

## CHAPTER III

# Afro-Curaçaoan Life and Culture Prior to Emancipation

## *Introduction*

When studying the historiography of the popular class, scholars are confronted with the problem of categorization. Peter Burke, for example, addresses this dilemma in his historical studies on the popular class in Europe (1978, 1991). Usually the 'two-model system' of dividing the masses from the elite is applied, but here the problem lies in determining a criterion for exact division. In which manner does a small group, generally called 'the elite', excel in one way or another with respect to the majority of the population? In his study on mentality and culture in pre-industrial Europe (1988), the historian Petrus Spierenburg recognizes the inherent difficulties in distinguishing between the elite and the non-elite. An additional factor is that there are large differences in values, beliefs and behaviour patterns among the members of the popular class themselves (Sharpe 1991:27).

The situation in the Caribbean is even more complex. Here, class divisions have over time become closely connected to racial, ethnic and colour differences. The formation of these societies was grounded on European colonization, essentially the decimation of the indigenous population and the forced importation of diverse ethnic groups. Today's African presence in the Caribbean is due to three hundred years of transatlantic slave trade. The enslaved and their descendants would remain in the lowest strata of society. They responded to this system of racially based social inequality in many diverse ways.

Although this study does not deal with slavery as such, social life following emancipation cannot be studied in isolation (Olwig 1993:6). Necessarily, the lives of these enslaved Africans revolved around labour; it was the hub around which they formed their social lives. Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan state that 'when, where and especially how the enslaved worked determined, in large measure, the course of their lives' (1993:1). This forced labour as the central focus of life has been studied extensively. These studies reveal the diversity of work carried out by enslaved people in the Americas - leading to different gradations in the slave/master relationships. For example, mining was more demanding than agricultural work, which in turn was heavier than working in the factories and shops. Housework was physically the least demanding. Within these broad categories there were many differences, for example depending on the type of crop to be cultivated. It is generally accepted that work on the sugar plantations was by far the hardest to endure, as the working year of these enslaved people was longer - more hours per day, more days per month - than that of those engaged in the cultivation of any other crop (Berlin and Morgan 1993:4; Thornton 1998:162).

Apart from the actual work, the different plantation regimes were a determining factor in the social life and culture of the enslaved people, according to Mintz and Price (1992). Most slavery studies have dealt with life on plantations producing monocrop commodities for Europe (Beckles and Shepherd 2000:253; Shepherd, 2002). Less attention has been paid to developments on plantations based on a subsistence economy, like most of those on Curaçao. Here the ecology of the area, with its infertile soil and lack of rain, led to the existence of small plantations combining varied activities, such as subsistence farming, horticulture, animal husbandry (focusing on pigs and goats), hunting, fishing and the collection of natural products for export (Hamelberg [1901-1903]1979:82) What are the consequences for the daily life experiences of the enslaved and the freed?

In this Chapter I will outline Afro-Curaçaoan cultural history from the time Africans were imported into Curaçao as enslaved people until the moment slavery was abolished entirely in 1863. I will identify the group, in this study referred to as 'Afro-Curaçaoans' and try to answer the question as to how they were able to conduct their social life within and beyond the different constraints in the period of slavery. Studying the ensuing social structure will help to provide insight into the many ways in which the enslaved established and developed their own institutions and cultures within and beyond the confines set for them by those in power. I will also look at the cultural meanings and values they managed to create within the boundaries of this particular social system.

### *The Arrival of Blacks on Curaçao*

It is probable that during the Spanish occupation of Curaçao (1499-1634), there were already blacks residing on the island, since they also formed part of the Spanish force exploring the Americas. Nevertheless, the arrival of large groups of Africans is linked to the introduction of slavery. It is not possible to state precisely when the first Africans arrived after the Dutch colonization of Curaçao in 1634. One of the earliest records in which they appear as a social group are the instructions of the West Indian Company (W.I.C.) to Jacob Pietas Tolck, director of the island from 1638 until 1641<sup>1</sup>. In these, guidelines were given as to how the enslaved people should be dealt with.

As the Dutch became heavily engaged in the slave trade, Africans by definition came to be perceived as economic commodities. Between 1644 and 1717 the island turned into a commercial slave depot. On the basis of the Asiento Contract with Spain, the W.I.C. would sell enslaved people to surrounding Spanish colonies (Kunst 1981:125). Settlers in the New Netherlands would also purchase enslaved people from Curaçao, since they were preferred to those coming directly from Africa, who often were ill on arrival due to the extremely poor conditions on board. In the Curaçaoan depots at Zuurzak and Karké they were allowed to recuperate in expectation of further transportation (Thornton 1998:159; Martinus 1997:125).

Even though few data are available on the number of enslaved people in transit, or the number actually remaining on the island, one can assume that when Curaçaoan society functioned as a transit harbour for enslaved people, little slave labour was required on the island itself. The few indicators of the number of enslaved people present on the island

during certain periods underscore this assumption. For example, in 1668 the Chamber of Amsterdam saw to the importation of food for the 3,000 enslaved people on the island (Hoetink 1958:68). From 1667 until 1675, the peak period of exportation, around 24,000 African enslaved people were shipped to Curaçao (Jordaan 1999:474). Another source shows that in 1683 a contract was signed by the Asientista Juan Barosso del Posso for the delivery of 18,000 enslaved people over a period of six years (Hamelberg [1901-1903]1979:74; Hoetink 1958:68). These numbers exceed by far the 576 enslaved people who worked for the W.I.C. around 1695 and the 1841 enslaved people registered as house- and craft-enslaved people in 1697 (Hamelberg [1901-1903]1979:83; Hoetink 1958:68). Furthermore, the number of enslaved settling on the island would fluctuate, as they were sold by the W.I.C. when faced with economic adversity (Hoetink 1958:68).

From these data it is clear that most enslaved people were merchandise in transit. Those remaining would fulfil the labour needs on the plantations of the W.I.C. These were essentially centres for food production for both resident enslaved people and those in transit, as well as for the crews of commercial shipping. The enslaved people worked the land: they sowed, weeded, harvested and reaped millet - the staple crop. Other tasks entailed the cleaning and maintenance of wells, animal husbandry and the burning of chalk to make lime for masonry work.<sup>2</sup>

The ratio of male to female enslaved people in the seventeenth century remains unclear. Initially (when Curaçao began functioning as a centre for slave transport) male slaves must have outnumbered the female slaves on the island, as the masters in the Americas generally preferred - young - men, whom they believed to be strong and efficient workers (Berlin and Morgan 1993:12; Moreno Fraginals 1978:19; Thornton 1998:173).

With the ending of the Spanish Succession War in 1714, the importance of the island as a depot began to decrease. This contributed to the breakdown of the W.I.C.'s previous monopoly on the slave trade with Africa. The trade would continue as a private enterprise from the 1730s. Slave prices collapsed. In 1715, an artisan slave was worth 150 to 160 pesos, while in former years the same person cost about 500 to 600 pesos. The W.I.C. was unable to sell many of its enslaved Africans due to reduced demand (Rutten 1992:183). This, combined with other problems - such as rivalries between the white civil servants and the merchants, and severe drought - would affect the social situation of the depot slaves and of those working for the W.I.C. still further. For example, between 1714 and 1720, the food supply from the company diminished. This would eventually push the enslaved into a rebellion in 1716 (Rutten 1992:182). Faced with these difficulties the W.I.C. began to rent plantations out to private people in 1717.

The year 1778 saw the last slave ship entering the Curaçaoan harbour with new slaves (Hoetink 1958:70). Soon, African-born slaves were now outnumbered by the creole-born group. By the end of the eighteenth century most plantations and enslaved people were privately owned (Renkema 1981a:7). This, however, did not result in the authorities relinquishing control over these slaves; they would continue to impose rules as and when it suited their interests.

The dynamics of Curaçaoan society are more clearly revealed as of the late eighteenth century, with improved population statistics on the island available. Data in the nineteenth century, being relatively more reliable than those of former centuries, give an overview of the black population on the island. Even then, Renkema cautions, one has to be careful with these statistics as the registration was not always carried out correctly. Slave-owners often underreported enslaved people in their possession, to evade head taxes (Renkema 1981a:117-8). Until 1840 the Afro-Curaçaoan population is classified as 'Enslaved and Freedpeople' (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Estimated Population of Curaçao, 1820, 1830, 1840

Year	Total population	Whites	%	Freed manumitted	%	Enslaved	%
1820	14,733	2,555	17	5,195	35	6,983	47
1830	14,511	2,682	18	5,921	40	5,908	40
1840	14,916	2,734	18	6,432	43	5,750	38

Source: Renkema 1981a:336

After 1840 the manumitted former slaves were registered together with the white population as residents (Table 3.2). The number of enslaved people decreased over the years. Their number in the Table varies from the total of slaves really present on the island. In 1863 according to the *Koloniale Verslagen* (Colonial Reports), there were about 5,498 enslaved people on the island, whereas the slave registers of that year report a total of 6,751, with 6,684 of these belonging to private owners and 67 to the government. This is 1,253 slaves more than the number reported in the Colonial Report, from which the figures in Table 3.2 are sourced (Renkema 1981a:118). After due corrections, the total number of enslaved people who received their freedom in 1863 would be 35 per cent of the total population and not 29 per cent as is stated in the Table.

Table 3.2 Estimated Population of Curaçao, 1841, 1850, 1860, 1863

Year	Total population	Resident	%	Enslaved	%
1841	15,544	9,518	61	6,026	39
1850	16,530	10,892	66	5,638	34
1860	19,596	13,634	70	5,962	30
1863	19,127	13,629	71	5,498 <sup>3</sup>	29

Source: Renkema 1981a:336-7

There was a clear gender bias in the geographic spread of the Afro-Curaçaoan slave population. The following Table drawn up by Renkema demonstrates that there were more male slaves in the countryside than female slaves. Plantation owners often sent some of their female slaves to work in their homes in town or in those of a third person (Rutten 1989:33).

Table 3.3 Geographical Distribution of the Enslaved Population of Curaçao According to Gender

Year	Countryside (western and eastern)				Town District			
	Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Male	Female	Boy	Girl
1820	1847	1190	980	835	281	918	438	494
1830	1470	1017	819	827	216	765	355	439
1840	1277	998	785	745	206	721	479	460
1848	1170	904	742	664	183	749	428	449
1856	1175	905	811	729	210	811	416	459

Source: Renkema 1981a:122

### *African Continuities and Creolization*

In order to understand the dynamics of the formation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture, many issues need to be addressed - to begin with, the enslaved peoples' African background. This has been a topic of much debate, especially for those in search of African continuities on the island. Since in most cases slave-owners would merely identify their enslaved people's origins by the name of the embarkation port rather than by their ethnic background, this has considerably hindered research.<sup>4</sup>

Another aspect to take into account when looking at origin is that preferences for enslaved people from specific regions would shift over time (Engerman and Genovese 1974:33-49). For example, in 1668 the W.I.C. expressed its dislike for slaves from the areas of River Calabary and Rio Camoronis, who were said to be prone to commit suicide, while thirty years later the company preferred slaves from precisely those areas Knappert 1932:82; Hartog 1961:447).

Postma (1990:106), in his extensive study on African exportations and the origins of enslaved people, mentions different reasons why traders would decide to acquire enslaved people in certain parts of Africa. These were availability, prices, commercial contacts with African leaders, political and economic conditions in a given region, and the demands of the marketplace. It has been established, then, that at the beginning of the eighteenth century, most enslaved Africans destined for Curaçao came from the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Elmina, Fida, Ardra, Accra, Bercou, Angola and Luango (the region north of the mouth of the Congoriver (Jordaan 1999:475; Römer 1979:13). As Hoetink (1958:69-70) cautioned, we need to bear in mind that not necessarily all enslaved people came from

these areas, as they were also caught in the African interior. Berlin and Morgan (1993:13) support this argument and state that slave-owners had little control over the African market; enslaved people were drawn from the interior of Africa to coastal points, from where they would be distributed.

In 1755 the Catholic priest Gambier recorded in a book on baptism the Christian names of enslaved people along with their places of origin, thus giving a possible indication of the diversity in geographical origins of enslaved people on the island and a variety of ethnic backgrounds as well (Hoetink, 1958:71). Gambier registered place-names such as Timbo, Dombo, Congo, Canga, Jamba, Biciba, Luango, Socco, Angora, Amina, Laviras, Carrabbarri, Macamba, Marcambe, Guene, Bobo and Watje (Hoetink, 1958:71). Hoetink (1958:71) linked a few of these to specific ethnic groups in West and Central Africa. Although this apparent heterogeneity must have had implications for the cultural rebuilding in Curaçaoan society, it should be noted that at the time cultural similarities existed between Central and West Africa - even between West and East Africa (Thornton 1998:183-205).

The question as to why certain enslaved people were kept on the island while others were transported, is a difficult one to answer due to the lack of available historical sources (Hoetink 1958:69). Jordaan shows that certain slaves remained in order to assist with the disembarkation of the newcomers. In the beginning of the eighteenth century the W.I.C. used seasoned Luango's as caretakers of the newly arrived enslaved people (Jordaan 1999:478-9). Language skills were probably the primary reason for this, as these assistant slaves were able to communicate with both the new arrivals and the slave-traffickers.

Linguistic creolization was therefore in full swing even if documents show that in the period around 1750 some enslaved Africans still used their native languages. Papiamentu increasingly became the lingua franca both among slaves, between masters and slaves and even within the master class. Written evidence shows that Papiamentu already existed in the eighteenth century and was used as a form of communication among members of the Jewish group on the island (Salomon 1982:368).<sup>5</sup>

The various cultural expressions originating from many corners of Africa - having survived in diverse expressions, songs, stories and place-names on Curaçao - bear witness to these diverse backgrounds. For instance, Papiamentu terms such as 'Luango', 'Bobo' and 'Guene' - originally referring to particular ethnic groups - are still in use. Earlier studies have erroneously concluded that on Curaçao 'Luango' and 'Guene' only have negative meanings (van Meeteren 1947; Hoetink 1958:69-70). According to van Meeteren (1947:233) people from these areas were considered foolish as they spoke a language incomprehensible to others. Yet, as we saw, in the beginning of the eighteenth century the W.I.C. used experienced Luango's as caretakers of the newly arrived slaves (Jordaan 1999:479).<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, some Papiamentu sayings and proverbs still use the term 'Luango' in a negative sense, for example 'Puñá pa luangu, bakoba pa makaku' (A cut for the Luango, is a banana for the monkey), referring to people who allow others to make a fool of them (Hendrikse-Rigaud 1994:293). The priest Putman, for example, stated in a letter to his parents, dated 14 March 1838, that he had heard 'two negroes quarreling, while one of them said: 'Bestia quico bo ta carda [corda?], fer [for?] di unda bo a vini ladron, Luango!'' (Animal, what do

you remember(?), where do you come from, Luango thief?). The other answered angrily: 'Si bo no ta tapa bo boca un bez, lo mi dal bo un bostaa [bofta?], ku bo ta weita culu [kul?] pa un pompoena' (If you don't close your mouth immediately, I will give you a punch, that you will see backside for a pumpkin).

But there are more meanings: in stories the Luango's - and the Guene's - were portrayed as a supernatural people. As previously stated, they were believed to be small people with wings who were able to fly back to Africa if they did not eat salt. The ability would be lost once salt was consumed. This theme can be found in the music and oral literature of the Caribbean and the southern United States. In the Caribbean the myth came to imply freedom - either in the sense of escaping from the plantation or as the ultimate act of suicide (McDaniel 1990:29, 38).<sup>8</sup>

Due to their supposed ability to fly, the Luango's and Guene's enjoyed a certain prestige; one of my informants referred to them as 'sabí di e tempunan ayá' - the wise people of those days. The following quotation comes from a man born in 1898; this information had been passed on to him by his elders.

R.A.: *Di kon a yama nan 'Luangu'?*

C.E.: *Pasó nan no tabata hende djaki. Nan a bini di un parti di Afrika. E tempunan ayá, e shonnan tabata bai kumpra hende pa traha pa nan. E luangunan tabata bula bai bini. M'a krese tende esei i mi a tende ku e shonnan tabatin hopi trabou ku nan pasó nan tabatin ala. Nan tabata bula bai bini, bula bai bini, bula bai bini, te un biaha nan a bula bai sin bini bèk. Sí, ta asina ami a lanta tende. Asina ami a lanta tende ora mi tabata krese.*<sup>9</sup>

R.A.: *Why were they called Luango's?*

C.E.: *Because they were not people from here. They came from a part of Africa. At the time, the shons (the slavers) would go and buy people there to work for them. The Luango's used to fly back and forth. I grew up and heard that they (the shons) had great trouble with them because they had wings (emphasis on wings). They flew back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, until they flew away, never to come back again. Yes, that is the way I heard it. That is the way I heard it when I was growing up.*

The informant clearly focuses on this ability to fly, which represented freedom and independence, and thus contrasted with the constraints of enslavement. Similar powers were attributed to the Guene's:

C.E.: *M'a lanta konosé un señora ku tabata biba na Montaña. E tabata kabes di e labaderanan di Newport. E tabata yu di un gueni. Su tata tabata un gueni. E tabata un muhé chikitu asina. Ami a tende ku e gueninan tin ala, pero esaki no tabatin ala. Tur esnan ku tin ala a bula bai. El a ked'atras i el a traha na Santa Bárbara. El a ked'atras, pasó el a kome salu. P'esei el a ked'atras.*<sup>10</sup>

C.E.: *I grew up and knew a lady who used to live in Montaña. She was the head of the washer women in Newport. She was the child of a Guene. Her father was a Guene. She was a small lady. I heard that the Guene's had wings, but this lady did not have any. All those who had wings flew away. She stayed and worked in Santa Barbara. She stayed back because she had eaten salt. That is why she stayed back.*

The informant made a distinction between the Guene, who had not been born on the island, as opposed to those who had been born on the island.

The term 'Guene' also refers to a language, as the following quotation indicates. The informant sang several songs in Guene - taught to him by his elders - called the *kantika di guene* or *kantika di makamba*. The notion of origin is not only present in the generic name given to these songs, which were mostly sung during work<sup>11</sup>, the informant also addressed his ancestry and the legacy of his family, while he defined the Guene in relation to his race.

*E lenga, nos ta bisa, nos tawela ta bisa, nos tata ta bisa ta lenga di gueni. Wèl niun di nos no konosé e hendenan ku a papia e lenga ei. Nos a tende solamente ku nan tabata biba den e mundu akí promé ku nos a bin biba akí. Nos ta nan rasa. Ta esei hendenan a konta nos. Tabatin algun di nan ku por a bula. Esun ku a kome salu no por a bula bai. Esnan ku a kome salu, a ked'atras. Nos ta nan rasa. Esei mi tawela a bisami. Awor akí nos ta kanta e kantikanan na gueni, pero e tempunan ei, nan no tabata kanta e kantikanan so, nan tabata papia gueni manera nos ta papia papiamentu awor.<sup>12</sup>*

*The language, we say, our grandfather, our father, say, is the Guene language. Well, none of us here know those people who spoke the language. We only heard that they lived in this world before we lived here. We belong to their race. That is what people have told us. There were some of them who could fly. Those who had eaten salt could not fly away. The ones who ate salt stayed back. We belong to their race. Our grandfather told us. We now sing songs in Guene, but at the time, they did not only sing them, they spoke Guene the way we speak Papiamentu now.*

Another example is given by the singer Shon Tin (born in 1886) from Ma Louisa (eastern part of Curaçao). He told Brenneker that an enslaved man bid farewell to his friends and then sang the following song as he rose from the ground and flew away:

*Le mai mundu eh leba ho  
Le mai mundu eh leba ho  
Le mai mundu eh leba ho  
Limania go eh saino  
Limania go eh mira pa bo numa  
Ma limania go eh saino<sup>13</sup>*

*I am in trouble<sup>14</sup>  
I am in trouble, man  
I am in trouble  
If you see God  
Give my compliments to him  
If you see God*

It is evident that the terms 'Luango' and 'Guene' have multiple meanings in Curaçaoan society, which have not been sufficiently recognized in past studies.

Further references to Africa are present in traditional songs, many of which are stored in the previously mentioned Zikinzá-collection.<sup>15</sup> A fragment of one such song about Africa, which was introduced by the singer Reini Laker, 72 years in 1959, from Seru Fortuna (centre of Curaçao), reads as follows:

*Zaba ta keje keje zaba tu nama we  
Shon Grandi na Ulanda  
Su nabiu ta na Gene  
Zaba tu keje keje zaba tu nama we  
Shon Grandi na Ulanda  
Su nabiu ta na Ginewa  
Shon Grandi na Ulanda  
Su nabiu el a bai ku kanao<sup>16</sup>*

*Zaba ta keje keje zaba tu nama we<sup>17</sup>  
The big master in Holland  
His ship in at Guinea  
Zaba tu keje keje zaba tu nama we  
The big master in Holland  
His ship in Guinea  
The big master in Holland  
His ship, he went by canoe<sup>18</sup>*

In his study on Guene, Frank Martinus analysed a variant of this song sung by another person (age unknown), who stated that Guenewa stands for Africa.<sup>19</sup> To substantiate this argument Martinus quotes Norman Cameron (1934), who had found that Northern Melli was called Guinea at the time - afterwards it became French Guinea and since its independence in 1958 it is again known as Guinea (Martinus 1996:200).<sup>20</sup>

Finally, several place-names which have remained in use on the island also have African origins: 'Popo' (a piece of land in the eastern part)<sup>21</sup>, 'Kongo' (also in the eastern part)<sup>22</sup>, 'Kanga' (in the centre), 'Poz Luango' (in Willibrordus), 'Serká Luango' (in the western part) 'Calabari' (near Santa Maria)<sup>23</sup>, 'Africa' (the burial-ground for the enslaved on the plantation of San Juan), and the 'Seru di Mandinga' (a hill in the eastern part of the island) (Brenneker 1969:23). Oral tradition has it that an escaped slave of phenomenal strength used one of the caves of the *Seru di Mandinga* as a hiding place. To survive he tended a garden and regularly killed animals of the slave-owners in the neighbourhood. He was never captured.

### *Slave Labour as the Hub of Life*

As the island's position as a slave depot began to decline in the beginning of the eighteenth century, a large number of private people began taking up ownership of plantations and enslaved people. Especially in the beginning of Dutch colonization some had made attempts to introduce cash crops for export - such as sugar-cane, cotton and indigo, as in the rest of the Caribbean - but since this generally proved unsuccessful they would usually grow subsistence crops, the primary one being millet (Renkema 1981a:7, 18). The few masters growing cash crops owned the largest plantations, some of which housed over one hundred enslaved. But generally Curaçaoan plantations were small, with the average slave-master owning less than five slaves.<sup>24</sup>

Labour was a determining factor in the life of enslaved people. The annual cycle of the field work - planting, hoeing, tending the crops and harvesting - structured many aspects of plantation life: the cycle of work began following the rainy season in October, when the millet was planted. Then the plot was hoed and protected against insects, pests, weeds; and close to harvesting also against birds, which could spoil an entire crop. In March or April the millet would be harvested; the celebration of this event would include the entire plantation's population, while enslaved people from neighbouring plantations would also participate. Both masters and slaves were familiar with this type of festivity.

West Africans, the majority among the enslaved Africans, used to be farmers and knew harvest celebrations such as the yams (a major West-African crop) festival, in honour of the god of fertility (Rattray 1923). The folklorist Roger Abrahams (1992:xxii) describes a similar phenomenon on plantations in the deep south of the United States. He sees this type of event as 'part of a process going on at the plantation in which the enslaved neither divested themselves of their African cultural heritage nor acculturated to the behaviors and performance patterns of their masters'. To the enslaved people the harvesting of the millet signalled the end of the agricultural cycle, after which they would be employed in other types of work, such as tending the animals; most plantations kept cattle, pigs and goats.

The common labour division being field-, house- and craft-slaves - implied a certain hierarchy. For example, artisans were highly valued and they were the ones with better chances to acquire the means to buy their freedom. But this diversification did not apply to the smaller plantations, where all may have been put to work in the fields (Renkema 1981a:126). At the same time enslaved people also worked in non-agricultural environments. When there was no work at the plantation they would, for example, be hired out to work in town or for the government. In this way, in 1766 the owner of plantation Porto Mari, Helena Lesire-Kinnegem, received 5.383 pesos for masonry work undertaken by a few of her enslaved people who helped build the Fort Church.<sup>25</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century the number of plantations containing salt-pans increased considerably. In the dry season the enslaved people would be put to work on the salt-pans, while during the rainy season they worked the millet fields. Salt was exported to Spanish colonies and to the United States (van Soest 1977:34). This type of work was arduous. The combination of sun and working with bare feet in the salt water was referred to as *buamentu di salu*, hard and unhealthy labour. In 1857 these slaves even received 25 cents per week for food, thus also showing the beginnings of a wage economy.<sup>26</sup>

Such hardships survived in oral traditions. In 1989 I interviewed Clemens Bonifacio, who at the time was 82 years old. He related certain aspects of working on the salt-pans at the beginning of the twentieth century:

*Nos ta lanta tres or di mardugá. Mas trempañ, asina bo por hasi uso di e airu fresku. Och'or di mainta nos ta stòp di traha i nos ta regresá kuat'or di atardi. Ora tin luna yen nos ta traha te diesun or di anochi. Den sukú ta difsíl traha. Tabatin hende ku ta koba salu ku piki. Nos ta yena makutu ku salu. Bo no por yena e makutunan yen yen pasó bo mester laga e awa sali. Despues nos ta pone salu na monton.*<sup>27</sup>

*We would wake up at three in the morning. The earlier the better, so you could benefit from the fresh air. At eight in the morning we stopped working and returned at four in the afternoon. If there was a full moon we would work until eleven o'clock in the evening. In the dark it is difficult to work. There were people who dug salt with a pickaxe. We would then fill the baskets with salt. The baskets should not be filled completely as you had to leave the water to drain. Then the salt was placed on piles.*

Enslaved people would also work as carriers in towns or in shipyards. This diversity in occupations is clearly shown in a list of slaves escaping from the island made in 1775. Cooks, bakers, fishermen and sailors are registered (Klooster 1999:506), but also occupations such as violinists and drummers serving the recreational needs of their owners.

In times of economic adversity, male enslaved people would often be hired out to work as seamen in order to provide an income for their owners, although this was not entirely without risk to their owners - 16.6 per cent of runaway enslaved people were sailors.<sup>28</sup> This pattern, labelled by Neville Hall (1985) as *maritime maroonage*, has been a common thread running throughout the Caribbean; on Curaçao the enslaved would often escape as soon as the ship reached a port.<sup>29</sup> Those who returned to the island would have done so due to family ties (Price 1966:1371). They may have been exposed to other slave cultures in the Caribbean where, for example, the import of new enslaved people from different areas of

Africa continued well into the nineteenth century. These maritime Maroons may therefore have stimulated cross-overs in African identity-building in the Atlantic.

The nature and intensity of female participation in slave-work was determined by the economic viability and size of the plantation. Women generally worked the land in the same way men did, and both sexes fell under the generic name of '*chap* [hoe] negroes'. These workers planted, tended and harvested the millet at the appropriate times of year (Renkema 1981a:115-6). Older female slaves looked after the poultry. Women were also hired out as domestic servants in town. On the larger plantations, slave women would also work as seamstresses, washerwomen, ironers, makers of straw hats or as midwives.

### *Social Life under Slavery*

Curaçaoan slave society did not simply consist of white masters on the one hand and black enslaved people on the other. There were different forms of classification, linked to both class and race. Levels of status seem to have continued within the slave community. Initially, *within* the group of enslaved people, diversification was made according to the length of time a slave had lived on the island - as illustrated by the proverb 'Es ku bo wela luangu a siñabo awe, di mi krioyo a siñami ayera kaba' (literally: What your grandmother Luango taught you today, my Criollo grandma taught me yesterday). Even though both persons referred to are *criollos*, as both were born on the island, the one whose parents were also born on the island (and in this case even grandparents), felt superior to the one whose parents and/or grandparents came directly from Africa - newly arrived slaves were referred to as *bozals* and were at the bottom of this hierarchical scale.

Indeed, as Jordaan (1999:479) has stated, the nature and length of residence on the island enhanced one's position. This corresponds with the general sense of superiority of creole enslaved people in the Americas, which was attributed to their familiarity with the condition of enslavement.<sup>30</sup> These slaves were delegated positions of authority and laboured independently, while the ones born in Africa - the so-called 'saltwater slaves' - had to perform the meanest tasks, and solely under supervision (Berlin and Morgan 1993:11). In contrast, the creoles were accredited because of their language skills and their familiarity with the landscape and work. In addition, they supervised the newly arrived. The Papiamentu saying 'Si bo fòrsa buza, buza ta papia latin' (If you force the bozal [Africa-born slave] he will even speak Latin) underscores the idea that bozales could be forced to learn and do many new things.

With the increase of coloured people, one's skin colour became the deciding factor for social mobility.<sup>31</sup> Legal discrimination was introduced. Hair texture and the degree of one's skin pigmentation became important markers of identity. In general, colour, as in the rest of the Caribbean, was rated in descending order as follows: *whites*, *quadroon*, *mesties*, *koesties*, *mulato*, *sambo* and *blacks* (Teenstra 1977:167; van Dissel 1857:111-112). These terms were like a summary of a combination of qualities, which to some degree were probably internalized by the Afro-Curaçaoans themselves. Those of mixed race (both enslaved and freedpeople) were also categorized as 'coloured'. The term 'coloured people', *hende di kolo*, meant that one had a lighter and therefore more 'appropriate' skin colour, thus with

slightly better chances for upward mobility. Afro-Curaçaoan women especially could reach certain positions on account of their lighter complexion. They were more likely to be chosen to work within the household of the enslaved people's owner; they would work, for example, as *yaya*'s (nannies) and as domestic servants (Römer-Kenepa 1980).

Attitude towards colour remained ambiguous. Sexual intercourse with black women was generally believed to have curative effects on certain diseases. 'Pretu ta kura' (Black cures) used to be a common expression. Furthermore, white mothers who were unwilling or unable to breastfeed their children, would choose a black woman to give milk instead (Brenneker 1970:10). In the same vein black animals were believed to have special qualities: the milk of a black cow was thought of as more wholesome than that of a white or spotted one.<sup>32</sup> During the oral history project of the plantation Porto Marie, an informant recalled that the plantation owner instructed his driver (*fitó*) to preserve the daily milk of a black cow for a weak baby born on the plantation (Allen 2001b).

Several studies have shown that coloured people too suffered from white elite's stereotypes regarding their racial and slave backgrounds. Planters still regarded them with contempt and treated them with little respect (Renkema 1981a:95). Mulattoes were considered arrogant and pretentious, and were therefore disliked. Even though lighter coloured people would have family members still under slavery, they often manifested racist attitudes towards those with a darker complexion (Oostindie 1995:161-2; Oostindie 1997:57). Thus, colour also led to tension and antagonism within the black population itself. One's skin and other phenotypes, such as hair, mouth and nose, became elements determining beauty. Announcements of runaway enslaved people not only included physical characteristics such as gender, age and distinguishing marks, but also labelled racial features subjectively.<sup>33</sup>

Awareness of one's social position, decreed by one's skin colour, was expressed in certain songs.

*Yoradó yora yoradó yora*  
*Até kolo anto kolo ta kolo ku yama kuku*  
*Yoradó yora*  
*Nan di mi keda ketu*  
*At'é kolo anto e kolo*  
*Yama kolo di kuku*<sup>34</sup>

*Cry crier cry crier*  
*It is the colour and the colour of kuku (kuku is*  
*a type of local black fruit)*  
*Cry crier*  
*They told me to shut my mouth*  
*It is the colour, the colour of kuku*  
*Call the colour of kuku*

This awareness also appeared in proverbs, such as 'Den gera di blanku, pretu ta keda mal mirá' (In a quarrel among whites, blacks are the ones to suffer), 'Na tera di galiña, kakalaka no tin bos' (In the land of the hens, the cockroaches do not have a voice), and 'Kada rea ku su para' (Every pot with its own ear).<sup>35</sup>

The following work song also deals with the issue of self-perception. During the interview I conducted in 1986 with Nicolaas Petrona (born 1898 in Kent U Zelf, eastern part of the island), he recalled the following *tambú* song. His mother had told him that some house-slaves had made this song under the instruction of their master when Tula, the leader of the largest slave-revolt ever, was hanged in 1795. Petrona mentioned this to show the extent to which the slaves lived both mentally and physically under the rule of their

masters. His explanation indicates as well that slave-owners also made use of the musical role of the tambú as a vehicle for transmitting messages.

*Papa Sewe,  
Ata Negru tribí  
k'a lanta ku Blanku  
Papa Sewe,  
Ata Negru tribí  
k'a lanta ku Blanku  
Hork'é  
Mat'é<sup>36</sup>*

*Papa Sewe,  
Look at that insolent Negro  
who stood up against the Whites  
Papa Sewe,  
Look at that insolent Negro  
who stood up against the Whites  
Hang him  
Kill him*

This song identifies two social groups, 'Negru' and 'Blanku', thus showing the importance attributed to race. It clearly pervays a value judgement regarding Tula's behaviour: he did not abide by the rules of submission but revolted against them. The verb *lanta ku*, 'to stand up against', is considered a negative action; it is mostly used in the context of a person standing up against someone in a higher social position - for example a labourer versus his employer, a child versus its parents, women versus men etc. Tula, a black who resisted the subjugation by whites, is thus viewed as an insolent person, *un hendé tribí*. In 1959 Brenneker and Juliana collected a song with a similar text and value judgement. According to Brenneker his informant stated that the slaves threw hot mud in the faces of those who tried to capture them.

*Zino papapa zinowé  
Neger tribí  
k'a lanta ku Blanku  
Zino papapa zinowé  
Tula tribí  
ku traha papa  
Zino papapa zinowé  
Tula tribí ta hala lechi.<sup>37</sup>*

*Zino papapa zinowé  
The insolent Negro  
who stood up against the Whites  
Zino papapa zinowé  
The insolent Tula  
who made porridge of mud  
Zino papapa zinowé  
The insolent Tula is milking the cows (profit-  
ing?).*

The following work song also collected by Juliana and Brenneker deals with self-perception. An informant gave this song to me in 1984. At the time he was 84 years old. His parents had taught him the song. His explanation alluded to the emotional barriers the enslaved people had set up to fight stereotypical notions of themselves. This agrees with Genovese's theory regarding the paternalism of slavery. Although based on the situation in the south of the United States, this theory contains certain elements applicable to the Caribbean - and, in our case, to Curaçao. According to Genovese, in order to facilitate living together within the same setting, both masters and enslaved people needed to balance their self-interest with their respect for others. Paternalism, accordingly, was a way of protecting both groups from excesses possibly resulting from their separate, unequal positions. While this required an acceptance of the relations of super- and subordination within slave society, in contrast it also implied the recognition of the humanity of those, supposedly, lesser human beings (Genovese 1974).

My informant used animal figures to demonstrate his argument and explain the song. The lyrics reflect an understanding of the ambiguity of the socio-economic system, in which, ironically, those in power depend on those without power. The bird he used to symbolize the powerful, the Warawara (Caracara or Crested Caracara), is a local bird of prey - a mighty one in the hierarchy of birds. However, in this song the bird depends on a small fly for his survival.

*Kinono solele*  
*Nochi pa solete*  
*Ni karni ni yò yò*  
*Ni karni ni yò*  
*Ni karni ni yò awe*  
*Ni karni ni yò*  
*Ni karni ni yò*  
*Ni karni ni yò<sup>38</sup>*

*Kinono solele*  
*Evening is falling*  
*Not even meat or salted meat*  
*Not even meat or salted meat*  
*Not even meat or salted meat today*  
*Not even meat or salted meat*  
*Not even meat or salted meat*  
*Not even meat or salted meat*

The Warawara sings that he has been unable to get meat or *yòrki* (sundried and salted goat's meat). He has been flying the whole day looking for food. The night is arriving and he is flying home. Suddenly, as he passes a fence and his wings go 'gògògò', a small fly coming from a dead donkey sings the following in Guene, which I was unable to translate.

*Ata tokòròkò*  
*Wawa'é*  
*Ata tokòròkò*  
*Wawan'é*  
*Sayaneva*

As the Warawara continues to sing that he has not found any food, the small fly comes out of the bush. Then the Warawara sees the food. The informant concluded that it had been the small fly who led the big Warawara to the food.

When determining the nature of the interaction between owners and enslaved people, one should take into account precisely who exercised control over the plantations. An absentee land-owner living in Europe, as was common elsewhere in the Caribbean, was not known on Curaçao. However, local absenteeism was found in many places on the island (Renkema 1981a:99). The planters would own a second house in town and live there during certain periods. Owning a house in town indicated that the owner had commercial interests other than managing a plantation. In 1819, for example, only sixty per cent of the island's plantation owners lived entirely off their plantations; 38 years later, in 1857, this was less than fifty per cent. The management was usually left in the hands of an overseer, the *fitó*, who formed an intermediary between enslaved people and masters (Renkema 1981a:99; Allen 2001b:12). Because of his position, the *fitó* could be approached when in need. But he was not always loved, as is shown in the following song published in *La Union* of 8 September 1937. The author states that it was sung during the times of slavery. The lyrics critically portray the manner in which the relationship between the plantation owners and their overseers is experienced.

*Ora shon ta parti ko'  
Kasi tur ta pa fitó  
Mas tirano e diabel ta  
Mas stèrki su sòpi ta*<sup>39</sup>

*When the shon is handing out things  
Nearly everything is for the overseer  
The more tyrannical that devil is  
The stronger his soup is*

Specific expressions in this song indicate subtle protest. The phrases ‘mas tirano e diabel ta, mas stèrki su sòpi ta’ imply that the fitó is rewarded according to the way he treats the enslaved people: the harsher the treatment, the bigger his reward. This song thus implicitly condemns those who were delegated by the slave-owners to take command over the enslaved’s lives. Ironically, some overseers were even chosen from the groups they would oversee; according to Renkema (1981a:99) some were black.

There was also condemnation of the *bomba*, who in the main was a male slave working as a superintendent: supervising the work of the enslaved people and seeing to it that the plantation’s rules were obeyed. If they failed, the bomba could exercise his authority through physical punishment. On some plantations the bomba was employed and the larger plantations had more than one bomba (Renkema 1981a:128-30). According to Rutten (1998:2796), there were also female bomba’s.<sup>40</sup>

His powers are evident in the way he would punish disrespectful enslaved people. A typical example of this is the 37 year old Lodewijk, who received forty lashes with a rope as he had behaved disrespectful to his bomba.<sup>41</sup> Because of their intermediate positions - they strove to engender the trust of their master and to assert their authority over the enslaved people - bomba’s sometimes behaved very wickedly and were therefore much disliked by their fellow slaves.

In some cases bomba’s were killed during slave riots, as in 1750, when a bomba named Cadjo was shot down by his fellow enslaved people. Or in 1766, when a bomba was poisoned by two slaves whom he had caught stealing maize. In carrying out their revenge they sought the help of a well-known herbal specialist (Rutten 1999:2796). The use of poison for revenge shows the continuation of an act practiced within Africa.

Some bomba’s were known as *sutadó* (castigation loving). From their recurring appearances in traditional songs and slave-narratives commenting on their wicked behaviour, one can deduce the impact they had on people’s lives. In the song on Bastian Taniwá, ‘Bomba yama katibu pa mi’ (Bomba, call the slave for me) two voices are present: that of the slave-owner who tells the bomba Taniwá to go and fetch a slave to be beaten, and that of another person, who says that the slave is good and that Taniwá should let go of him (‘O, bomba laga katibu bai di dje’).<sup>42</sup>

Several songs and stories focus on Ba Balentin, or Buchi Balentin, a bomba who was known for his malicious character. The interviewee Henriette Willems referred to him as Satan, the devil in her song ‘Oliande mama’.<sup>43</sup> Ba Balentin became an important figure within oral tradition, in which conflicting feelings of respect and hatred were manifested. He was known to have fathered many children on the plantation of Kenepa. Many people I interviewed, despite portraying him as a wicked person, claimed to be one of his descendants. Roberts (1998:52) explains this kind of ambivalent attitude by stating that the introduction of black foremen in slave society had a profound influence on the black perception of both the self and the relationship with the master. These foremen were the most

representative and visible members of their class, and their position of authority and responsibility signified an important change in the social structure of the slave system. But it was also an acknowledgement that blacks were indeed human beings.

In the following song Ba Balentin is called an insolent black who has shared a meal with whites. The song was based on his relationship with a widowed plantation owner.<sup>44</sup> Once again, the song is an act of recognition on the one hand (Ba Balentin has been able to transcend the race barriers) while an accusation of treachery on the other hand.

*Papa misinowe  
Papa misinowe  
Negru frijpostu a kome ku blanku  
Papa misinowe  
Papa misinowe  
Buchi Balentin a kome ku blanku*

*Papa misinowe  
Papa misinowe  
Insolent slave has eaten with a white  
Papa misinowe  
Papa misinowe  
Buchi Balentin has eaten with a white*

Some details of Ba Balentin's behaviour were given to me in an interview with Imelda Valerianus, who was born in 1915.

R.A.: *Na kua plantashi Ba Balentin tabata bomba?*

R.A.: *On which plantation was Ba Balentin the bomba?*

I.V.: *Na plantashi di Kenepa. Ba Balentin tabata un bomba hopi mal hende. E tabata mi tawela. E tabata mi famia. Mi no por ninga. Tin bisá ku e ta para na porta di habitantenan di kunuku. Tur ta pretu. E ta bin para na porta di plantashi ku intenshon di bati hende. E ta bin para puntra pa kandela. E tempu ei hende ta kushiná den wea poné riba tres piedra, riba kandela. E ta bin puntra pa kandela. Purá purá hende ta manda nan yu bai buska pida palu kayente. E muchanan tin ku kore su tras. E ta riba kabai, i si e kandela paga, enter e famia di e mucha ta haña sla.<sup>45</sup>*

I.V.: *On the plantation of Kenepa. Ba Baletin was a wicked bomba. He was my grandfather, thus he was my family. I cannot deny that. It is said that he would come at the door of the inhabitants of the plantation. All of them were black. He would come at their home, already with the intention to beat the people. He would come and ask them for some fire. In those days people cooked in pots placed on three stones heated by branches of wood. He would come and ask them for some fire. The people had to rush and ask one of their children to get a piece of the heated wood. The child had to run behind Ba Balentin, as he was on horseback, and if the fire of the piece of wood extinguished, the whole family of the child would be beaten.*

The following song is also about Ba Balentin and regards the relationship he had with many women on the plantation. It says that Balentin, the son of Machacha, would eat their flesh and leave the bone, meaning that little was left of the women after their relationship with him.

*Mi t'ei bai Kenepa  
Bai mira Balentin  
Brisa  
Mi t'ei bai Kenepa  
Bai mira Balentin  
Brisa*

*I am going to go to Kenepa  
To see Balentin  
Brisa (chorus)  
I am going to go to Kenepa  
To see Balentin  
Brisa (chorus)*

*Mi t'ei Kenepa*  
*Bai mira Balentin*  
*Brisa*  
*Balentin ei!*  
*Balentin*  
*Balentin di Ma Chacha*  
*ku a kome karni laga wesu*<sup>46</sup>  
*Mi t'ei Kenepa*  
*Bai mira Balentin*  
*Brisa*<sup>47</sup>

*I am going to Kenepa*  
*To see Balentin*  
*Brisa (chorus)*  
*Balentin eh!*  
*Balentin*  
*Balentin of Machacha*  
*who ate the meat and left the bone*  
*I am going to Kenepa*  
*To see Balentin*  
*Brisa (chorus)*

It is generally thought that the enslaved were treated relatively well on Curaçao, at least better than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Lamur (1981) considers the high fertility pattern on the island proof of their relatively good treatment. He believes that the high birth rate among slaves was not solely due to demographics - a young average age when first giving birth, short intervals between births, and few women never bearing children - but also to socio-economic aspects, such as the nature of the work, the small plantation units and the greater proportion of whites in Curaçaoan slave society. On sugar estates the fertility rate was generally low and the death rates twice, sometimes three times as high as on coffee and cotton plantations.

Römer (1977) states that by working enslaved people on Curaçao to the extreme, a slave-owner could only fail, due to the harsh natural conditions on the island. The expression 'Katibu no por hecha banana' (A slave cannot make bananas ripe) may be a good analogy.<sup>48</sup> Other studies have opposed this notion of good treatment, noting several examples of brutal treatment on the island (Paula 1992). Moreover, there were also times when the enslaved resisted their master's demands en masse: the revolts of 1719, 1750 and 1795 are confirmation of this.

In my opinion, these debates regarding the treatment of slaves on Curaçao lead us to miss the more central issues of enslavement, that is the commodification and dehumanization of human beings under any system of slavery. In order to understand the social life of enslaved people, attention should be paid to the flexibility of social relationships and interactions between the groups of different social and economic positions despite the constraints of enslavement.

In the course of the nineteenth century the Dutch government introduced several laws and directives regarding the punishment and treatment of enslaved people (Renkema 1981a:130-40). A gradual transition to a more humane approach to the enslaved is indicative of the institution of slavery beginning to wane. Many slave-masters, who were no longer allowed to punish their slaves themselves, considered this an infringement of their rights. The enslaved, meanwhile, became more aware of their rights and started resisting certain types of work and complaining about the work (as the new law allowed) to their masters.<sup>49</sup> According to testimonies of former slaves the perception of slave-owners ranged from good to bad. A *bon shon* looked after their well-being, did not beat them, gave them sufficient food and allowed them spare time. The concept *bon* was used in the sense of just. The *mal shon*, in contrast, enjoyed watching his slaves being beaten (while they had to say thank you for every whip), or would allow a beating to last until he had finished smoking his

cigar. Some sayings refer to this distinction. The expression ‘E ta manera katibu di mal shon’ (He/she is like the slave of a bad master) is used for someone who has to work very hard to survive, and ‘Mi no ta katibu di mal shon’ refers to a person who is experiencing difficulties in life and believes he deserves better. Finally, the terms ‘mal shon’ and ‘bon shon’ indicate close contact between slave-owners and their slaves, and show that the latter made a distinction between the two, within the limited confines of their situation.

In a similar vein enslaved people behaving insolently were called names. To be called a ‘katibu sobèrbè’ (impudent) or a ‘katibu salbèchi’<sup>50</sup> (wild) meant to be an unruly slave. This could have applied to someone being disrespectful to the master, either by answering back or refusing to work. An overview of punishments carried out by the police between March and December 1857 shows that 8 cases out of a total of 76 dealt with these types of offence.<sup>51</sup> Several laws allowed the planters to punish such a slave themselves, or to report the incident to the Procurator of the King (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:3-8; Gehring 1987:456). The term ‘katibu kastigá’ referred to a slave who was punished.<sup>52</sup>

Other stories demonstrate how enslaved people ingeniously undermined the control of their master and how they used tricks while undergoing punishment. Shon Pa, who was interviewed by Brenneker and Juliana, claimed that ‘some wise (*sabi*) people tied canvas clothes on their buttocks. When they would be beaten by their masters, the canvas would take all the beating. They would shout very loud but it was the canvas that received all the blows.’<sup>53</sup>

Certain aspects relating to the treatment of enslaved people have lived on through oral tradition in place-names. Descendants remembered several places where slaves were sent to be punished. One of them, *Plenchi di Berdat* (the Square of Truth), otherwise known as *Plenchi bai no bolbe mas* (the Square of leaving without returning) or *Plenchi bai sin bolbe mas* (the Square of no return)<sup>54</sup>, was situated on the plantation of Ascencion. This suggests that on some plantations enslaved were punished in public as a way of setting an example to others.

L.B.: *Mi mama tabata konta nos di e lugá ei na Asenshon. Nan tabata mara nan. Nan ta trese katibu for di otro lugá pa bati nan i mata nan. Nan ta dera nan ei. Na Plenchi di Bèrdat. Bai sin bolbe mas.*

E.J.: *Komo katibu bo sa ku si nan hibabo Asenshon ku bo no ta bini bèk. Serka di e plenchi ei mester tin sobrá di hende.*

L.B.: *Mi mes a haña basta kos eibanda. Despues e doñonan a yena e lugá.*<sup>53</sup>

L.B.: *My mother used to tell us about that place in Ascencion. They would tie them up. The enslaved were taken from elsewhere and were beaten, to be killed. They would bury them there. At the Plenchi di Berdat (the Square of Truth). The Bai sin bolbe mas (the Square of no return).*

E.J.: *You would know as a slave that once they took you to Ascencion you would not return. Near that square there must be some remains of people.*

L.B.: *I myself have found many things there. Afterwards the owners filled up the place.*

Some remembered a certain post to which slaves were tied in the woods of Santa Barbara, in the eastern part of the island:

P.B.: *Nan tabatin un pilá den mondi di Santa Bárbara, kaminda nan ta mara e katibunan?*

H.G.: *Mara nan na pilá. Nan ta kòrta algun palu i e katibunan ta keda ei. Nan no ta haña kuminda i nan ta muri di hamber. Asina mi wela a kontami.*

P.B.: *Anto warawara ta kome e kadaver.*

H.G.: *Warawara ta kome nan kadaver. Tabatin hopi warawara, yuana ei... Tabatin un bomba ku yama Piet Aronchi.*

P.B.: *Piet Aronchi.*

H.G.: *Piet Aronchi. Anto eeh... tabatin un muhé na estado (informante ta baha bos). Mi no sa di ki manera, pero e bomba ei a manda nan koba un buraku i pone e muhé na estado ku su barika den e buraku. E muhé ta na estado, anto Aronchi a manda un hòmber bati'é, keda batié te ora el a kaba di huma su sigá. Despues ku el a kaba di huma su sigá, nan a saka e muhé for di e buraku... Mitar morto... Mi no sa kiko a pasa kuné despues.<sup>56</sup>*

P.B.: *There was a post in the woods at Santa Barbara they would tie the slaves to?*

H.G.: *Tie them to the post. They would cut down some wood, and the enslaved would remain there. They would not receive any food and die of hunger. That is what my grandmother told me.*

P.B.: *And the warawara bird would eat the corpse?*

H.G.: *Warawara would eat their corpse. There were many Warawara's there. Yes Warawara, yuana... There was a bomba called Piet Aronchi.*

P.B.: *Piet Aronchi.*

H.G.: *Piet Aronchi. And eh... there was a pregnant woman (here the informant lowers her voice). I don't know in which way it was, but he made them dig a hole and had the pregnant woman placed with her belly in the hole. The woman was pregnant and he made the man beat her until he finished smoking his cigar. When he finished his cigar the woman was taken from the hole... Half dead... I do not know what has become of her.*

There are many stories of pregnant enslaved women being placed with their bellies in a hole so that they could be whipped without harming the unborn child. They have become part of a collective memory, thus showing the impact of these events upon the community.

R.A.: *Shon Elisabeth su mayornan a konta di sklabbitut?*

C.E.: *Wèl, nan tabata konta nos di e tempu di sklabbitut. No mi mama, pero mi wela. El a bisa ku den tempu di sklabbitut hende mester a traha mashá duru, pasó shon a kumpra nan. Nan tabata biba riba kunuku di shon. Nan tabata planta pa nan kome. Tin biaha ora nan hasi un kos malu, shon ta manda bomba bati nan. E 'yùfrounan' ku tabata na estado, nan tabata koba un buraku pone nan barika aden i bati nan.<sup>57</sup>*

R.A.: *Did your parents talk to you about slavery?*

C.E.: *Well, they would tell us about the time of slavery. Not my mother, but my grandmother. She said that in slavery time, people had to work very hard, because the shon had bought them. They lived on the 'kunuku' of the shon. They planted for them to eat. But sometimes the shon, when they had done something wrong, would order the bomba to beat them. For the misses who were pregnant they would dig a hole, lay them with their belly in it and beat them.*

Pregnant females were not exempt from heavy physical work or punishment. It was not until 1857 that a law stipulated that pregnant and nursing women, along with children, the weak and the elderly, should be given lighter work (Renkema 1981a:135). On a plantation

in San Juan there was a special room for women in labour. Although enslaved women would also work as midwives, a midwife helping to deliver babies on a plantation would not necessarily be a slave.

There were also stories about escapes. Not all escapees fled the island; there are several stories preserved in oral history, attributing strong character to those who were able to survive as runaways on the island. The story of Wan Pe, for example, is a recurring theme in oral tradition. He was glorified as a special person able to defy the slave-master in several ways. Yet when his master was sick and was carried in a hammock to town, Wan Pe forgave the hardship and helped carrying his master. The moral of the story being that although Wan Pe was treated badly, he bore no grudge against his owner and helped him when in need. Below is part of an interview where the name of Wan Pe was mentioned. At the interview the oldest daughter and a friend of the 90 year old interviewee were also present. Unlike the interviewee, her friend did not want to say anything. She only gave a proverb to strengthen the story.

Yu muhé (50 aña): *Nan tabata konta hopi historia. Tata mes tabata konta hopi historia di Tula.*

I.V. (ta grita): *Mi-Wan-Pé-di-Toya.*

Yu muhé: *esei ta e katibu ku a hui i kai den pos?*

I.V.: *Mi-Wan-Pé tabata hòrta den Santa Cruz. E ku... ki yama esun?*

Yu muhé: *Wanchi Kla?*

I.V.: *Wanchi Kla. Pasobra nan tur dos a bai hòrta den hòfi di Santa Cruz. Un dia nan a bai hòrta atrobe, el a bisa e sua di dje ei no kome e milon. E milon ta pegabo. E sua a hòrta e milon tòg, (e tabatin hamber, no). El a kom'é, el a pega te tosa. Anto ora el a kuminsá tosa, hendenan a tende. Nan di: 'Ta ken?' E di: 'Ta Ken? T'ami Wan Pedro di Toya.' Hendenan a kore su tras. E tabatin un pampuna den su man, el a dal e den pos. Un hende di: 'Até akí. El a kai den pos. Ora nan a bai busk'é, nan no por hañ'é. Dia ku shon Muhé tabata malu, ku nan mester a buta shon Muhé den hamaka, karg'é pa hib'é Punda, Wan Pé a mira ku nan no tabata karg'é bon. El a sali for di kaminda e ta. El a pasa man, dreña bou di e hamaka, karga shon Muhé bou di kantika di gueni bai pariba. Anto shon Muhé a bisa nan pa no mishi kuné mas. Te awor akí niun hende no saunda e buraku ta na San Kristòf kaminda nan tabata kanta kantika na gueni.*

Daughter interviewee (50 years old): *They used to tell us many stories. My father himself used to tell us about Tula.*

I.V. (shouts): *Me-Wan-Pe-di-Toya.*

Daughter: *that is the slave who ran away and fell into the well?*

I.V.: *Me-Wan-Pe used to steal in Santa Cruz. He and... what's his name again?*

Daughter: *Wanchi Kla?*

I.V.: *Yes, Wanchi Kla. Because both of them went to steal in the orchard of Santa Cruz. One day, they went to steal again, and he told his brother-in-law not to eat the melon. The melon would choke him. The brother-in-law did not listen, (he was hungry, you see). He ate the melon and choked and he began to cough. People heard the coughing. Someone said: 'Who is there?' He said: 'Who is there? It is me, Wan Pedro of Toya (nickname of his mother Victoria). The people went after him. He had a pumpkin in his hand and he threw it into the well. Someone said: 'Here he is. He fell into the well.' When they went to look for him they could not find him. One day the female owner of the plantation was sick, and she had to be carried in a hammock to town. Wan Pe saw that they were not carrying the hammock correctly. He left his hiding place, went under the hammock and carried the lady singing his guinea songs all the way to town. The female owner ordered to leave Me-Wan-Pe alone. Up until now nobody knows where the hole is on the Saint Christopher's hill where guinea songs were heard.*

Yu muhé: *Nan di Mi-Wan-Pé tabata drenta den un buraku anto nan tabata tap'é gewon. Riba seru di San Kristòf.*

I.V.: *Mi-Wan-Pé-di-Toya Ta bon ku e no a mustra niun hende e lugá. Kaminda e ta drumi niun hende no sa.*

Otro muhé presente: *'Bo no mester konfia ni bo planta di man, pasó e ta manda bo boka.'*<sup>58</sup>

Daughter: *they say Me-Wan-Pe used to go inside a hole and cover it just like that. On Saint Christopher's hill.*

I.V.: *Me-Wan-Pe, Viktoria's son... Fortunately he did not show any one. Where he used to sleep nobody knows.*

Friend of the interviewee: *'You must not trust even your own hand, because it controls your mouth.'*

### *Slave Life: Economy and Material Culture*

Work divided the lives of enslaved people into two distinct worlds and economies (Berlin and Morgan 1993:2). One world was organized by the master, although contested and constrained by the enslaved people; the other was organized by the slaves, although contested and constrained by the master. In securing a measure of economic independence enslaved people would achieve their greatest successes where masters were most vulnerable. The more vulnerable the master, the greater the enslaved's bargaining power, with the niches, in which their fragile economic independence rested, increasing. An important aspect in the organization of the economic lives of slaves - apart from the nature of labour, the requirements of particular crops, the seasonal rhythms and the organization of production - was the master's need to ensure subsistence for his enslaved people (Berlin and Morgan 1993:42).

On Curaçao, the principal way of providing food for the enslaved people was, as we have already seen, an integral part of slave-work. The amount of food given to slaves was regulated soon after the insurrection of August 1795 - by the Law of 20 November 1795 (Paula 1974:314). Previously, the law had only stated that enslaved people should be fed 'properly' (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978). This new law allocated more food to male enslaved people than to female slaves: they were given five and four cans of maize respectively per week. This allowance was increased in 1824 and in 1857. As of 1824 all enslaved people received an additional can from October until March, as during this period work was at its most intense with the planting and harvesting of the maize. Children would receive an amount according to their age. In 1857 both female and male enslaved people received six or eight cans of maize-flour per week during the whole year. Even so, these laws were not necessarily abided by, since food production was always a major problem on the island: provisions could be difficult to obtain (Renkema 1981a:135).

Views differ as to the quality of the slaves' diet. While some considered it to be nutritionally very poor, others stress that it was rich in protein.<sup>59</sup> The Curaçaoan Island Regulation did not specify meat or any other products. In contrast, the diet of enslaved people in the United States included game and sweet potatoes (Gaspar and Hine 1996:27). According to oral tradition a shon on Curaçao would deserve the predicate 'bon' when he regularly killed an animal and added its meat to the food of his slaves.

Curaçao's climate and soil were unfavourable to agriculture. The special Thanksgiving and Prayer days prescribed by the government in the eighteenth century give an indication

as to how frequently drought prevailed on the island (Kunst 1981:212). Renkema's overview of harvest failures during the nineteenth century is also telling in this respect (1981a:86). But the drought not only harmed the crops, it also affected animal husbandry, which was undertaken as an alternative to subsistence. The island did not know the meadow system. Animals - mainly goats - grazed freely on reserved areas (Hamelberg [1901-1903]1979:92).

Confronted with these climatic difficulties, slave-owners had several options. During droughts, for example, they would import flour of inferior quality from the United States to be distributed to the slaves.<sup>60</sup> Or they would allow them to work elsewhere, and with their share of the money earned, they would purchase what food they could. It was common in times of economic adversity for the elderly and the handicapped to receive their freedom, so that they had to fend for themselves. Stealing food from the plantations was also common practice, as is documented in police records.<sup>61</sup> The priest Putman, who was interviewed by the State Commission (installed in 1853 to prepare for the eventual emancipation and to devise measures that would improve the plight of the enslaved people), stated that slaves stole from both their owners and the free black population in their bid to overcome hunger (Staatscommissie 1856:34).

One solution was for the slave-owners to allocate land to the enslaved people, enabling them to grow crops for their own consumption (Staatscommissie 1856:42). Berlin and Morgan (1993:42) indicate that these practices, including the importation of rations from outside the plantation, were not mutually exclusive and that they differed from place to place and changed over time. Some slave societies in the Americas depended almost exclusively on rationing, while others relied on slave provision grounds for most of their food. More frequently, plantations developed a mix of imported and estate-grown foodstuffs on the one hand, and the independent production of food by enslaved people on the other. Slave-owners would allow, encourage or force their slaves to fend for themselves when provisions were expensive or difficult to obtain (Staatscommissie 1856:42).

Millet, also named *maishi chiki* or guinea corn (Renkema 1981a:86), was the primary crop slaves would grow from the earliest days of settlement when given a piece of land - called *kunuku*. They were familiar with this crop as it was grown in Africa (Thornton 1998:155). Due to its familiarity it was popular amongst slaves.

Some enslaved people were allowed to keep chickens and goats, to plant vegetables and to sell their produce on the market. The Guinee fowl, called *galiña guene* (*Numifa meleagris*), was an African breed introduced to the Caribbean which quickly naturalized to its new environment (Watts 2000:144). This fowl reflects the religious outlook of the black popular class, as well as its communal values: up until the present it is believed that with its black and white feathers the fowl has magical powers and can protect the home against evil air (*mal airu*). Because of these alleged supernatural powers the hen was not eaten, but left to pick up any evil substances left in the yard.

Studies have shown that enslaved people used their recreational time to work on their allocated land; their owners would sometimes give them time off for this purpose.<sup>62</sup> Enslaved people were exempt from the 1820 Law prohibiting people from working on Sundays and public holidays, as they were allowed to work a piece of land for their own purposes on these days.<sup>63</sup>

Slaves on Curaçao generally worked shorter hours than was typical on Caribbean sugar and coffee plantations, where during harvest they had to work even through the evening. They could thus devote time to their own subsistence after they had finished their day's work. Their working hours and holidays were stipulated in the above laws. The Law of 1795 defined the working hours from 5 until 11 o'clock and from 2 o'clock until sunset (Paula 1974:314). This was further extended in the Law of 1824: from sunrise until sunset with a two-hour break, according to the historian Renkema (1981a:132, 135) - a ten-hour workday. However, the Roman Catholic Church was critical of the fact that these rules were not always abided by.<sup>64</sup> The Zikinzá-collection contains several songs indicating this, such as 'Bomba a nenga merdia'<sup>65</sup> (The bomba has refused to give them resting hour at midday) and 'Ta merdia'wo bomba' (It is midday now, bomba).<sup>66</sup> The following song also supports this criticism. Here again the message is coded. It is not the slave who is talking, but a bird called 'sokle', or 'choke'.<sup>67</sup>

*Sokle a bisa mi bomba ta merdia awor  
Sokle a kanta, mi bomba na Wacawa, ayá*

*Sokle a kanta, mi bomba na Paradera ayá.*<sup>68</sup>

*Sokle said, my overseer, it is already midday  
Sokle has sung, my overseer, yonder at Wacawa  
(plantation in the western part of the island)*

*Sokle has sung, my overseer, yonder at Paradera  
(part of the plantation of Sint Hironimus, also  
in the western part of the island).*

Furthermore, the laws also stipulated the days when the enslaved people were free, which were Sundays and holidays. But this did not apply to herdsmen, gardeners and servants. As with the governmental food stipulations, owners did not necessarily abide by these rules, as eclectic documents reveal (Dahlhaus 1924). Besides growing crops to feed themselves, the enslaved people fished, hunted and gathered food in order to supplement their diet. Those who fished often borrowed boats and nets from the plantation owners. In return they had to hand over part of their catch (Staatscommissie 1856:285). This gave enslaved people an opportunity to develop their own domestic economy. Price states that fishers were a privileged subgroup among the enslaved.<sup>69</sup> They were more trusted by the slave-owners and possessed more freedom than other slaves (1966:1370).

Plantation owners issued special permits to allow hunting on their lands. Among the animals hunted were deer - at the time already under threat of extinction - and a red-haired rabbit, which existed in small numbers on the island (Teenstra 1977:263). Other animals, such as land crabs, were hunted with torches. Pigeons, such as the bula deifi (*Zenaidura auriculata*), the ala blanka (*Columba corensis*) and totolika (*Columbigalinna passerina albivitta*), were also caught. And iguana (*Iguana iguana*) - a speciality even today - was hunted. They were caught by throwing a rope made of horse hair around the neck of the iguana (Paddenburg 1819).

Some enslaved people engaged in small-scale trading, thus taking advantage of the limited possibilities available to them within their master's economy. They would also sell products from the land in town for their masters (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:337). As early as 1710, the then director of the island Abraham Beck forbade some local residents to allow their slaves to sell anything other than vegetables, fruits, meat or fish in the streets.

This prohibition was enforced due to slaves smuggling goods such as silk, linen, wool and other merchandise and selling them at a low price (Brito 1989). There were also cases where gold and silver were sold. Several laws were promulgated prohibiting this and stipulating terms for punishment (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:253-4).

From the beginning of slavery, enslaved people also stole animals, which is clear from the introduction of the Law of 15 July 1715, prohibiting Indians, but also blacks, both freed and enslaved, from catching young horses, marking and selling them (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:129). Several overviews of the punishments given during the nineteenth century indicate that enslaved people did not only steal food, but also material goods, such as tobacco, silver spoons, ox-hides etc. An example was the case of Teresa, a 19 year old female who had taken some small items on credit in the name of her mistress. For this offence she was chained for a month.<sup>70</sup>

### *Social Life*

One of the primary questions in this thesis regards the organization of domestic life and particularly marriage. Most studies have concluded that enslaved people were not allowed to marry. However, this conclusion is based on a western notion of marriage, where a couple is recognized as being married when their relationship has been formalized according to certain legal regulations, as in the colonial motherland. Very little has been done to analyse whether, and if so how, slaves were able to develop their own customary ways of social relations despite the threat of forced separation through sale, relocation of their owners or on the death of their owners.

First of all there are some indications that enslaved people were willing and able to establish a nuclear family life. The overview given by Jordaan regarding slave family organization on the W.I.C.-plantations in 1717 shows a variety of family compositions. Out of the 47 families, 40 per cent consisted of a man and a woman; 27 per cent of a man and a woman with one or more children; 4 per cent of three generational families; 25 per cent of a woman with children; 4 per cent of a man with children (Jordaan 1999:483). Thus, the extended family type was also present, as sometimes families of three generations, consisting of grandmothers, mothers and children, would live together (Renkema 1981a:134).

However, a stable family life could be hindered by their possible separation - mainly occurring to men and women - at any moment. For example, an overview of the punishment given by the police to enslaved people between March and December 1857 shows several cases of men and women being separated due to their behaviour, for example leaving the plantation regularly or staying out at night without the consent of their master.<sup>71</sup> Some enslaved people left their plantation to visit their partners elsewhere.

M.D. Teenstra, who visited the Dutch islands and Suriname in 1828-1829 and in 1833-1834, stated 'that neither on Curaçao and in Suriname there is something such as family law. Children of 7 and 8 years old are being sold for 70 and 80 guilders, without their mothers being asked for permission' (1977:168). The relationship between mother and child was sometimes unstable. Renkema mentions a case in 1836, when a slave mother

requested to be sold together with her sons. But only her two sons were sold. With help she later tried to kidnap them, but did not succeed (1981a:134). The traumatic effect of the separation of mothers from their children has lived on in oral traditions and songs. The following song was collected by several researchers and is still alive. According to Brenneker and Juliana, who first discovered it, it speaks of slave children who were separated from their mother. They compare themselves with hens.

*Katibu ta galiña, mama  
Katibu ta galiña!  
Shon ta bende nos, mama  
Katibu ta galiña!*<sup>72</sup>

*Slaves are chickens, mama  
The slave is a hen!  
Slaves are chickens, mama  
The slave is a hen!*

The following song also relates to this separation, but here it is linked to punishment. Hulia Jechi Isberto, born in 1881, had heard it as a small girl and explained that a slave mother who lived on plantation Blauw, as she was punished to stay in a hole, feared that she would die and never be able to see her eight children again. As a punishment she preferred to be sold together with her children.

*O Beilo, ma mi ta mama di ocho yu  
O Beilo Shonnan, bendemi bende mi yu  
O Beilo, ma mi ta mama di ocho yu  
O Beilo, yangadó di tera abou<sup>73</sup>  
O Beilo yangadó janga numa  
O Beilo, yangadó di tera abou  
O Beilo Shonnan, bendemi bende mi yu<sup>74</sup>*

*Oh, Beilo but I am a mother of eight children.  
Oh, Beilo Master, do sell me with my children  
Oh, Beilo but I am a mother of eight children  
Oh, Beilo waggler from 'tera abou'  
Oh, Beilo waggler keep on wagging  
Oh, Beilo waggler from 'tera abou'  
Oh, Beilo Master, do sell me with my children*

It was not until 1839 that laws were promulgated outlawing the separation of a mother from her children under the age of twelve (Renkema 1981a:133). Yet this practice was not entirely wiped out, as the following statement by an informant born in 1883 suggests. She recalled that her father's duty as a young slave boy was to look after the chickens on the plantation. However, this abruptly ended when he was sold to a doctor in town. He stayed there until emancipation, after which he returned home to live with his sister, his mother having died.

R.A.: *Ma Tuda su mayornan a konta Ma Tuda di sklabitut?*

G.A.: *Mi tata tabata konta nos di dje. E tabata hasié semper ora nos kaba di kome. Promé ku nos resa rosario, promé ku nos bai drumi. E ta konta nos kiko su bieunan a kont'é. Nan tur a muri.*

R.A.: *Kuantu aña papa tabatin ora el a muri na 1921?*

G.A.: *Mi no sa. E tempunan ei hende no tabata sa kuantu aña nan tin. E tabata bisa ku el a nase durante tem' di katibu. Tempu e tabata*

R.A.: *Ma Tuda, did your parents tell you about slavery?*

G.A.: *My father used to tell us about it. He would always tell us after we finished eating. Before we prayed our rosary, before we went to bed. He would tell us what his elders told him. They are all dead now.*

R.A.: *How old was your father when he died in 1921?*

G.A.: *I don't know. In those days people did not know their age. He used to tell us that he was born during slavery (tem' di katibu).<sup>76</sup> When he*

*chikitu un døkter a bin pidi doño di plantashi un yu di katibu. E døkter tabatin mester di un hende pa limpia su ofisina. E doño di katibu a pidi mi wela, mama di mi tata, pa laga mi tata bai. Mi wela a yora, bisa: 'Si e bai, mi ta pèrd'é.' E doño di: 'Nò, e døkter ta sòru bon p'e. Ta døkter e ta.' Mi tata tabata un mucha e tempu ei, e no tabata bai skol ainda, ni lès di katisashi. E døkter tabata biba na Punda. Su nòmber ta døkter de Veer.<sup>75</sup>*

*was a small boy, a doctor came and asked the owner of the plantation for a slave child. The doctor needed someone to clean his office. The owner asked my grandmother to let father go. She cried out: 'Oh, if he leaves, I will lose him.' 'No,' said the owner, 'the doctor will take good care of him. He is a doctor.' My father was a small boy then, he was not going to school yet, neither to catechism lessons. The doctor lived in town. Doctor de Veer was his name.*

Article 17 of the Law of 1857 stated that enslaved people would be punished if they neglected or failed to take proper care of their children, or if they would beat them in an inhumane way (1857/2). One wonders whether this regulation was introduced on humanitarian grounds or served to protect the slave-master's possession, or both.

The communal life that enslaved people were able to construct was necessarily restricted. The Roman Catholic Church played an important role in the creation of a community, as it offered opportunity for social interaction. Since the beginning of slavery, baptisms provided a good opportunity for this. Euwens describes how the enslaved often walked into town on their free Sunday to participate in a baptism at the Sint Ana Church - until the beginning of the nineteenth century the only Catholic Church on the island. These outings were outlets for all types of emotion, including conflict, sometimes escalating into violence (Euwens 1932:124).

Both enslaved people and manumitted former slaves would seize the main events in life - births, baptisms marriage and death - as an opportunity to come together, reinforcing bonds and expressing their religious beliefs. The rites of passage performed on these occasions emphasized their importance to the Afro-Curaçaoans.

Deaths and funerals in particular, allowed for traditional practices to be conducted, along with the creation of new ones in an effort to deal with the conditions enslaved people found themselves in. G.B. Bosch, who in 1815-1827 lived as a vicar on the island, describes a crying ritual at a funeral (1985:124).

Music was a dominant feature of these events. Hillary Beckles states that music and dance, above all, constituted the bridge over the troubled waters that connected Africa-born persons and their creole progeny. The linkage of these cultural encounters, however, represented much more than the passionate pursuit of pleasure; they were encoded with noises of spiritual liberation and invoked the voices of cosmological redemption. Dances, as these musical parties were called, embraced persons other than those gathered for a fun-filled time, they also provided masks for enslaved people to share opinions on the issues of the day (Beckles 2002:223-4).

Very often western visitors referred to drumming, singing and dancing when writing of their experiences on the island.<sup>77</sup> Teenstra (1977), who travelled in the Dutch West Indies in 1828-1829 and in 1833-1834, wrote that both coloureds and blacks would sing at the funeral of a family member, just as in Suriname. A document written in 1765 indeed mentions the drumming of a group of black people during the wake of a child (Klooster 1999:507). Social conduct at these events was not always accepted by those in power and

harsh measures were often taken. Laws were introduced to regulate behaviour at funerals. For example, during one period it was stipulated that no more than six people could attend a funeral and that they must return to their homes immediately after the service (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:102-3, 137-8, 208).

These regulations had to be repeatedly enforced. Social gatherings were much more than merely the reinforcement of social cohesion: they were the manifestation of a sense of spirituality. They show how Afro-Curaçaoans perceived and experienced themselves in the world. For example: rather than a departure, death was considered a transition to a new status, that of the ancestors, (*avochi*), who remain connected with the living.<sup>78</sup>

Work songs grabbed the attention, as earlier documents reveal. The aforementioned Bosch (1985:200-1) wrote that the enslaved people sang work songs while they were building his lime kiln. Bosch showed the multifunctional aspect of singing, which besides providing entertainment, was meant to enhance group solidarity and participation. Another author, named Abbring, stressed the profound nature of music in Afro-Curaçaoan society. He was amazed that enslaved people could still be singing songs, considering their tragic plight (1834:50).<sup>79</sup> Abbring showed some sensitivity to the slaves and underlined the function and the importance of songs, dance and poetry in making their lives more bearable.<sup>80</sup>

### *Life of the Free Black Population*

In the nineteenth century the free coloured population continued to grow. The number of manumissions increased particularly after 1850, when they were made free of cost (Renkema 1981a:120). Over time the growth of this category contributed to greater societal complexity. Scholars have long recognized that in order to understand slavery as an institution, and the status of free people of colour within slave society, it is necessary to gain a better insight into the potential for - as well as the rate of incidence of - manumission. Manumission was based on the interplay of psychological, socio-demographic, geographic, economic, chronological, individual and family factors. No single factor in isolation could determine the greater or lesser frequency of manumission (Russell-Wood 1982:31).

On Curaçao it was a frequent event that enslaved people were able to purchase their freedom through hard work. Skilled artisan slaves in particular were likely to have this opportunity. The elite viewed them as 'geldzoekers' (money-seekers). Enslaved people would usually be hired out to do specific work; a fixed amount of the fee went to the shons (Römer 1980:25; Renkema 1981a:132). Urban enslaved people particularly, were hired out and in this way earned some money for themselves. The question remains as to what extent they were able to prosper once they had purchased their freedom. The fact that some young slaves (who had inherited their slave status from their mothers) were later manumitted by their already freed fathers, may be an indication of a degree of financial well-being among this group (Goslinga 1956:111).

In addition, some masters freed their slaves as an act of humanitarianism. They would sometimes also provide them with a piece of land.<sup>81</sup> Some of these slaves, to whom property was left, had either blood or sexual ties with their master. Documents show that over the years these pieces of land were passed on to descendants as family land.

The nature of manumission was closely related to the economics of plantation life. The least productive slaves, the crippled and the old, were the worst off. When they were also granted freedom, generally this went without any form of support, especially in adverse economic situations (van der Lee 1998:2). The masters were not forced by law to support their manumitted former slaves, as was the case in the British Caribbean. Thus manumission did not necessarily imply opportunity and benefit for everyone. Mainly for the elderly and handicapped it would mean destitution. After 1863 these groups experienced difficult times living on their own and having to provide for themselves. They would receive government aid in the order of fifty or sixty cents per month. Circa two hundred persons received this aid. At first the money was paid out to their former owners, who provided them with food and clothing. Afterwards the district master paid them directly (Langenfeld 2005).

Of the total freed population, the proportion of people of mixed race was relatively high, as it was usual for the illegitimate offspring of the slave-masters to be granted manumission by their white fathers. Some scholars consider the sexual relationships between black slave women and their white owners, resulting in coloured people, as the ultimate expression of the slave-master's power over the lives of his slaves. Yet, according to Mintz and Price (1976:76), these relationships are among the most complicated issues in African-American history, as they went against the ideal of strict racial separation. This situation did have some compensating factors for the slave women involved. Being the mistress of a slave-owner brought along material and social benefits. The coloured offspring could also acquire wealth and power in addition to manumission. Hence, the social hierarchy of enslaved, like that of free people, was whiter at the top than at the bottom (Berlin and Morgan 1993:2). On Curaçao this social advantage gained by a female slave cohabiting with a European male, was valued and expressed in the term *drecha rasa*: 'to improve the race'.

Among the freed population on the island there were more women than men (Renkema 1981a:28, 72). The Table below demonstrates this.

Table 3.4 Manumitted Slaves 1820, 1830, 1840

	Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Total
1-1-1820	877	2,047	1,160	1,111	5,195
1-1-1830	1,063	2,166	1,200	1,392	5,821
1-1-1840	1,166	2,190	1,492	1,584	6,432

Source: Renkema 1981a:338

Curaçao stood out among other Caribbean societies for its comparatively large free coloured population. The social position of the freedpeople varied. Some coloureds became prosperous. Some, mostly the offspring of Jewish slave-owners, were able to integrate into a higher social level, especially in the field of commerce (Hoetink 1958:81; Römer 1979:44; Rupert 1999:74). Others had the opportunity to become land owners or even owned slaves themselves (Renkema 1981a:96). In 1819 a private school opened, led by a mulatto (Römer 1992:38).

Coloured women in particular formed a large part of the manumitted (Klooster 1999). The following example shows that they were also able to transcend certain limits. Maria Manuela, alias Leyba, petitioned the government in 1862 to change her name to Leyba as she was the illegitimate daughter of a man named Leyba. She was manumitted in 1850, at the age of 35. Nine years after being freed, she was able to buy a slave and a few years later a second one.<sup>82</sup>

In general, the attitude of white society toward freedpeople of colour was ambiguous. On the one hand they were used as a counterweight to the slave population by placing them in the battalions of free mulattoes and blacks, to help suppress rebellions. On the other hand they were often considered to be rebellious and lazy, and lacking in respect for the white ruling class. It seems that as the number of freed black and coloured people increased, the more racially conscious white society became. In 1818, governor Kikkert even considered sending freedpeople to Suriname (Renkema 1981a:146).

The freed coloureds were prevented from attaining certain public offices. James Agnes Jones, a highly articulate manumitted coloured merchant - who spoke several languages - was presented in 1854 as a candidate for an official function by the acting governor who had recently arrived from the Netherlands. However, Jones was pressured to decline the offer due to his colour (Sjiem Fat 1986:81). Some opposed these discriminatory practices and fought for their civil rights, as was the case of the former slave called Joseph Kogen, manumitted in 1833 at the age of 33, who was denied the possibility of being elected a member of the juridical tribunal.<sup>83</sup>

Freed Curaçaoans were confronted with the basic problem of how to participate economically and socially in society. At the final stages of slavery, priests such as Niewindt and Putman painted a very bleak picture of the social situation of the freed. Niewindt wrote in his letters how he saw freedpeople suffering from hunger, lack of proper housing, clothing and medical treatment, and sometimes both the freed and the enslaved ended their lives lying by the side of the road (Goslinga 1956:111).

What possibilities lay open for the freed to adapt to their new situation? What chance did they have of gaining a livelihood? The first option was agriculture. This was, however, severely hindered by the island's geology and climate. Their subsistence through agriculture was also made difficult by the fact that by the mid-eighteenth century large part of the fertile land was already given over to plantations (Renkema 1981a:17-8). The freed were thus limited to using public ground, the so-called *sabana*. There, a large number built their houses and used the land for producing crops such as maize, beans and squashes. However, this land was mostly infertile and on these pieces the land owners were permitted to graze their live stock. Their animals would eat the crops of the inhabitants. Although several regulations prohibited this practice (de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:270) - this was once again mentioned in the Regulation of 1849 as a problem for the freed - it would continue until the twentieth century. Thus sometimes legal measures may in themselves not have been discriminatory, but their enforcement often was. In the same year the government gave amnesty to those who had illegally built their homes on the *sabana*, but it would act against any future illegal developments.<sup>84</sup> The freed were allowed to keep goats, donkeys and pigs; their number being regulated by law.

Some freed blacks engaged in the trading of food-crops, so that portions of the subsistence production were transported to town and sold in the marketplace. This could only be done in accordance with the regulations. For other forms of subsistence, such as hunting and sometimes fishing, permission was required from the plantation owners (Kunst 1981:212). During slavery fishing was hindered by laws aimed at preventing slaves from seizing fishing canoes to escape from the island (Kunst 1981; de Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978). During the last years before emancipation, the number of enslaved people using stolen boats to escape increased considerably, despite several regulations obligating the owners to ensure that their boats could not be taken away. Moreover, fishermen had to obtain special fishing passes, which they had to renew every three months, at the costs of three cents per pass. These were shown to the head guards when they went fishing.

Sometimes fishing was combined with agriculture. While workers were moving from one activity to the other - dictated by the weather or the season - women tended to the tasks of agricultural production during the period when this was required. Fresh fish was sold by female peddlers in town, or they smoked and dried the fish in order to make it last longer. Sometimes turtles would be caught at the Islas Los Roques or the Islas d'Aves (Bosch 1985:146), which provided an additional income. Their prices were even regulated by law.<sup>85</sup> Even though the work was tedious, fishing offered higher returns than agriculture. Different fishing villages were founded, such as Westpunt and Boca Sami. Westpunt became a large community, with a church being built in 1849.

Qualified artisans could gain a livelihood by working as carpenters, masons, shoemakers and tailors. There were also prospects within commerce and the shipping-industry, which were well developed on the island. Men became sailors or dockyard workers.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, no statistical data are available regarding the number of people who made a living from these types of work in the beginning of the nineteenth century (Renkema 1981a:15). Women also worked as wet-nurses. I encountered a contract dated 16 January 1852 in which a manumitted woman agreed to breastfeed a babygirl in exchange for food and clothing for her and her daughter. She would receive the salary of two guilders per month at the end of the two-year period.<sup>87</sup> These women were usually called *menchi*.

Sometimes people would leave the island in times of economic adversity, to seek a livelihood elsewhere. Yet manumitted former slaves were still restricted in their mobility due to the Law of 10 May 1837, stipulating that if they wanted to leave the colony before their first manumitted year had ended, they should apply for a special permit from the State.<sup>88</sup>

A Roman Catholic priest, when interviewed in 1853 by the Commission preparing for emancipation, stated that people would emigrate as a survival strategy. People travelled the region in search of work, relocating to countries such as Venezuela and Puerto Rico. These creoles from Curaçao, as they were called in Puerto Rico, were mentioned as a separate group in the 1849 publication on Puerto Rican customs *El Gibara* by Manuel Alonso (Quintero-Rivera 1994:27). Putman stated in his interview before the Commission that in St. Thomas - at the time a Danish colony - there was a street where freedpeople from Curaçao were living and where one could hear only Papiamentu being spoken (Commissie 1856:297).

As males migrated, women had to manage their own families' lives to survive their extremely poor conditions. They themselves would then farm their land or do other types

of work, such as weaving straw hats. During the 1850s women, and especially children, would weave straw hats and cigar cases for a living. The raw material was imported from the Spanish mainland and from Cuba (Renkema 1981b; van Dissel 1868). The hats were known as *Panama hats* and were exported to the United States.<sup>89</sup> This was an income for freedwomen living in the countryside rather than in town. According to A.W. Sythoff, 'if it was not for the making of hats, people would be in want' (1857:112-3).

Some enslaved women managed to migrate. Curaçaoan women often left to work as cooks or nannies employed by higher class Curaçaoan families, who themselves left the island in times of economic malaise (Hoetink 1982:33). For example, in a contract of 1852, Dominga Hypolite Fedelle committed herself to work as a wet-nurse, nurse-maid and domestic servant wherever her employer went.<sup>90</sup> Kinship relations were another decisive factor for emigration. For instance, two months after having been freed in 1862, a woman called Maria Ignes asked the colonial government permission to leave the island with her two mature sons for Puerto Rico, in order to join family members who were already living there.<sup>91</sup> Family reunification was thus an important motive for leaving and liberation was used to re-establish kinship ties - wherever they might be.

### *The Roman Catholic Church's Mission*

The nineteenth century sees increasing attempts to convert Afro-Curaçaoans to Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church gradually convinced the colonial government of the importance of educating the enslaved. In that way the Church played a primary role in the dynamics surrounding the cultural encounters between enslaved, freedpeople and the free on the island. Their lives were thus influenced not only by the white elite, but also by the Roman Catholic Church, which became an important mechanism of cultural control (Lampe 1988; Allen 1988).

There is some evidence that enslaved people were baptized in the Christian faith before departing from Africa (Martinus 1997:127). The evangelization of the enslaved became more intense in the nineteenth century. At first the Dutch colonial government did not concern itself with this issue (Oostindie 1995a:53, 136). It is stated that from 1700 until 1824 the Church had little influence on the island, due to measures curbing religious practice, such as the admission of only one priest on the island at a time, the existence of only one church where people could be baptized and hear the gospel, the prohibited access on some plantations for priests, and - most importantly - the restrictions and laws imposed on the enslaved by the colonial government.

Even in these early times the Church did have some influence in the process of de-Africanization of the enslaved. Priests contributed, e.g. to changing names of the enslaved.<sup>93</sup> An article in *La Union* of 18 August 1971 mentioned that a priest named Michael Schabel living on the island in the eighteenth century had made sure that the enslaved did not receive what he called 'heathen names', in a bid to destroy paganism. Instead he chose from saints' names, a custom enduring until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The arrival of Niewindt in 1824 (who two decades would become the first vicar apostolic on Curaçao) marked the beginning of a new era in the history of christianization by

the Catholic Church on the island. Upon his arrival, Niewindt expressed concern for the enslaved. He denounced their poor living conditions and was able to enforce slave protection laws previously disregarded. With missionary zeal and in a dynamic manner, Niewindt applied himself to their conversion. Despite many difficulties he did for the most part succeed.

For Niewindt, conversion to Christianity entailed more than teaching the gospel. In his activities the term 'civilization' was a key concept. According to him the enslaved lacked civilization, which he saw as being at the core of all their evil practices. Unlike others, who at the time believed that blacks lacked all kind of civilization and were unable of changing, Niewindt's opinion was that their backwardness was not innate or genetic, but the result of their descent from Africa, where no civilization had ever existed. This inferiority meant that they needed to be educated and civilized. This encompassed certain virtues, such as diligence, discipline, neatness and monogamy. He stereotyped blacks as lazy, careless and lascivious, but added that through civilization this could change.<sup>94</sup>

To Niewindt civilization represented more than only the refinement of behaviour. This he specified more clearly in his arguments to promote education among the enslaved and the freed. Apart from learning how to read and write, education involved learning the basics of the Roman Catholic religion in which they were baptized; it also addressed their obligations towards the government, their master and their fellowmen.<sup>95</sup> Even though until 1848 Niewindt's ideas about education did not antagonize the government, it was quite difficult for him to convey his ideas to the colonial administration. His state of readiness in religious matters, as manifested in the building of several Catholic churches on the island, did not leave the establishment unaware. They feared, as did others, that the large gathering of enslaved during church services would allow them to realize 'their collective strength' (Lampe 1988:104).

All of this would change after 1848, a turbulent year for the colonial government due to the unrest of enslaved people on the Dutch Windward Islands. Due to these problems a closer relationship grew between the State and the Church. The colonial government seemed to agree with Niewindt that educating the enslaved was an important device in maintaining peace on the island and in safeguarding the lives and the property of the other inhabitants. The State even began to pay the salaries of the priests (Goslinga 1956:130).

Moreover, the slave regulation of 1857 guaranteed religious education for the older people and general education for the young (Dahlhaus 1924:430).<sup>96</sup> There were opportunities for slave-children to attend schools founded by the Church. Sometimes the yearly reports mentioned complaints that very few of the enslaved and freed living in the countryside made use of this opportunity. One factor contributing to this was the practice of using child labour; due to this, slave-children were kept from going to school by their owners. Poverty was another factor keeping children from attending school, as they lacked proper clothing.<sup>97</sup>

School was also an opportunity for slave-children to meet freed children, leading to a sense of cohesion.<sup>98</sup> In various schools the children of the enslaved were taught basic reading and writing skills, and above all catechism. Roman Catholic priests translated the Bible in the local language and used other methods for spreading the message. Putman had

several young children living in his house to who he taught the gospel (1941:53). Moreover, some people were payed by priests to educate slaves and others unable to attend church.<sup>99</sup>

The clergy also addressed aspects of life which they felt were hindering Christianization. This was manifested, for example, in the fight against colonial laws preventing slaves from marrying. Slave-masters were opposed to formal marriage because this would not allow them to sell their slaves separately. Furthermore, marriage was seen as a consecration of the relationship between two human beings of different sexes; this was not an institution a slave was entitled to, since he was considered a material possession. Yet the Roman Catholic Church considered marriage an important mechanism towards civilization. The priest Stoppel openly voiced his concerns in this respect to the King of Holland in a letter in 1817. He even proposed legal changes by stating that enslaved people should be allowed to marry, that both civil and church marriages should be free of charge, and that married slaves should not be sold without their partner (Stoppel in Lampe 2001:137).

Niewindt would continue in this attempt and argue that marriage was essential, focusing on the benefit this institution would have for the slave-master:

*The attachment of the enslaved to his master will become larger when he knows that not only his life, but also that of his wife and children lies in the hand of the slave-master.*<sup>100</sup>

In this respect the Roman Catholic Church was less successful. At various times slaves acted against this prohibition. However, they could consecrate their cohabitation in what was called a 'matrimonia clandestina': a slave couple would be married by a priest in a clandestine way; such a marriage was not legalized. Locally it was called *salta garoti*: 'jumping the cane'. Among slaves it was a valuable institution, and such a union was respected by the community.

In the process of christianization, the Roman Catholic Church fought hard to eradicate cultural practices it considered heathen and which it thought were remnants of an African past. In that sense the Church initiated a change in the behaviour of Afro-Curaçaoans. One of the customs it tried hard to eradicate was the previously mentioned *tambú* gathering. The Church became increasingly concerned with control and took an active role in the de-Africanization of Curaçaoans.

All of these methods were efforts to prepare the enslaved for freedom. Niewindt played a leading role in this and is still considered the emancipator of the enslaved people (Goslinga 1956; Rojer 1997). Amongst scholarly priests, however, there is a recent tendency towards a more critical view of Niewindt's role. Cees Streefkerk (1999) is less favourable in his judgement of the Catholic Church's position in the emancipation process and he questions whether Niewindt deserves to be called the emancipator of the slaves. Lampe (1988) had already opposed this view on Niewindt; he also focused on the contributions of the priest Putman - who in general receives very little attention.<sup>101</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Afro-Curaçaoans did not form a homogeneous group. In assessing the characteristics of the Afro-Curaçaoan population it is clear that on arrival they were, and would continue to be, a diverse group, both in terms of social position and awareness. Oral history reveals the different ways in which this awareness was manifested. Race, skin colour and ethnicity became important determinants for distinguishing people.

The origin and dynamics of the slave trade, economic and political circumstances and social conditions - such as demographic circumstances - influenced the lives of enslaved people as cultural agents in society. Afro-Curaçaoans had a notion of certain ethnic and cultural practices from the African continent. This revealed itself for example in their songs and narratives, and in their naming of places on the island, which they passed on to the younger generations. However fragmented and vague these notions may have been, they demonstrated the continued claim to a geographically specific African descent. Oral history, in particular information collected from people born soon after emancipation, shed light on how people saw slavery at the time.

In their everyday lives, both as enslaved and as freedpeople, Afro-Curaçaoans had to deal with the reality of powerlessness. Much of their life took place within strict limits defined by the institutions of white society. Laws regulating their lives were made in the interest of the plantation owners. This manifests itself most clearly in the area of work, where the intervention of those with power was clearly present. Some enslaved lived under less stringent conditions, sometimes giving rise to a social bond between owners and enslaved ('bon shon'), whereas others lived under harsh conditions with little interaction with their masters. Oral history also reveals the hardships slaves encountered on plantations under the regime of a particularly 'mal shon'.

The growth of the freed coloured and black population added to the anxiety of plantation owners in particular. Over time the manumitted former slaves became a significant group. Their growing numbers, remarkable by Caribbean standards, put the resilience of Curaçaoan slave society to the test. Apart from social and racial discrimination, this 'free' group also suffered from material distress, resulting in malnutrition and poor health. The Roman Catholic Church did take initiatives to help them, adding at the same time a good dose of paternalism. This heralded the Church's role for the period after 1863, when full emancipation was accomplished.

## *Notes*

- 1 De Smidt and Schiltkamp 1978:3-8; Gehring 1987:3-7. These instructions addressed the type of work both Indians and blacks ('swarten en swartinnen') should perform, their punishment if they should try to escape, and their treatment by the whites. It is interesting to note that even though blacks and Indians performed slave-work, their women were allowed to intermarry with white men. However, this could only happen if the women had been baptized as a Christian and if they had been instructed accordingly - and officially accepted as such. Thus, even though Indians and blacks were set apart as a group, at the time religion played a more determining role than race and colour.

- 2 Jordaen (1999:478). Undoubtedly slaves like elsewhere in the Caribbean were involved in gathering the prime materials for lime: conch, lime rich marine shells and island coral (Price 1966:1375).
- 3 Renkema 1981a:118.
- 4 Postma 1990. Terms such as 'Minase negers' (negroes embarked at Elmina) and 'Fidase negers' (negroes from Fida) were often mentioned in the case of Curaçao.
- 5 La Union, 18-8-1971. This article refers to the announcement of two slaves who fled in canoes. One was named Batista Vlaams and could speak the language of the land of Calabari in Africa. The author also refers to the Jesuit priest Dujardid, who learnt various African languages so that he could communicate with the people. The first written account in Papiamentu is a letter dated 5-10-1775 from a Curaçaoan Jew to his mistress.
- 6 This rather close collaboration with European slave-owners is at odds with the way Luango's are often represented in oral history. Luango (Angola) was an important state in Africa during the time of the slave trade. Geographically large and including a number of tributary states that exercised considerable internal control and that were bound by payments of tribute outside any administrative decree (Thornton 1998:xxvii).
- 7 Putman 1937-1941. Putman lived in the eastern part of the island.
- 8 According to McDaniel this differs from the West African myths, where only witches and spirits are able to fly. This ability could nevertheless also end once salt was eaten.
- 9 Interview C.M. Elizabeth (born 1897), Allen, 15-6-1989. (NatAr).
- 10 Idem.
- 11 Hence they were called work songs, *kantika di trabou*.
- 12 Interview Eduardo Tokaai (born 1899), Allen, 12-9-1984 (NatAr).
- 13 Interview Shon Tin (born 1886), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 854, NatAr).
- 14 McDaniel 1990:29 (translation by Frank Martinus.)
- 15 See Chapter 2, 'Cross-Checking with the Brenneker/Juliana Collection'.
- 16 Interview Reini Laker (born 1887), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 1025, NatAr).
- 17 Unable to translate as it may be Guene.
- 18 This may have had to do with the fact that a canoe was required to go ashore.
- 19 Zikinzá-collection, T 416, NatAr. Brenneker transcribed 'nabiu' as 'navluta', while Martinus (1996:200) transcribed it as 'naviu'.
- 20 Its inhabitants called it Genni, the Arabs used to call it Ghenoa, while the Portuguese and other Europeans named it Ghinea.
- 21 Thornton (1998:xxii) states that Popo bordered on the Volta and on Allada.
- 22 This land belonged to Martina Bonnet, alias Martina Kongo (NatAr, Archief van het Gouvernement, Brievenboeken 4e district, 1863-1906, inv. no. 136, 25-9-1894/107). The piece of land is situated between Jan Boos and Weto. See also Werbata Map: a map put together by the topographer J.V.D. Werbata, who worked in 1906-1909 on Curaçao (Renkema 1981a:270).
- 23 Werbata Map. See La Union, 18-8-1971.
- 24 Oostindie 1997:12. An overview of the number of slaves on the Curaçaoan plantations shows that in 1735, of the 376 slave-masters, only 11 per cent owned more than ten slaves, while 73 per cent owned less than five. There was only one owner who had more than one hundred slaves. In 1764, 16 per cent of slave-owners had more than ten slaves, 66 per cent less than five. In 1863, 62 per cent had less than five slaves, 17.5 per cent more than ten. Eight owners had more than one hundred slaves. Most of the larger plantations on Curaçao were situated in Banda Bou. Slaves in the eastern part of the island (Banda Riba) were more accustomed to living together in small concentrations (Römer 1979:16-7)
- 25 Els Langenfeld, Project Porto Mari 2001.
- 26 NatAr, Publicatie Blad 1857,nr. 2.
- 27 Interview Simon Bonifacio (born 1907), Allen, 9-5-1989 and 16-5-1989 (NatAr). From his 18th until his 20th birthday he had worked on the salt-pans.

- 28 Klooster 1999:506. See Report Commissie 1856:257. Compare Oostindie 1997:32.
- 29 Announcements about escaped slaves would therefore indicate in which places they had fled and their assumed new places of residence. Furthermore, when slave ships were confiscated by the Spanish government in Venezuela, they would sell all their belongings, including the slaves.
- 30 'Creole' refers to being born on the island, not to race (mixing). Thus it could also refer to a white person born on the island. Menkman 1935:80.
- 31 The way in which the white population perceived blacks is reflected in the words they used to describe them as a group. Increasingly they were set apart, indicated as 'neger' ('negro'). The terms 'piecas de Indias' and 'macarons' clearly show how the black race was seen as a commodity.
- 32 Interview Lucia Wederfoort (no age registered), Brenneker/Juliana, no date (Zikinzá-collection, T 529, NatAr). 'Cornea bam kunuku/bam kunuku bam kunuku/kornea bam kunuku/bam bebe lechi/bam bebe lechi di porku pretu' (Cornea come and drink the milk of a black pig).
- 33 *La Union*, 18-8-1971. Until the present day the term 'pretu mahos' (black and ugly) is used and certain hair types are labelled good or bad. Expressions such as 'mal òf bon kabei' (good or bad hair) are still common.
- 34 This song was collected by Brenneker and Juliana and sung by Pedro Clemencia (age unknown). Stored at the Public Library.
- 35 Juliana 1963:14, 42. In an interview, dated 11-10-1983, Machinet Sluis (born 1900) used these proverbs to demonstrate why, according to her, whites and blacks should keep themselves to themselves. NatAr.
- 36 Interview Nicolaas Petrona (born 1898 in Kent U Zelf, eastern part of the island), Allen, 1986 (NatAr).
- 37 Interview Pa Allee (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 906, NatAr).
- 38 Interview Eduardo Tokaai (born 1899), Allen, 12-9-1984 (NatAr).
- 39 *La Union*, 8 -9-1937.
- 40 Based on the plantation lists of 1862-1863 and on those of 1802 and 1819 (Renkema 1981a:128-30.)
- 41 The nature of the punishment handed out to slaves on Curaçao during the year 1859. Koloniaal Verslag 1860.
- 42 Interview Wawa Willems (born 1875), Brenneker/Juliana, 1960 (Zikinzá-collection, T 177, NatAr).
- 43 Interview Henriette Willems (born 1890), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 509, NatAr). She sang: 'mi t'ei Kenepa, bai mira e Santanas' (I am going to Knip to visit the devil.)
- 44 Interview shon Pa di Zegu (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 14-2-1972 (T 24, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).
- 45 Interview Imelda Valerianus (born 1915), Allen, 27-8-1995 (NatAr).
- 46 Literally: 'who took advantage of everything and left nothing behind for others.'
- 47 Interview Imelda Valerianus (born 1915), Allen, 27-8-1995 (NatAr).
- 48 English translation: 'Everything takes its time.'
- 49 For example, in 1857 fourteen complaints were registered by enslaved. No action was taken, however, due to lack of proof (Verslag over het beheer en de staat der West-Indische bezittingen en van die der kust van Guinea over 1857. Koloniaal Verslag 1857, zitting 1859-1860).
- 50 In a conversation with Lucille Berry-Haseth, knowledgeable about the Papiamentu language, she stated that the word 'salbèchi' might be derived from the word 'savage'.
- 51 Staat van straffen van maart tot ultimo december 1857 door de politie aan slaven opgelegd. In: KV 1857, zitting 1859-1860.
- 52 Interview Leoncito Blindeborg (born 31-10-1906), Brenneker/Juliana, 24-2-1972 (T 25, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).
- 53 Interview Shon Pa di Zegu (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 14-2-1972 (T 24, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou). The stealing of a piece of canvas was cited as a motive for giving Theodor-

- us, a 25 year old slave, three months of hard labour. Staat van straffen opgelegd aan slaven op Curaçao gedurende het jaar 1860. In: KV 1860, zitting 1862-1863.
- 54 The enslaved taken there would never return.
- 55 Interview Leoncito Blindeborg (born 31-10-1906), Brenneker/Juliana, 24-2-1972 (T 25, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).
- 56 Interview Henriqueta Garcia (born 1898), Brenneker/Juliana (T 75, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).
- 57 Interview Celestino M. Elizabeth (born 1897), Allen, 15-6-1989 (NatAr).
- 58 Interview Isabel Valks (born 1906), Allen, 13-3-1984 (NatAr).
- 59 Goslinga (1956) and Rutten(1989) considered the nutritional aspects of the slave food very poor, while Lamur (1981:87-102) mentioned the 'highly nutritional food' as one of the factors leading to the high fertility rate of enslaved on the island.
- 60 NA, Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850-1900, inv. no. 6738, 2-3-1863/138. These were motives given by H. Moran when he applied for a permit for the importation of a steam driven maize mill.
- 61 Register van de door de Politie gestrafte slaven, 1857. Koloniaal Verslag 1857, zitting 1859-1860.
- 62 Berlin and Morgan 1993; Blassingame 1975.
- 63 NatAr, Publicatie Blad 1820, nr. 31.
- 64 Niewindt stated in his report of 31 March 1828 to the Commissioner General J. van den Bosch that on some plantations enslaved were forced to work on Sunday (Dahlhaus 1924:90-4).
- 65 Interview Henriët Willems (born 1890), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 511 NatAr).
- 66 Interview John Godden (born 1876), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 667, NatAr).
- 67 This song refers to the bird revealing that people on the other plantations had already had their break.
- 68 Interview Pa Allee (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 1256, NatAr). Pa Allee's parents lived on the plantation of Sabaneta situated in the western part of the island.
- 69 His statement was based on data from Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, Barbados, Jamaica and St. Kitts.
- 70 Staat van straffen opgelegd aan slaven van Curaçao gedurende het jaar 1861. In: KITLV, Koloniaal Verslagen 1861, zitting 1863-1864.
- 71 Staat van straffen van maart tot ultimo december 1857 door de politie aan slaven opgelegd. In: ITLV, Koloniaal Verslagen 1857, zitting 1859-1860.
- 72 Interview Pa Cai Maduro (born 1870), Brenneker/Juliana, 1958 (Zikinzá-collection, T 487, NatAr); interview Matias Bertinus (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 624, NatAr); interview Nicolaas (Shon Cola) Susanna (born 1915), Allen, 1984 (NatAr).
- 73 'Yangadó' literally means waggling, but might here be used for someone who walks with pride, referring to the bomba who punished people. The meaning of 'tera abou' here is unclear.
- 74 Interview Hulia Isberto (born 1881), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 560, NatAr).
- 75 Interview Gertruda (Ma Tuda, born 1883), Allen, August 1983 (NatAr).
- 76 For long, the older generation used the period of slavery as an important marker of time. It was referred to as *tem' di katibu*.
- 77 Roberts (1998:xxvi) states that a main characteristic of traditional African music is that it is interconnected with daily living. Music serves a purpose and has a social use.
- 78 Music and singing served several functions among Afro-Curaçaoans. Mosley (2003:23) argues, in accordance with Gilroy (1993:74), that music has been the exemplary mode of communication in the black Atlantic world throughout the period of slavery, as the Africans came from diverse language and cultural groups and there was no common spoken language available.
- 79 The author lived and worked for ten years on the island. He was shocked one day to see a slave walking in front of him half naked with a heavy bunch of twigs on his head.

- 80 As late as the twentieth century, work songs were considered very important by the employers. According to an interviewee who knew a large number by heart, he was paid to be lead singer and so set the pace of the work by calling out the lines of verses, which were responded to by his co-workers. He improvised lyrics to include events and news affecting the community at that time. Following an injury due to an accident he was not dismissed – as was commonly done in that period – but kept at work in order to continue his singing. Through singing Afro-Curaçaoans could maintain and reinforce their religious beliefs and values. In their songs they expressed notions regarding communal life, pregnancy, birth, death etc.
- 81 See for example, NA, Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850-1900, inv. no. 6729, 27-9-1854/599.
- 82 NA, Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850-1900, inv. no. 6734, 5-12-1862/831. See also van der Lee (1998:596), stating her manumission date. Roset (Maria Manuela alias Roset, the daughter of Aldersina, belonging to the owner C.O. Leyba).
- 83 Staatscommissie 1856:247. The former governor referred to Kogen with much disdain in his interview with the Commission. See also van der Lee 1998:373.
- 84 NatAr, Publikatie Blad 1849, nr.228.
- 85 NatAr, Publicatie Blad,1829
- 86 KILV, Koloniale Verslagen, 1845 en Koloniale Verslagen, 1848).
- 87 NatAr, Notariële archieven (Curaçao), Notariële protocollen 1846-1854, inv. no. 19, 16-1-1852,15.
- 88 NatAr, Publicatie Blad 1837 nr. 201.
- 89 KITLV, Koloniale Verslagen 1853.
- 90 NatAr, Notariële archieven (Curaçao), Notariële protocollen 1846-1854, inv. no. 19, 13-2-1852,41.
- 91 NA, Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850-1900, inv. no. 6734, 15-10-1862/701. Being a former slave wanting to leave the country within one year after her manumission, she had to ask permission to leave. Clearly children remained with their parents despite being adults.
- 92 Patterson (1982) compared slavery to social death. One of his arguments was precisely the inability of enslaved Africans to retain their original names. See also Burton 1999:35-58.
- 93 Father Michael Schabel, born in 1662, was a bohemian Jesuit (Streefkerk 1995:159).
- 94 See Niewindt's report, 31-3-1828 (Dahlhaus 1924:119-20); letter Niewindt to the Bishop of Curicu, 8-1-1850 (Dahlhaus 1924:438-442;444-447).
- 95 Letter Niewindt to the Minister of Colonial Affairs, 14-11-1834 (Dahlhaus 1924:419-420) .
- 96 Letter Niewindt to the Minister of Colonial Affairs, 17-7-1848 (Dahlhaus 1924:428-433).
- 97 KITLV, Koloniale Verslagen 1854, 1856; Staatscommissie 1856:278.
- 98 KITLV, Koloniaal Verslag 1855.
- 99 KITLV, Koloniale Verslagen 1855.
- 100 Niewindt (8-1-1850) in Dahlhaus 1924:438-442;444-447.
- 101 Allen 1992a focuses on the Church's civilizing mission as a strategy to mould the personality of the enslaved and to make them more accepting of their plight. To the Church, a predominant factor in educational and social activities for the poor, social control was synonymous with civilization.