century and published several studies (1895, 1896, 1901-1903a, 1901-1903b, 1903).⁶ Hamelberg was a major force behind the creation of a Society for History⁷, in which he played a pivotal role once established. The Society would publish six reports but folded once he left for the Netherlands.

According to Hamelberg, blacks were not equal to whites. His publications on slaves and former slaves clearly illustrate his ideas on racial and cultural inferiority. Hamelberg's convictions also came to the fore in *Vragen van de dag* (1895b), in which he stated that the black popular class should not have the right to vote. In a different essay (1895a) he further elaborated upon these views and cited the high number of babies born out of wedlock among blacks and their use of the Papiamentu language as hindrances in their development. In many ways his ideas ran parallel to those of the English theologian Anthony Trollope (1860) and the historian James Anthony Froude (1888), whose books reinforced the stereotypes of the plantocracy in the British West Indies. Clearly, at that time these were commonly held ideas regarding blacks in the Caribbean.

Up until the mid-nineteen sixties the area of history receiving most attention by scholars and laymen alike was that of colonial administration. The body of literature on this subject is considerable.⁸ The historiography on the islands was principally a description in chronological terms, focusing on influential men.

Interesting in this development of chronological historiography are the contributions in the beginning of the twentieth century of local people such as Wein Hoyer and Nicolaas van Meeteren.⁹ Because of the extensive documentation he held relating to Curaçao, Hoyer was approached whenever information on the island's history was needed. He was also one of the first historians to write in Papiamentu.¹⁰ Van Meeteren, whose family (originally from the Netherlands) had been on the island for three generations, was also seen as a knowledgeable person regarding the island's history.¹¹ Both Hoyer and van Meeteren represented the interests of local people in their history. Their works, however, followed the traditional concept of history as they represent descriptive accounts of events and focus on powerful men.

This trend continued in the in the mid-twentieth century with the writings of the professional historian Johan Hartog. Not confining himself to political issues, Hartog covered various other areas, thus disclosing a collection of facts from different archives in the Netherlands and in the Netherlands Antilles. His works are encyclopedic in character, but regretfully his large compilations of facts are not always sufficiently contextualized. Furthermore, in Hartog's works the populace is only fleetingly mentioned. In that sense he perpetuates the traditional method of exploring history. Although his main study on Curaçao (2 vols. 1961) comprises 1109 pages, the Chapter on slavery and emancipation consists of a meagre 34 pages. The rare mention of slaves throughout this book is exclusively coupled to occasions where they pose a threat to the established order. The post-emancipation period is almost entirely overlooked in Hartog's writings.

Another current flowing through the historiography of Curaçao, running parallel to politics, is that of the Roman Catholic Church – one of the earliest institutions to document the

history of the Netherlands Antilles. In addition to preaching the gospel to the black lower classes, some priests published historical books and articles. Most of their writings came to light at the beginning of the twentieth century. Priest-historians such as Petrus A. Euwens and in the mid-fifties M.D. Latour and W.M. Brada, being prolific writers, penned numerous publications.¹²

Among these studies were biographies on leaders of the Catholic Church in the Dutch Caribbean. For example, several life-histories were written on Martinus Niewindt, a priest who had arrived on the island in 1824. When Niewindt became the first vicar apostolic in 1843, the Church intensified its mission on the Dutch islands. Niewindt introduced a modernized medical system and was active in improving education opportunities for children of the black popular class. His role in the local expansion of the Catholic Church has been acknowledged in many forms.¹³ G.J.M. Dahlhaus (1924) is worthwhile mentioning in this respect as he published some of Niewindt's correspondences in one of his books.

However, most of these studies undertaken by the clergy were descriptive evaluations of the Roman Catholic missionary role in Antillean society and focused on the positive contributions made by the Church in the development of the islands and the problems they encountered. This corresponds with the Church's ideas on the role history should play in education. Historiography by priests is thus limited to the history of Christianity. This vision – 'History education should be the history of civilization, hence first of all the history of Christianity'¹⁴ – is portrayed in several studies on the history of Curaçao.

Yet others have approached religious history from a different viewpoint. The late twentieth-century publications by R.H. Nooyen, for example, do not only focus on religious leaders but also on members of the popular class who played an important role in the Catholic Church (Nooyen 1959, 1974, 1979, 1995). A more analytical study of missionary work is Cornelis Goslinga (1956), in which the author discusses the numerous difficulties faced by the Church when introducing Christianity to the slaves.

Harry Hoetink's dissertation, a sociological-historical study published in 1958, pioneered a new phase in the historiography of the Netherlands Antilles. To date, this book is regarded as the standard work for social scientists and historians alike.¹⁵ It represents a shift toward sociology and reflects the rising interest in giving social questions a more historical perspective. It also marks the beginning of a conceptualization of the historical reality of the island in sociological terms. Hoetink went beyond looking solely at events – as historians had been doing previously – and examined the complex organization of Curaçaoan society before 1863. He looked at how colour, race and ethnic origin, as well as the inherent powers, determined a person's position in the social hierarchy. He examined how this determined the ways in which ethnic groups lived – independently – as well as how they interacted (I will elaborate on this later in this Chapter).

With this, Hoetink laid the foundations for a better understanding of a society emerging from slavery. In his following work (1962) he compared the bipolar race relations in the British colonies to the far more flexible ones in the Spanish territories, in order to theorize on colour and race sensitivity in the Caribbean.¹⁶ Hoetink questioned whether race relations and the nature of slave systems in the Caribbean were exclusively and uniformly culturally determined. He substantiated his views in a comparison of slavery and race relations in Suriname and in Curaçao. He also launched the concepts of 'somatic norm image'

(the way in which several groups in Caribbean society valorize colour and race) and 'somatic distance', referring to how people experience differences between the valued somatic features and their real physical appearance (Oostindie 1996).

The Curaçaoan sociologist René Römer would continue to stimulate the interest in social issues in his dissertation (1979). He further examined the social changes on the island over a period of four hundred years and sustained Hoetink's theory that colour, race and ethnicity were important determinants of one's social position, both before and after slavery. According to Römer, this only changed to some extent with industrialization. Due to the consequent structural changes in Curaçaoan society, colour and race became to a lesser degree obstacles for social mobility.

The rising interest in social and economic issues manifested itself in new studies using models and paradigms drawn from scholarly traditions. Most of these works focused on demography and economics (Higman 1985-1986:3). J. van Soest (1977) addresses the macro socio-economic impact of the oil-refinery on twentieth-century Curaçaoan society.¹⁷ He also discusses the economic situation of post-emancipation society before the arrival of Shell, including the economic opportunities open to Afro-Curaçaoans during that period.

A rare demographic study was published by H.E. Lamur (1981), which quantifies and compares the birth rates of the slave population in the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname.¹⁸ W.E. Renkema (1981a) pursued the rising interest in economic questions and explored the range of economic activities on Curaçaoan plantations in the nineteenth century through the use of primary sources, such as the property records of plantation owners. Even though he examined to some extent the owners' powers with respect to pre- and post-emancipation plantation life and looked at the barriers set up by them to obstruct the establishment of black lower class communities in their neighbourhoods, he paid relatively little attention to the development and the position of the peasantry on and outside of the plantations.¹⁹

Jeroen Dekker (1982) compared the social situation on the island in the period before and after the arrival of Shell in 1915. He used quantitative measures to analyse the demographic, economic and social processes taking place over a period of almost three decades. Dekker drew on population records to reassess the validity of certain observations made by previous scholars. He concurred that after the arrival of Shell, Curaçao changed from an agrarian-commercial society into a modern capitalistic industrial society with improved socio-economic conditions and the possibility of upward social mobility. Based on statistics, this study provides new insights into the social processes during the final phase of the pre-industrial period.

In the late twentieth-century religious historiography of the island a new process challenged the dominant views in this area. Some authors became more critical of the role played by the Catholic Church in Curaçaoan society. Armando Rudy Lampe's dissertation (1988) locates at the end of slavery, both slaves and the freed population of Curaçao within the contours of the power struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the State. This critical approach is also reflected in the book edited by B. Boudewijnse et al. (1992) and coordinated by the priest and scholar J.M. Schoffeleers. This study examines the role of the Catholic Church in the specific areas in which it has been influential in the lives of the popular class.

Amado Römer (1984) assesses the contribution of the Church in the area of social well-being and labour unions. Aart Broek (1990) focuses on themes such as the influence of the Catholic Church on the popular class literature development in early twentieth-century Curaçao. No studies addressed, however, the syncretic character of the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the slaves and manumitted former slaves.

The new, sociological approach to history also led to a focus on the activities of women, who for long had been of peripheral interest to historians. Towards the end of the twentieth century this reassessment resulted in research on women's contributions to the history of Curaçao. As a group, women had not been recognized sufficiently in historical writings. In this sense, these scholars joined the worldwide feministic approach to history aimed at debunking preconceptions and paradigms based on gender prejudice.²⁰

On Curaçao the pioneering study by the historian Nolda Römer-Kenepa (1980) was one of the first to focus on Curaçaoan women under slavery for analysis. She compared the different ways in which they were socially placed in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Curaçao. In addition to slavery, gender to a large extent determined their lives. This twofold hindrance was transferred to their freed descendants. Apart from gender discrimination they were subjected to prejudices based on their colour and class. In this context of growing awareness of women's histories, the reader *Mundu yama sinta mira* (1992) must also be mentioned here, as it contains abridged versions of studies on Curaçaoan women's history.²¹

In the search for a redefinition and reassessment of women's role in society, the labour history of women has received far more attention than any other subject in the new women's historiography. Annemiek van der Veen's study (1984) on the making of straw hats on Curaçao and Bonaire rose from this interest. Through making straw hats, women acquired an extra income for their families, thus enhancing their independence. In this light van der Veen's research also provides a valuable insight into women's activities after emancipation. However, much more research challenging the existing assumptions about gender-relationships in society remains to be done, starting with the rewriting of the aforementioned studies by male scholars, who have paid little attention to the gender issue. More research is required on the role of the freed and enslaved women as labourers, mothers and partners, and as carriers of ideas. Children, handicapped people and the elderly are neglected groups also requiring further investigation.

The reassessment of history by local scholars and amateurs intensified from the 1960s onwards, and would give extra attention to Afro-Curaçaoans in history. This process went hand in hand with the issue of identity of the black popular class, which took place around the same time as part of a larger international social movement in which people questioned the existing political and social order. This renewed historical awareness manifested itself on different levels. It made clear, for instance, the necessity of the establishment of a local archive where relevant documents for the study of history can be preserved and consulted. It also led to several movements aimed at commemorating significant historical dates.²² Principally, the slave revolt of 17 August 1795 received much attention. This revolt had been spearheaded by among others the slaves Tula and Karpata, in a bid to highlight the necessity of improving the social conditions of slaves. In an effort to reassess events and groups excluded from history, this rebellion took the limelight and was considered a

pivotal point in slave history, not dealt with sufficiently or objectively in the existing historiography.

The rising interest for this aspect of history coincided with a call for the re-examination of existing publications regarding this particular event. Several books were published, such as Hartog (1973) on Tula: a result of governmental attention to this subject. A year later A.F. Paula (1974), the then director of the Central Historical Archive in Willemstad, made public the official documents on this event.²³ The reassessment of one's place in history led to another theme, which Paula (1967) had already addressed. In this work he raised the issue of self-awareness and looked at the issue of identity and identity-formation within the Afro-Curaçaoan group. He discussed the problem of how Afro-Curaçaoans tended to internalize the standards for self-judgement set by the white elite in society, and their consequent self-denial (Paula 1967:31-2).

The silence surrounding this part of history is a phenomenon still present. It was not until 1984 that the date of the 17 August 1795 slave revolt was institutionalized as a day of remembrance. And this only occurred after the *Komishon di Koordinashon 17 di augustus* had cited this as its main objective. This officialization required that institutions such as schools and the Ministry of Culture recognize this day. However, this has not led to any in-depth historical study being initiated by the government. When in the 1980s and 1990s society was challenged by economic problems, a soaring crime wave and a disenfranchised youth, consecutive cabinets neglected the importance of history and concentrated instead on practical solutions for these problems. This corresponds with the prevailing general lack of interest in history (Huender 1993). However, in non-governmental areas certain activities did continue. The establishment in 1999 of the African museum 'Kurá Ulanda' in Otrobanda (Willemstad) has also led to a new phase in the stimulation of awareness in the subjects of slavery and freedom. This museum introduces schoolchildren to African cultures and the history of slavery. Annually a tour is organized by the *Komishon Lucha di Libertat (Ruta Tula)* in cooperation with the National Archives, visiting the principal locations where the uprising of 1795 occurred.

New research methods, moreover, have been explored in the process of a re-examination of history, presenting subjects previously neglected or unknown. An example of this is the use of the archeological excavation, alongside the application of scientific techniques such as carbon dating. In this way important information is gathered on artifacts, regarding their age, origin, manufacture and function in society. At the moment archeological studies are being performed in the Caribbean to reveal more about the slaves' ways of life and to link these to past cultures in Africa. On Curaçao, the archeologist Jay Havisser has dealt with this aspect in his study (1987) on the basis of archeological fieldwork.²⁴ In a later study with co-author F.D. Antoin from Bonaire, they studied the 'kas di palu di maishi' of Curaçao and the 'kas di bara' of Bonaire by comparing their structures, materials, construction forms and spatial use. They concluded that the differences have to do with the nature of the European-African cultural contacts on each of the islands (Havisser and Antoin 2003).

The method of oral history has also been used to further study and document what people were able to remember of slavery and the period afterwards. Examples are Martinus (1996), Rutten (1989), Lampe (1988) and Rosalia (1997), who all utilized oral sources

in their studies. Frank Martinus used these sources and deciphered a long time extinct language, *Guene*, in order to access its linguistic contribution to Papiamentu. A.M.G. Rutten gave a cultural dimension to his study of medical history by using oral sources (1989) and A. Lampe analysed the extent of protest and resistance by slaves to the system by means of Ananzi stories (1988).

While Lampe, Rutten and Martinus used oral sources collected by others, and thus depended on how well these collectors had researched their data, René Rosalia's dissertation on the popular custom of the *tambú* was drawn from interviews he himself had conducted with people knowledgeable on this subject. His pioneering book (1997) analyses the persistence of the *tambú*, despite its persecution by the State and Church.²⁵ With this publication Rosalia gives evidence that the black popular class possessed a deep power of cultural resistance, and because of this, it also played an important role in the shaping of Curaçaoan culture. In 2004 Leon Weeber published the life history of Bubuchi Doran, who recalled his life on the plantation Savaneta. The historiography regarding Afro-Curaçaoans is thus still burgeoning and there is need for more comprehensive studies on how they lived. In addition, the post-emancipation period has also been relatively neglected in Curaçaoan historiography.

Most scholars have either dealt with slavery or have leapt from slavery to the post-1917 industrial period. In this respect Curaçaoan historiography shares a fate similar to the rest of the Caribbean, where the focus has generally been on slavery rather than on the subsequent freedom. Karen Fog Olwig questions this imbalance by stating that 'if we define emancipation in the sense as free from constraint, control or the power of another it is not easy to see how the abolition of slavery gave West Indians of African descent true emancipation' (1995c:3). Or, as Rebecca Scott argued in her study on post-emancipation:

when one wants to formulate a research design for work on the aftermath of emancipation, the question arises: what exactly should one do with this insight about behaviour, this realization that slave emancipation was neither a transcendent liberation nor a complete swindle, but rather an occasion for reshaping – within limits – social, economic and political relationships? (1988:408)

The findings of the few studies which have dealt with emancipation on Curaçao underscore the ambivalent situation as described in both statements. Several works show that the major institutions in society did not change with the end of slavery. Ethnic relationships based on colour and race remained an obstacle for social mobility, impeding the manumitted from breaking through in the existing power structure, where plantation owners and others struggled until the end of the nineteenth century to remain in control. Former slaves and their children continued to live in poverty, constantly seeking employment opportunities, either on existing plantations, in towns, or through emigration (Römer 1979; Renkema 1981a:179-84; Oostindie 1997).

Life after emancipation cannot be merely examined on the basis of elite renderings of this past. One should not underestimate the complexity of this past and the active role of Afro-Curaçaoans in the process. As W. Marshall states, if we are 'to determine the meaning of freedom in terms of social relations, consciousness and cultural activity, we should

not only look at the legislation, but also at choices people made which influenced their actions and responses in their life' (1993:12).

Studying post-emancipation life of Afro-Curaçaoans is justified as D. Eudell stated: 'events during the post-slavery era, beginning with the way in which emancipation was conceptualized and then later implemented, bear some direct relation, conceptual as well as institutional, to the contemporary conditions with which the descendants of slaves remain confronted' (2002:7).

At the moment of freedom a large part of society ceased to be the property of others. Freedom, however, was not merely a change in legal status. It also delineated the foundation for the existence of new community of people who within the constraints placed on them by the ruling class had to define a new way of life for themselves as free citizens (Brereton, 1999). It meant freedom of choice and greater possibilities to exercise their capacities to deal with persisting social constraints. Their resilience and the various creative ways in which they skilfully dealt with the obstacles placed in their path, is at the heart of this study.

A Turn towards Culture in Caribbean Historiography

As previously stated, in this thesis the key concept is culture. An important contribution of anthropology to scholarly debates has been the fact that culture no longer is considered something only pertaining to the elite group. After Edward B. Tylor (1871) in the nineteenth century defined culture in a broader anthropologist sense as the 'complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, law, morals, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society', there have been various other definitions and meanings. These include the various ways in which the cultures in the Caribbean have been assessed.

Over the years scholars have analysed Caribbean societies and cultures according to several conceptual models. In the 1960s the plantation society model dominated in the Anglophone Caribbean. According to this model, plantations are characterized by the production of an agricultural monocrop for export, strong monopolistic tendencies and a race-related class system with a weak community structure and a marginal peasantry – these conditions further determined the culture, politics and economy of Caribbean societies. With their legacy of slavery, plantations would continue to influence social life and culture in the Caribbean long after emancipation.

This model has been criticized for its over-determinism of economy on other aspects of society, while it neglects to establish relations between them. Furthermore it fails to take into account that those low in the social hierarchy were also able to influence the system. Hence it neglects perceptions of rights and duties, values, aspirations, ideas and beliefs of various socio-economically disempowered yet important groups (Patterson 1967; Bolland 1997:7). It also overlooks the fact that these groups did not always readily accept cultural dominion over their lives – those with power had to introduce laws and regulations to control the behaviour of the black lower classes in plantation societies both during and after slavery (Bolland 1997:8). Finally this model fails to address the question of how those

without power modelled their life pattern within this structure of inequality. And as it solely focuses on plantations as an economic device, it is also difficult to apply it to Curaçaoan society, which has known a plantation system dissimilar to the rest of the Caribbean.

An alternative model elaborated by the Jamaican anthropologist M.G. Smith (1965) recognizes the role of culture in its analysis. Smith followed the British economist J.S. Furnivall (1948) who used the term 'plural society' to describe the culturally and institutionally complex features of South East Asian societies. Contrary to Furnivall, who utilized this concept from a predominantly economic point of view in relation to the Dutch East Indies, Smith focused on the concept of culture and defined the term 'cultural plurality':

Cultural plurality [...] is a condition in which two or more different cultural traditions characterize the population of a given society [...]. Where cultural plurality obtains, different sections of the total population practice different forms of these common institutions; and [...] differ in their social organization, their institutional activities, and their system of beliefs and values. Where this condition of cultural plurality is found, the societies are plural societies (1965:14).

According to Smith, in these plural societies there is often a lack of consensus of values between ethnic groups, which manifests itself in institutions such as marriage, family, education, economics, religion, language and folklore. Consequently these ethnic groups are continuously in conflict, and are enforced politically through a cultural minority.

The idea that in Caribbean society each social group formed a separate culture without any cohesion with the rest was debunked with the concept of *creolization*. Developed during the 1960s, creolization saw the shared legacy of European plantation societies with enslaved Africans as the foundation of Caribbean culture. The mixture between European and African cultures into a common creole culture resulted in a hybrid synthesis; one that was neither European nor African. For Edward Brathwaite (1974), one of the main proponents of this view on Caribbean culture, creolization as a cultural process took place through two distinctive phases. The first was the process of acculturation, which reinforced the superiority of the European culture with respect to the African and required the dominated to submit by force. The process of interculturalization follows as the subordinated majority shape the dominant culture in ways that are unplanned, unstructured and osmotic. The creolization process that results thus becomes the tentative cultural norm of society.

This creole society model in turn has been subject to scholarly critique. O. Nigel Bolland has been one of the main critics of the creole society model and denounces it as being the action of 'a desperate need for a coherent national ideology and cultural identity by Caribbean nations in the sixties' (1997:8). According to him this model is based on an attempt to bring forward national integration and to create national unity between groups of different ethnic origin in societies profoundly impacted by slavery and colonialism and now by other forces seemingly beyond their control. He further states that by presenting the creole society in this way, one does not pay sufficient attention to change in society nor to the role of structural contradictions and social conflicts happening within this process

of change. The more dialectic approach to the creole society model which he proposes looks at the historical process of domination and subordination within society and at the more mutually dependent relationship between social structure and human agency (1997:8).

Additionally, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that such models, including that of Bolland, also neglect historical particulars in the sense that they do not look at the concrete circumstances of individuals engaged in the processes of social change. In Trouillot's view, they pay insufficient attention to the ability of people of African descent to create their cultures 'unexpectedly, unforeseen developments of an agenda set in Europe, by Europe and for Europe' (1998:10). In the same article, he further asserts that this model does not sufficiently consider the ability of the African group in Caribbean societies to 'stretch margins and circumvent borderlines' in spite of and within the context of cultural domination (1998:27-8).

A key issue in these discussions becomes then the question of which role Afro-Caribbeans played in the production and reproduction of culture in Caribbean societies, consisting of groups whose social and political position has been determined by colour and ethnicity. Many theories have affirmed that those in power control the dominant value system through the institutions of State and society. The following questions then arise: How do those in subordinated positions accept or contest these values and ideas of domination? And how do they transform them into something new and different?

The analysis of cultural creativity of those of African descent in Caribbean societies both during and after slavery has been an ongoing debate for many decades. The debate began with E. Franklin Frazier, who argued in an early study (1939) that due to Middle Passage's experiences, upon their arrival in the Caribbean, Africans experienced a cultural vacuum and consequently lost their culture.²⁶ Melville and Frances Herskovits (1934), Melville Herskovits (1941),²⁷ John Blassingame (1972), Lawrence Levine (1977) and Herbert Gutman (1976) have questioned this view, and broke new grounds by showing that even though slaves lived under severe conditions, they were able to survive as a community and recreate their own cultures based on elements that originated from African cultures.

In the search for African cultural elements, other studies have attempted to prove that certain African cultural forms had continued to exist in the Caribbean. Melville and Frances Herskovits (1934, 1941) conducted extensive research in Africa and the Caribbean and identified 'retention' or survivals, as they called some components in Caribbean culture which they linked to African culture. The Herskovits' theory of retention has been questioned by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1976), who found this vision of culture too static. According to them the Afro-American culture emanated to a large part in the Caribbean itself (1976:10). It is difficult to find surviving African elements in the Americas since from the start slaves were systematically prevented from bringing with them those materials which maintained their homeland institutions, the complex social structures of their ancestral societies. Mintz and Price further argued that West African knowledge has been perpetuated in the unconscious, underlying 'grammatical principles'. These are the cognitive orientations, attitudes and expectations common to the diverse communities from which most of the enslaved originated and which are shared by all African slaves despite varied African origins (1976:4-5).

Others scholars have taken the discussion a step further and have looked at the variety of ways in which enslaved people affected cultural processes, through resisting the established order. The historian Eugene Genovese distinguished two types of resistance during slavery and consequently argued that slaves in the United States resisted covertly rather than overtly. He claimed that slave revolts occurred where the relationship between master and slave was more business-like and hard, as was the case in very large slave holding units (Genovese 1974:591). Covert resistance tended to occur in opposite situations. Genovese, however, also viewed accommodation as a type of resistance. 'Accommodation itself', as he pointed out, 'breathed a critical spirit and disguised subversive actions and often embraced its apparent opposite, resistance' (1974:591). By being accommodating to slavery, the slaves appeared to agree to the situation, thus avoiding falling victim to the forces of dehumanization, deprivation and self-hatred.

'Resistance' has become an all-encompassing term in studying the everyday manifestation of social life in the Caribbean. The anthropologist Peter J. Wilson, who published one of the earliest works on historical anthropology, applied a bipolar model to the theory of resistance in his study of everyday social life of English-speaking people on the Colombian-owned islands of Providence (1973). In this model, he placed the value of respectability at one end and reputation at the other end. Respectability has to do with the moral force behind the coercive power of colonialism and neo-colonialism and is dominated by the value system of the churches. It is generally supported by the middle class and all classes of women, who seemingly are more influenced by the Church than men. Key values represented here are marriage, the home, self-restraint, work, education, economy, purposeful self-construction and respect for social hierarchical values. Reputation refers to resistance and centres on those behaviour patterns that oppose respectability (Wilson 1973:102, 233). A major criticism of Wilson's bipolar model comes from the feministic studies which go against the view that Caribbean women were compliant to this domination (Besson 2001:93).

Resistance manifests itself in different forms. Several authors cite the everyday life of subjugated people as a form of resistance to those with power. The anthropologist James C. Scott, for example, studied (1990) the ways in which subordinated people respond in their daily activities to the dominant groups and how they continually resist them, both collectively and individually. According to Scott, in contrast to those with power – who display their domination openly and publicly – those subjugated often wear a 'mask', which manifests itself in stupid, innocent or servile behaviour to hide and retain what little power they have. The anthropologist Lawrence Levine has labelled this attitude 'masking'. It is expressed both in speech and in behaviour and involves a whole range of activities (1977:8-9). Scott calls them the 'hidden transcripts', as they entail the offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what appears in the public sphere and takes place beyond the direct observation of those with power (1990:4-5). In the case of Curaçao, Armando Lampe (1988) and René Rosalia (1997) have researched aspects of life in the past within this context of resistance, contradicting the idea that Afro-Curaçaoans accepted the existing power relationship passively.

However, an analysis of the everyday life of subjugated people almost solely in the context of either resistance or compliance obscures matters. Do they in their daily lives solely

and continually respond or react to these oppressing forces? Do they manifest dissident cultural behaviour patterns solely to oppose the powerful? Mintz is among those who have argued against characterizing certain actions of people either as resistance or as compliance. Either type of action does not necessarily exclude the other. The most effective forms of resistance, as Mintz points out, were built on prior forms of adaptation to oppressive living conditions (1974:75-81).

De Certeau distinguishes between what he calls strategies of resistance and strategies of opposition. According to him, resistance is only possible when those dominated (as a group or as individuals) act outside the system of domination enclosing them. The opposition strategies, in contrast, are the internal manipulations of the established order that may disrupt, but do not threaten or transform the power system. The concept of tactical opposition often entails people achieving their goals through negotiating, collaborating and compromising with those in power *and* within the system that controls them (de Certeau 1984:35).

Richard Burton extends this idea to the Caribbean (1997). He applies the concept of play, elaborated by Scott (1990), to his analysis of how Afro-Caribbean people oppose power in their daily lives. He argues that it is in the arena of play and not in that of work – where control was very evident – that Afro-Caribbean people manifested their autonomy and opposed the controlling forces. This arena of play manifested itself in cultural areas such as music, dance, food, religion and parties. He suggests, however, that this cultural opposition is double-edged. According to Burton, Afro-Caribbean culture by its very *creoleness* cannot step entirely outside the dominant system in order to resist it, and in that way it involuntarily tends to reproduce its underlying structures (1997:8).

Olwig has observed this in her study of Afro-Nevisian culture (1993). After freedom, she concludes, Caribbean societies became even *more* complex, as people interrelated and interacted on a greater scale than before, while looking for social and economic opportunities inside and outside their own society. Olwig approached the cultural implications of interrelatedness and interactions according to modern concepts such as ‘global flows’, ‘cultural complexity’ and ‘fluidity’. She based her approach on that of Arjun Appadurai (1990) and Ulf Hannerz (1992), who have looked at present cultures as the results of global processes characterized by the fast streams of information, images and knowledge, and by people who are constantly on the move. Key in this is how people reinterpret and localize these global processes and their impact on society.

Culture has thus been redefined within the context of movement, positioning and interpretation. It no longer seems pervasive, logical and connected, but rather diverse, inconsistent and contentious (Barth 1989:124). Culture is ordered as it operates within ‘streams of cultural traditions’, which are certain cultural elements able to persist, manifesting themselves with some coherence over time (Barth 1989:130; Olwig 1995c:103). Olwig analyses this Afro-Caribbean culture from the viewpoint of what she labelled three ‘cultural traditions’. The first refers to those connected with the development of a colonial society based on a plantation economy with a strong patriarchal characteristic, where those in the lower social hierarchy were allowed some space to express their culture within the oppression situation. The social institutions they developed were determined by the space allowed by the masters to maintain themselves, but also by the ‘grammatical

principles' (Mintz and Price 1976:7, 9). For example, slaves were allowed festivities such as Christmas, Easter and harvest. They could celebrate certain events as long as they acted and behaved according to the accepted ideals of those in power.

The second tradition deals with the way in which the Afro-Nevisian group continued to organize itself internally, based on what Mintz and Price have called 'grammatical principles' (1976:7, 9). The enslaved created a cultural sphere of their own, with their own value systems, outside the sphere of control imposed by their master. These involved their notion of kinship, both fictive and bilateral, as well as their way of belonging to different socio-cultural groupings. These communities developed both within and outside the confines of the plantations.

The third tradition came with the influence of the British missionaries and concerned their idea of respectability, stressing values such as 'decency, morality and a proper sexual attitude'. Afro-Nevisians adopt in their own culture elements from the culture deemed respectable by those with power. In their everyday lives, this is applied where it is convenient to their own knowledge, practices, values, initiatives and aspirations (Olwig 1995a:23-39;1995c:113). It is precisely through displaying this paradoxical behaviour that they experience the concept of freedom withheld from them by the dominant class.

What is also important in the thought of Olwig is that she includes next to slavery, the impact of freedom on Afro-Caribbean culture. Most of the old theoretical models and their applications may suggest that only slavery and the circumstances surrounding it have been decisive in the formation of cultures in the Caribbean. In Olwig's vision, however, emancipation added to the complexity and fluidity of Afro-Caribbean cultures.

A Turn towards Culture in the Historiography of Curaçao

The study of Dutch Caribbean culture was pioneered by the historian R.A.J. van Lier and the sociologists Hoetink and René Römer. Van Lier ushered in the discussion on race, class and ethnicity in the Caribbean and introduced the model of plural culture in the region (Sankatsing 2001:60). According to van Lier (1953-1954), Surinamese society was segmented and composed of several cultural groups of different race, ethnicity, language, religion and economic spheres, who coexisted but rarely mingled.

Hoetink continued to use van Lier's concept of a segmented society and applied it to Curaçao (1962:2). This was a segmented society in the sense that it consisted of several groups of different races and associated cultures, each with its own social institutions, structure and social rank, while society as a whole was politically governed by one of these groups. In his earlier analysis of social hierarchy within Curaçaoan slave society, the Dutch and other Europeans were at the apex, themselves divided into Higher and Lower Protestant classes. Next in line were the Sephardic Jews, who arrived in the seventeenth century and who dedicated themselves mostly to commerce. At the bottom were the majority of African descent, who had arrived as slaves (Hoetink 1958). In a later edition of his 1958 dissertation, Hoetink argued that the system of pure plurality is only present at the beginning, when within a society groups of different cultures and racial backgrounds are placed together in a rigid hierarchical order. The cultural interchange

between these groups begins immediately afterwards, through social and sexual contacts (Hoetink 1987:xii).

The Curaçaoan sociologist René Römer was among the first Antillean scholars to write on the issue of culture and cultural identity on Curacao. In agreement with Hoetink, Römer considered the system of segmentation to be present only at the beginning of a process, when groups of different cultures and racial backgrounds are initially placed together in a rigid hierarchical order within an emerging society. This initial process then gives way to the second phase, when social contacts lead to some racial mixing and cultural transfers between ethnicities.²⁸ According to Hoetink and Römer, this fusion between different cultures in society, which Hoetink initially referred to as acculturation, and later creolization, is trilateral in Curaçao. It had emerged from the admixture of white Protestant West European culture, the Latin (or Iberian) culture of Sephardic Jews and African cultures, which over time developed its own authentic character.²⁹ This creolization process manifested itself in cultural areas such as music and dance, eating habits and architecture, but principally through the use of Papiamentu.³⁰

Both Hoetink and Römer do not view cultural contact as has occurred on Curacao as an unilinear process, in which cultural values were transmitted solely from the dominant to the subjugated, leading to change in their behaviour and cultural patterns. However, Afro-Curaçaoans are only awarded a limited role in this process. Römer explains this by stating that the Curaçaoan creole culture vacillates between the 'undesired Africanization of the culture of the white population and the Europeanization of the black population' (1993:20).

Despite their attention to this dynamic interaction, the way in which Hoetink and Römer apply the idea of creolization does not capture sufficiently the tensions and contradictions arising from this fusion of culture in society. Some expressions supported by people of African descent were considered as folk culture, elements of African survivals or echo's from Africa. These expressions were named in that way, without an in-depth study of their impact on society. They are also separated from the creole culture and are marginalized as expressions only existent among the social group without economic power. Römer acknowledged this omission in a later publication, in which he addressed the question as to whether the African elements in Curaçaoan culture are a 'peripheral phenomenon only existent among the black population in society, or whether they are part of the creole culture belonging to all ethnic groups of society' (Römer 1998:82).

The studies of Lampe (1988) and Rosalia (1997), who researched aspects of life in the past using the resistance model, went against the idea that Afro-Curaçaoans accepted the existing power relationship in a passive form, rather than resisting in numerous ways. Both Lampe and Rosalia looked at the arena of play to sustain their thesis empirically. Lampe examined Nanzi stories, while Rosalia looked at it from the perspective of the tambú.

The focus solely on the resistance of subjugated people and their effort to counter-hegemonize those in control oversimplifies the fact that subjugated people live their day-to-day lives in a myriad of ways. They do not solely and continuously respond or react to these oppressive forces. They do not only manifest sanctioned or dissident cultural behaviour patterns to oppose the powerful. In other words, everyday life is much more complex than merely resisting or accommodating those with power. In addition to conflict and

confrontation, the daily social life of subjugated people contains elements of solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity that shape a great deal of the cultural processes. Furthermore, resistance theories, while placing exaggerated focus on conflicts and external dynamics, overlook the internal cultural dynamics that help to shape the form and texture of everyday life as well as many of its social institutions.

In one of the latest attempts to look at the life of Afro-Curaçaoans in the post-emancipation period, Haviser (2001) focuses on the value systems which have governed the attitude of Afro-Curaçaoans both before and after emancipation. He concludes that after 1863 Afro-Curaçaoans changed from being submissive and cooperative to being competitive and alienated. Haviser principally looks at the role the Roman Catholic Church played in education.

The model of cultural complexity applied by Olwig to the small Leeward island of Nevis also holds true for Curaçao. Within this model, culture is complex, multidimensional in scope, fluid and limited by traditions. Conflict, confrontation and contest are constant elements, as are cooperation, reciprocity and negotiation. Olwig, however, studied this model for a society characterized by a plantation economy. On the contrary, Curaçaoan society was unfamiliar with the large-scale plantation economy common to the rest of the Caribbean. Here other factors influenced the complexity of Afro-Curaçaoan society even further.

The first factor was Curaçao's unique position in the Caribbean as a transit and holding place for enslaved Africans to be sold on to mainland Spanish colonies. This had consequences for the cultural traditions and thus added to the complex character of society. The second factor influencing social life was that colonial society was economically founded on commerce and strategic goods rather than on a plantation economy common to the rest of the Caribbean. The enslaved tended to be involved in the production of subsistence products for the plantation owners. This significantly differentiated them from the enslaved on other Caribbean islands, contributing to the formation of a type of social system and culture different from that commonly found in the Caribbean, both during slavery and after. The third element to consider is the position of the Roman Catholic Church, which after the nineteenth century began to play a crucial role in the lives of Afro-Curaçaoans. The Church attempted to bring them in line with a 'civilized' culture.

Conclusion and Central Questions

Recent historical publications on Curaçao have used a socio-historical perspective to study the historically marginalized role of Afro-Curaçaoans. Even though literature in this area is not yet as extensive as it is in the rest of the Caribbean, this new perspective has challenged historians and social scientists to explore new sources and new historical research methods, such as archaeology and oral history.

Most of these studies have addressed the slavery period and/or twentieth-century post-industrial society. As previously stated, the immediate post-emancipation period has not received sufficient attention. The few studies on this subject reveal that after 1863 the social institutions of power persisted and that colour and race remained central to social

mobility. Post-emancipation social life has demonstrated how socially marginalized people continued to be subjugated. In these studies, power and resistance are central concepts. While this is an important advance, most studies on the post-emancipation period have neglected the complexity of the Afro-Curaçaoan experience and the dynamics of social interaction within and beyond the group.

In this thesis my concern is to reveal the cultural complexities of Curaçaoan society and more specifically the role played in this by the Afro-Curaçaoan majority. I will explore the varied forms in which the social and cultural lives of Afro-Curaçaoans developed during the post-slavery era until 1917 by considering the complex ways in which they interacted among themselves and with other groups in society. This complexity is determined by many factors, for example by the diversity of the group itself. In addition their social life is influenced by cultural processes originating from the existing power structures within the group and with the former slave-owners, the State and the Roman Catholic Church.

The central questions in this thesis are: *What role did the State, the former slave-owners and the Roman Catholic Church play in the lives of Afro-Curaçaoans in the post-emancipation era, in what ways did Afro-Curaçaoans shape their own material, social and spiritual lives, either within, outside or in opposition to the constraints of these institutions?*

More specifically, I will try to answer the following questions:

- Taking into account the continuing restrictions (juridical, economical and social) following emancipation, what survival strategies were available to Afro-Curaçaoans and how did these determine the decisions they made in their everyday lives? How did these strategies relate to other large societal issues, such as migration and the management of land resources?
- How has the social order been maintained and contested? Which role did the Church and State play in this and how did the populace respond?
- What was the outlook on life of the former enslaved and how was life symbolized and ritualized in their daily lives?

In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to tap resources other than the written ones dominant in traditional historiography. I will argue the necessity of this in the next Chapter.

Notes

- 1 Lewis (1998) denies this accusation and claims that particularly in the United States anthropology has not shown a lack of historical concern. According to him, even British anthropology has only been a-historical for a very brief period; a trend which was not followed by all its practitioners (see for example Edward Evans-Pritchard 1961). Societies and cultures are being recognized as dynamic entities, therefore the study of their history is essential for a full understanding.
- 2 The terms 'free coloured', 'free people of colour' and 'freedmen' refer to manumitted persons, in most cases of mixed racial ancestry. Gradually they came to be defined as a separate socio-racial group.
- 3 In 1863 the group of Afro-Curaçaoans comprised approximately 85 per cent of the total island population, of which 35 per cent had been freed on 1 July 1863, the date of emancipation in the Dutch colonies (Oostindie 1995b :158; 1997:56).

- 4 Oostindie (1987) attributed this initial amateurism in historical literature to the general lack of attention in the colonizing motherland for the history of these areas.
- 5 See also Klooster 1985.
- 6 The priest-historian M.D. Latour (1950:27) considered Hamelberg, who was also a civil servant, to be the first historian of Curaçao. He granted Hamelberg this status due to the fact that in his writings he had made use of official documents and governmental archives. At Hamelberg's death the local newspaper *La Cruz* (15-1-1919) wrote that Curaçao had lost a great friend. He was also praised for his efforts to bring economic projects to Curaçao and St. Eustatius.
- 7 In 1896 the civil servant Hamelberg proposed the establishment of a Society for the study of history. The then governor C. Barge recommended an expansion of this Society, enabling it to also focus on language, geographical origin and what was then called 'volkenkunde'. In the Netherlands the term 'volkenkunde' was utilized until the twentieth century as a synonym for 'ethnology' and 'ethnography'. The Society's official name was: 'Genootschap voor Geschied-, Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde'.
- 8 As a result of this approach Curaçao, as the centre of Dutch colonization in the Caribbean, received far more attention than the other five islands of the Netherlands Antilles, which at the time were called 'Curaçao en Onderhorigheden' (the present name was not officially introduced until 1948). It was more or less taken for granted that by writing the history of Curaçao, the history of Aruba, Bonaire, St. Martin, Saba and St. Eustatius would also be covered. Goslinga (1971) represents this traditional focus on politics in historiography. Goslinga was an (art) historian and a novelist, who would later become a professor at the University of California and at the University of Florida (Gainesville). As the title of this book indicates, the author looked at the imperial history of the Dutch in the Caribbean and in Africa and at their quest for land in these areas. Hamelberg was early in his advocacy for writing the history of the Dutch Leeward Islands and that of the Windward Islands as separate units. Initially, however, his proposals to the colonial government fell on deaf ears. When, for example, he wanted to write a history of St. Eustatius and therefore deemed it necessary to visit St. Martin and Saba as well, his request to the government in 1892 for financial support was denied (NA, Ministerie van Koloniën, 12-9-1892/551, inv. no. 6789). In 1903 Hamelberg produced a compilation of original documents on the two island units (Hamelberg 1901-1903b), thus making public some government records available on these islands.
- 9 Both Hoyer and van Meeteren were addressed as 'Shon', indicating their high social position (Shon Wein Hoyer and Shon Popie).
- 10 See Hoyer 1933, 1937, 1941. See De Gaay Fortman (1934) for a review of *Algun pagina tuma foi historia di Curaçao* by Hoyer.
- 11 Van Meeteren wrote several books on Curaçaoan history (for example 1950 and 1951). Soon after he died, van Meeteren was recognized as one of the three most important historians of his time, together with W.R. Menkman and B. de Gaay Fortman. See the article by M.D. Latour in *Amigoe*, 11-5-1953. See also the article by B. de Gaay Fortman in *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten*, 13-4-1953.
- 12 See several publications by Brada. For an overview of Euwens' work, see Nagelkerke 1973 and 1982. The priest Latour ventured to write on secular matters. He wrote a number of articles on themes such as the Papiamentu language and the belief-system on Curaçao, which he called Voodoo, after the Afro-Caribbean religion of Haiti.
- 13 Already in 1891 a person named W. Henriquez requested a monument to be erected to the memory of Niewindt. See *La Union*, 27-5-1891.
- 14 *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 4-10-1924.
- 15 See also Blussé, van der Putten and Vogel (1996:311). In this interview Hoetink claims to have been inspired by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, who used social science methods (1946). Van Lier's sociological-historical book on Suriname (1949) had also been a source of inspiration in reaching a non-traditional historiography for the island, which he refers to in the following comment: 'Although some history books had been written, no effort had been made

to analyse, be it in a modest way, Curaçao's society in the way that van Lier had done for Suriname.'

- 16 In 1967 a shorter English version of this work was published.
- 17 See also van Soest 1980 and 1983.
- 18 See also Beckles and Shepherd 1991:209-21.
- 19 See also Renkema 1975. Rupert (1999) focuses on five hundred years of commercial history on the island. Jews were predominant in this history. However, Rupert also examines the contributions of some members of the popular class to the commercial activities on the island in the form of small-scale trading.
- 20 Brereton 1988. See also Shepherd, Brereton and Bailey 1995.
- 21 See also Philipps 1988; Henriquez 1991; Cuales 1980.
- 22 On 1 July 1863 slaves received their freedom in the Netherlands Antilles. On 26 July 1499 the Spaniards had arrived on the islands. Initially the commemoration of the 17 August 1795 slave revolt was an activity of individuals who were challenging the existing order. For several years, these groups – through movements and foundations – made it their principal goal to create an awareness of the slave revolt and its leaders. Examples are the 'Movimentu 17-8-1795' established in 1968, and the 'Fundashon Identidat Antiano' (the Foundation for Antillean identity) led by A.F. Paula. The aim of the first group was to improve the self-esteem of the black Curaçaoan. A step in the right direction was to commemorate the slave revolt. In this, they differed from the second group, which strived for the recognition of the first of July as a national day.
- 23 See also Do Rego 1995. Do Rego's use of Papiamentu to explain the causes and developments of this slave revolt was seen as an attempt to make history accessible to the general Antillean public.
- 24 See also Haviser 1991 and 1999. Some years previously, Haviser used a similar method for uncovering the indigenous Amerindian culture on the island. His work gave another dimension to local historiography since history had focused almost exclusively on European contact.
- 25 During slavery the *tambú* was feared by slave-owners, as it offered the enslaved the opportunity to gather and express their disgust about their situation by means of song and dance. It was also condemned by the Catholic clergy, who called the dance lascivious and sexually immoral. Members of the older generation still relate the severe forms of punishment of those found participating in a *tambú* celebration. Punishment by the clergy included the confiscation of drums, whipping, and even expulsion from the Catholic Church.
- 26 Frazier based his ideas on the situation in the United States and stated that due to slavery blacks had become uprooted people. The phenomenon of matrilocality among the descendants of the enslaved was taken as an example of one of the results of this cultural uprootedness.
- 27 In 1934 Melville and Frances Herskovits published a study on religious survivals among the Saramaca.
- 28 Römer also used the term 'segmented society' (1964, 1969).
- 29 Römer (1964:20). See also Römer 1969 and 1993.
- 30 Römer maintained that Curaçao's distinctive culture manifested itself predominantly in the Papiamentu language (see Römer 1974 and 1993). The status of this creole language differs from local languages on other Caribbean islands since it is recognized and used as a means of communication by all social classes (Römer 1993).

