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**From Golden Rock to Historic Gem: a historical archaeological analysis of the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean**  
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**Citation**

Stelten, R. J. G. (2019, March 21). *From Golden Rock to Historic Gem: a historical archaeological analysis of the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean*. Sidestone Press, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/70210>

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



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**Issue Date:** 2019-03-21

# Introduction

For over seven millennia, people's lives have been shaped by the rhythms of the Caribbean Sea. Starting with the first settlers of the islands from the South- and Central American mainland, the history of the Caribbean has been characterized by a constant exchange of people, goods, and ideas that was facilitated by the sea (Versteeg 1992, Hofman et al. 2007, Hofman & Hoogland 2011, Keegan & Hofman 2017). These exchanges intensified through time, particularly during the colonial period when the region was settled by people from all over the world and extensive inter-island trading networks were developed on a scale not seen before. In addition, the sea has been instrumental in shaping the islands and the cultural landscapes that existed on and around them. There have always been countless links between the maritime and terrestrial worlds of the Caribbean, the study of which can shed new light on the complex and multifaceted history of the region. In this dissertation, the multitude of connections between the maritime and terrestrial worlds will be examined through a detailed analysis of the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius, a small island in the Caribbean Sea that was once one of the busiest ports in the region and played a determining role in shaping Atlantic World history. This work aims to investigate the ways in which the complex interplay of local, regional, and global social, economic, political, and natural forces have shaped the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius through time. The analysis adopted consists of the combined results from archaeological excavations, material culture studies, documentary research, and an examination of the land- and seascape. By adopting this multidimensional approach with the archaeological record as its backbone, we can more fully appreciate the role the sea played in the lives of those living on the islands and gain a better understanding of the fascinating history of St. Eustatius and the role it played in the Age of European expansion.

For centuries, the small Lesser Antillean island of St. Eustatius has fascinated all who set foot on it. Dramatic topography, a lush rainforest, and healthy coral reefs are some of the things that continue to attract small groups of adventurous visitors. St. Eustatius, affectionately called Statia by its 3,200 inhabitants, is a quiet, volcanic island of 21 km<sup>2</sup> in size.<sup>1</sup> Since the Netherlands Antilles were dismantled on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Statia has been a special municipality of the Netherlands. St. Eustatius is situated among several other islands: 13 km northwest of St. Kitts, 26 km southeast

1 Population number as of 31 December 2015, <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=80539ned&D1=a&D2=2&D3=0-1,3-4,7-8&VW=T>.

of Saba, 44 km south of St. Barths, and 53 km south of St. Maarten. Nevertheless, as a result of limited airlift, the lack of a ferry service, and the absence of mass tourism such as that found on neighboring St. Maarten, the island is relatively isolated. The majority of people live on the leeward side and central part of the island. Statia's only settlement, Oranjestad, is divided into two parts: Lower Town on the waterfront and Upper Town on the cliffs and plain above. The government is the island's largest employer, followed by NuStar, an American company that owns and operates a large oil storage and transshipment facility on the northern side of the island. Because of this limited development and a relatively small population, the island is an archaeological treasure trove that provides a fascinating case study in examining the maritime cultural landscape of a Caribbean island in a relatively undisturbed setting.

The formation of St. Eustatius and its community has been shaped by a complex interplay of many different factors, including globalization, the (forced) migration of people, acculturation, religious beliefs, conflicts, and the natural world. Before outlining the research problem that will be addressed in this study, it is essential to provide a short natural, environmental, and historic sketch of the island to place the research and research questions into perspective. The locations of all topographical, geological, and archaeological features mentioned in the text are shown in several maps found in Appendix VII.

## **1.1 Natural and environmental setting**

In order to fully understand the development of Statia's maritime cultural landscape, it is important to gain an understanding of the natural and environmental setting of the island first. As will be argued in this work, the natural environment played an important role in the lives of people on the island. Many of their choices were influenced by the natural environment, but as will be shown, their lives were never completely dictated by it.

St. Eustatius is part of the Lesser Antilles, a chain of volcanic islands with a length of 740 kilometers stretching from the South American continental margin in the south to the Anegada passage in the north. In this area, the North and South American tectonic plates subduct beneath the Caribbean tectonic plate, creating the Lesser Antilles subduction zone. The immense friction generated by this process causes sediment to melt and build pressure. This pressure is released by volcanic activity which has created the Lesser Antillean archipelago. The Lesser Antilles island chain can be regarded as a double arc. In the southern part, from Grenada to Dominica, the arcs appear tightly superimposed. Northwards the arcs bifurcate, resulting in an inner arc of active volcanic islands and an outer, extinct arc of limestone islands (Roobol & Smith 2004:3-6).

Statia is located in the active, inner arc of the Leeward Islands and measures 8 x 4 kilometers at its widest points. It lies on a continuous submarine bank that also contains the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis (Roobol & Smith 2004:99). The island's topography is dominated by two volcanic areas. The northern part, called the Northern Hills, comprises a cluster of five coalesced older volcanic centers composed of lava flows, Pelean domes, and their pyroclastic aprons of block and ash deposits. These are estimated to be between 500,000 and one million years old (Roobol & Smith 2004:107). The highest of these hills is Boven Hill, reaching



*Figure 1.1 Aerial image of St. Eustatius, looking south. The Northern Hills are in the foreground, behind which is the Quill. The island in the background, only 13 kilometers south of St. Eustatius, is St. Kitts.*

a height of 289 meters above sea level. The Northern Hills once constituted a separate island surrounded by cliffs bordering the sea. The Quill, a morphologically young, dormant stratovolcano, is situated two and a half kilometers to the south-east. It has an open crater with a diameter of 800 meters that rises to 601 meters above sea level at Mazinga Peak. The Quill's flanks become increasingly steep as altitude increases, sweeping up to 50 degrees at the crater rim. The lowest point on the crater floor has an elevation of 278 meters above sea level (Roobol & Smith 2004:101). The Quill began forming between 40,000 and 50,000 years ago. Its last eruption dates to around 1600 BP, when the island was inhabited by Amerindian people (Roobol & Smith 2004:104). The Quill is almost entirely composed of varied pyroclastic deposits. The presence of heated groundwater with increasing temperature zonation towards the crater is a clear indicator that the Quill is not extinct, but dormant. Two thick, white limestone formations, known as White Wall and Sugar Loaf Hill, are present on the Quill's southern slopes. These formations were formerly part of the sea bed, but were thrust upwards to the surface at an angle of 40 degrees during one of the Quill's active volcanic periods. Between the Northern Hills and The Quill is a relatively flat plain, called the *Cultuurvlakte*, on which most habitation is located. This plain, with an area of circa 5.7 km<sup>2</sup>, varies in elevation from 30 to 76 meters above sea level. Its seaside borders are composed of steep cliffs which vary in height between 18 and 45 meters. Geographic features such as cliffs, hills, and volcanoes constitute prominent parts of the St. Eustatius landscape and have shaped the formation of the island's maritime cultural landscape in various ways. As will be shown throughout this work, on the one hand they restrict human agency while on the other, people used these features to their advantage.

Soil fertility on St. Eustatius is poor due to a dry climate, extensive erosion, and very effective runoff drainage. Soils in the Northern Hills and The Quill are mostly shallow and the land here is stony. Soil on the central plain has built up over pumice to form a loose layer composed of sandy volcanic ash. This soil retains more moisture, but it can suffer severely from droughts and drying out by the trade winds (Barka 2001:106). The poor condition of Statian soils greatly reduced the island's agricultural potential which, as will be shown in the following chapters, played an important role in deciding the island's economic direction and its maritime cultural landscape.

It is important to realize that the island's modern-day landscape is far different from that encountered by its first human inhabitants, in which the first Europeans settled, and subsequent settlers established agricultural ventures. Originally, much of the island was probably covered by an evergreen seasonal forest. As a result of deforestation by humans, this has been replaced by thorny woodland, including acacia shrubs (*Acacia* sp.) mixed with West Indian cherry (*Malpighia emarginata*), sugar apple (*Annona squamosa*) and cacti (*Melocactus intortus*, *Opuntia* sp.).<sup>2</sup> These plants constitute the most common vegetation on the island today. Along the coastal areas there are low, flattened trees and bushes as well as sea grapes (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and patches of manchineel (*Hippomane mancinella*). The foothills of the Quill are home to a variety of fruit trees, including tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), and guava (*Psidium guajava*). At a height of about 250 meters the thorny woodland changes into semi-evergreen seasonal forest with trees such as the silk cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), mappoo (*Pisonia subcordata*), white cedar (*Tabebuia heterophylla*), yellow plum (*Spondias mombin*), and gum tree (*Bursera simaruba*). Some of the natural vegetation is preserved on the higher slopes and in the crater of the Quill. There is a small patch of elfin woodland on the crater rim. In the crater, a dense evergreen seasonal forest interspersed with cultivated plants such as cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) and coffee (*Coffea* sp.) can be found. The island is also home to sixteen species of orchids and many other types of plants, including two endemic vines (data from St. Eustatius National Parks mini guides and information panels).

Faunal biodiversity on St. Eustatius is also high. The island is home to a wide variety of birds such as the brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), magnificent frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), and red-billed tropic bird (*Phaethon aethereus*). Reptiles include the red-bellied racer snake (*Alsophis rufiventris*), the Lesser Antillean iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*), and anoles lizards (*Anolis wattsi* & *Anolis bimaculatus*). Caribbean hermit crabs (*Coenobita clypeatus*) and land crabs (*Gecarcinus ruricola*) are found all over the island. Due to human activity such as habitat fragmentation caused by development, many native animals are threatened with extinction (data from St. Eustatius National Parks mini guides and information panels). Originally there were few mammalian species present on the island, but in colonial times humans have introduced cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, horses, dogs, cats, rats, and mice. Most of these were used for human consumption or other purposes. Native animals, however, were eaten

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2 Deforestation on St. Eustatius already started by Amerindians at least in the first millennium AD. They cut down trees to build houses and canoes, and practiced slash-and-burn agriculture (Schinkel & Versteeg 1992). More extensive deforestation, however, probably took place in the seventeenth century when trees had to make way for plantations.

as well. Perhaps the best example is the Lesser Antillean iguana, whose Latin name is a testimony to its superb taste.

The waters around St. Eustatius boast an abundance of marine life including many species of reef- and pelagic fish, invertebrates, and mollusks. People's ability to exploit these resources has been tremendously important in establishing a maritime economy on the scale seen on eighteenth-century St. Eustatius, as large quantities of food were needed to sustain the insular population and the thousands of sailors calling at Statia each year. Many species can be found on the coral reefs around the island which have covered the Quill's lava flows. Migrating dolphins and whales are occasional visitors to Statian waters. Important subsistence species include Caribbean spiny lobsters (*Panulirus argus*) and queen conch (*Lobatus gigas*). The long beach on the east coast, called Zeelandia, is Statia's main nesting site for three species of sea turtles: the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) (data from St. Eustatius National Parks mini guides and information panels). Due to the prevailing eastern trade wind, seas on the leeward side are relatively calm and flat while seas on the windward side are usually rough. This was a determining factor in the decision to choose a place to establish a settlement.

St. Eustatius has a maritime savannah climate (Barka 2001:105). The average daytime temperature is about 29°C, while nighttime temperature averages 24°C. The average water temperature is 27°C. There is a light constant northeastern trade wind averaging twenty knots and the weather is mostly dry and sunny. Rainfall occurs in showers of short to medium duration throughout the year and ranges between 940 and 1220 mm annually. The island is located within the Atlantic hurricane zone. Hurricane season runs from June to November, with a peak from late August to mid-October. During these months, Statia regularly experiences the effects of tropical storms and depressions, which can bring large amounts of rain, strong winds, and rough seas. Usually once every few years, the island is struck by a hurricane. One of the issues this dissertation addresses is how the natural setting of St. Eustatius, particularly hurricanes, impacted the island's maritime cultural landscape.

## 1.2 Historical setting

As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2, the analysis of the maritime cultural landscape focuses on three different timescales, the island's connection with other colonies, and the influences of developments elsewhere in the Atlantic World on St. Eustatius. Therefore, a brief historical background is necessary to put the island's maritime cultural landscape in a wider perspective.

Christopher Columbus was the first European to lay eyes on St. Eustatius on his second voyage in 1493 (Hartog 1976:14). At this time, Amerindian groups that had occupied the island since the second millennium BC had moved away for reasons unknown (Schinkel & Versteeg 1992).<sup>3</sup> Deemed *islas inutiles* (useless islands) by the Spanish due to a lack of silver and gold, the Lesser Antilles were of no importance to the Spanish conquistadors. As the sixteenth century progressed, other European powers came to have a presence in the West Indies as well, and over time they were suc-

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3 There are no documented interactions between Amerindians and Europeans or Africans on St. Eustatius.

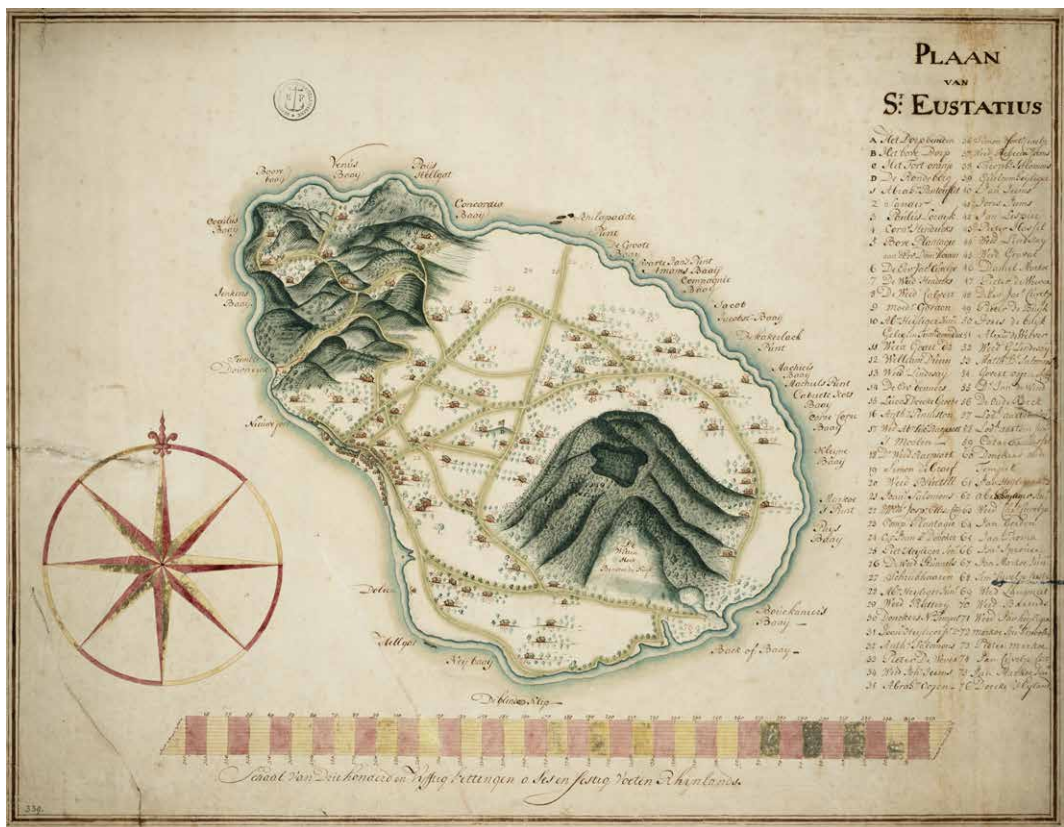


Figure 1.2 Map of St. Eustatius made by Alexander de Lavaux in 1741 showing dozens of sugar plantations that dot the island's countryside. This map depicts a rather peculiar view of the island. The Northern Hills are drawn much smaller than they actually are – an error more historic maps of the island contain. Nevertheless, the network of roads is similar to that of later maps and even resembles today's road network, so the southern part of the island is fairly accurately depicted. Source: NA 4.MIKO 3.A.2.5.1. – 339.

cessful in making dents in the Spanish monopoly. The Spanish, forced to defend their major ports and the treasure fleets, directed their attention to the Greater Antilles. The Lesser Antilles, including St. Eustatius, served as entry points for pirates, buccaneers, and later, merchants, leading eventually to a presence in the Caribbean for, among others, the English, French and Dutch. They soon realized that the islands had more potential than just points from which to attack the Spanish. In the early seventeenth century these European powers started to see opportunities for agriculture and commerce, resulting in rapid colonization of the Lesser Antilles (Palmié 2011:138).

The Dutch began to colonize several Caribbean islands in the 1630s. St. Maarten was colonized in 1631, Curaçao in 1634, Aruba, Bonaire and St. Eustatius in 1636 and Saba around 1640. In December 1635 the Zeeland merchant Jan Snouck and his partners received permission to establish a colony on St. Croix. They outfitted a ship, appointed Peter van Corselles as leader of the future colony and sent him with sufficient men to the West Indies. Upon arrival, St. Croix did not appear to live up to expectations regarding soil fertility and suitable anchorages, so they concentrated on nearby St. Eustatius. This island was occupied by the Dutch in the spring of 1636.



Upon arrival, Van Corselles and his men found the ruins of a deserted French bastion on the island that was built during a short stay in 1629. On its remains they built Fort Oranje (Attema 1976:17).

The new population of St. Eustatius consisted of about 50 settlers. These were mainly Flemings, Walloons, and people from the Dutch province of Zeeland (Attema 1976:16). Tobacco and cotton plantations were established in an attempt to develop a plantation economy. As plantations increased in size, so did the numbers of imported African and Amerindian enslaved people. Several European merchants settled on the island to take part in the growing and very lucrative transatlantic trade. In 1665, the population had grown to 330 white people and 840 enslaved Africans and Amerindians (Attema 1976:16). Yields from the plantations were exported to Zeeland, causing prosperity to increase steadily. When the tobacco market collapsed in the 1680s, the Dutch West India Company turned to its commercial instincts and converted St. Eustatius into a trading entrepôt. Dutch activity on the island caused envy among the English, particularly since a royal patent of 1627 declared England the owner of St. Eustatius (Attema 1976:18). Despite these irritations, these first few decades of St. Eustatius as a Dutch colony were peaceful.

Peace was disrupted in 1663, however, when Statia was sacked by Englishman Robert Holmes. The English occupied St. Eustatius in 1665 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War following a subsequent attack led by Edward Morgan. The island was returned to the Dutch two years later. In 1672, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, Statia was under English control again but a year later the Dutch retook the island. At the Treaty of Westminster in 1674 it was officially returned to the Netherlands, but the English were afraid it would fall into French hands, so they held on to it. This was agreeable to the *Heren XIX*, the board of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), as they preferred not to spend any money on the island's defense. St. Eustatius was taken back into Dutch hands in 1679. In the same year, though, the French attacked the island and destroyed the entire settlement. A year later a joint English-Dutch attack placed the island in Dutch hands once again (Attema 1976:21).

At this time, the WIC saw Statia's potential as a transit harbor for enslaved Africans. The trade in enslaved Africans grew in subsequent decades, and by the 1720s, large numbers of enslaved Africans were passing through the island (Postma 1990:225,320-348). In 1682, St. Eustatius came under full control of the WIC. Until then, Statia had been owned by various 'patrons' (Attema 1976:19). These were individual merchants and representatives of the WIC's Zeeland Chamber who had large amounts of capital at their disposal and were responsible for law and order and the appointment of a commander. The Zeeland merchants who had owned the island gave it to the WIC, as the constant disruption to planting and trading activities by pirates and privateers proved too difficult for them. In 1689, St. Eustatius was captured by the French during King William's War. The French hauled away a large booty, which indicates that there was already a considerable amount of wealth present on the island. The Dutch found themselves again in possession of the island in 1697 after the English recaptured it for them. The poor state of the island's defense, including cannon that refused to fire or would even explode, was one of the main reasons why Statia was often given over without any significant opposition during the last four decades of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the inhabitants gradually

lost the will to resist, since the mother country continually failed to supply them with sufficient ammunition.

The political instability and economic shifts in global trade led to great poverty on the island at the end of the seventeenth century. People from other islands moved to Statia to take advantage of low real estate prices during this time. Between 1705 and 1715, the population on the island more than doubled from 606 to 1,274 inhabitants (Hartog 1976:34). The first three decades of the eighteenth century were characterized by family feuds and rivalries, ruining all chances of maintaining a stable government and undermining a solid basis for prosperity. Since Statia was not very productive at this time, the WIC was not concerned with this turmoil.

The economic situation of Statia changed for the better after 1730 (Hartog 1976:36). In 1739, a synagogue was built in the center of Oranjestad for the island's growing Jewish community (Barka 1988:8). All arable land was under cultivation at this time as the demand for sugar soared on the global market. The residential and commercial areas on the island were enlarged in the eighteenth century despite various setbacks and difficulties like lazy workers, conflicts about landownership, and devastating hurricanes. St. Eustatius was declared a free port in 1756, causing it to become the nexus in the Caribbean and Atlantic World trade networks. Lower Town became the commercial center of the island in the second half of the eighteenth century. While today the Caribbean region plays only a small role in the global economy, the situation in the eighteenth century was the exact opposite. Called variously the 'Golden Rock,' 'Diamond Rock,' and the 'New Tyre,' St. Eustatius could supply almost any product manufactured in the Atlantic World (Gilmore 2013:44). Millions of products were sold each year from its warehouses, including enormous quantities of raw materials such as sugar, cotton, and tobacco that were produced in the region. Statia became one of the busiest ports in the world, where thousands of ships dropped anchor each year. Its population, composed of permanent inhabitants and an equivalent number of transient visitors, reached 20,000 people, which equaled the population of New York City at the time (Monkkonen 1990:259). Enslaved laborers, who were actively involved in trading activities in town, constituted over half of the population. This was unusual compared to sugar islands such as Barbados and Jamaica, where up to 90 percent of the population would sometimes consist of enslaved people (Wells 2015:282).

Statia's prosperity increased even more during the American War of Independence (1775-1783), during which trade with the North American colonies – particularly the arms trade – flourished. Even British merchants on the island were willing to sell whatever the enemies of their country needed. Statia's support of the North American rebels infuriated the British, who declared war on the Dutch in 1780 (the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War). In 1781, St. Eustatius was sacked by a large British force under the command of Admiral George Brydges Rodney, who put an end to the trade with North America. They hauled away the largest booty taken in time of war in the eighteenth century (Gilmore 2013:49). Statia was captured by the French just nine months later in a surprise attack. The island was returned to the Dutch in 1784 and the economy flourished once more, with the volume of trade rising to what it had been before the capture (Hartog 1976:98).

Statia's success did not last for very long after these events. The island's importance as a transshipment harbor declined around 1795 as the United States became

independent and trade moved to North America. To make matters worse, the end of the slave trade was looming and the struggling island and its withering economy fell to the French in 1795. The French policies governing trade inhibited the free transactions that built the island's wealth (Gilmore 2006:91). These events signaled the end of prosperity on what was the richest trading center in the Caribbean only fifteen years earlier. In 1801, the British seized St. Eustatius again, but a year later Dutch rule was reinstated with the peace of Amiens. St. Eustatius surrendered to the British again in 1810. The Dutch flag reappeared on St. Eustatius in 1816 when the island was returned to the Netherlands (Hartog 1976:105). In the following decades, the warehouses that used to be stuffed to their roofs decayed, just like the fortifications around the island. The houses in Upper Town fared a bit better. In 1840, there were just ten plantations left. The size of Oranjestad rapidly decreased along with its population density. After the abolition of slavery in 1863, former enslaved people left the countryside to settle in town and as a result the large-scale cultivation of crops came to an end. One way Statians kept their heads above water in these years was by exporting yams, potatoes, and trass, a volcanic earth that makes good mortar, to other Caribbean islands. A slight revival in cotton production and the frequent visits of whalers in the early twentieth century brought some prosperity. Devastating hurricanes at the turn of the twentieth century caused significant damage and exacerbated Oranjestad's decline. The population decreased from 2,668 people in 1816 to a mere 921 in 1948 (Hartog 1976:125-127). The island that was once known as one of the leading ports of the world became an almost forgotten colony.

Several hotels were built on St. Eustatius with the advent of tourism in the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. A small airport, constructed in 1946, facilitated tourists' transportation to and from the island (Hartog 1976:145). Statia's rich history has been a main attraction for tourists ever since. Because comparatively little development has taken place on the island since the eighteenth century, it is now an archaeological treasure trove, covered in hundreds of well-preserved archaeological sites which include plantations, warehouses, religious structures, fortifications, and shipwrecks.

### 1.3 Previous research

The first person to carry out archaeological investigations on St. Eustatius was J.P.B. De Josselin de Jong, an anthropologist at Leiden University who collected Amerindian artifacts at several sites in 1923 (De Josselin de Jong 1947). Several of these sites were excavated by a team from Leiden University under the direction of Aad Versteeg in the 1980s, among which was a Saladoid settlement called the Golden Rock site (Schinkel & Versteeg 1992). It did not take long before historical archaeologists started to take an interest in the island as well. When Norman Barka and Edwin Dethlefsen visited St. Eustatius in 1979, they were amazed by the density of colonial-period artifacts and archaeological sites on the island. In an article in *Archaeology Magazine*, they termed St. Eustatius "The Pompeii of the New World" (Dethlefsen et al. 1982). Under the auspices of the College of William & Mary, they set up an archaeological field school on the island in 1981, returning every summer to investigate colonial-period sites. For nearly two decades, staff and students of the College of William & Mary studied numerous sites, including the Government Guest House, synagogue *Honen Dalim*, several sugar

plantations including English Quarter, Concordia, and Princess, the Dutch Reformed Church, Battery de Windt, and various warehouse ruins in Lower Town (Barka 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1996). The William & Mary field school started underwater investigations as well. Assisted by amateur archaeologist Wil Nagelkerken, William & Mary students mapped the extent of the historical anchorage zone between 1983 and 1984 (Nagelkerken 1985, 2000). William & Mary also teamed up with researchers from East Carolina University to investigate several shipwreck sites. A magnetometer survey was carried out in 1986, followed by underwater surveys and test excavations in 1987 and 1988. Barka's students completed several Master's theses dealing with a variety of topics and sites, including fortifications, cemeteries, architectural styles, submerged archaeological sites, and the spatial organization of sugar plantations (Bequette 1986, 1992; Delle 1989; Howard 1991; Paonessa 1990; Sanders 1988).

In 2004, after the William & Mary field school had come to an end, the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research (SECAR) was founded. Grant Gilmore, one of Barka's former students, was appointed the first director. Gilmore completed his doctoral dissertation the same year, which investigated slavery on St. Eustatius in a comparative perspective (Gilmore 2004). Under his direction, a continuous field school was held until his resignation in 2011. During Gilmore's seven-year directorship, many archaeological research projects were carried out, including the excavation of a warehouse in Lower Town, a *mikveh* next to the synagogue, a free black village on the outskirts of Oranjestad, enslaved African burials at Union plantation, and the great house at Schotsenhoek plantation (Labiau 2008; Miller 2008). These sites were excavated with the help of students and volunteers from all over the world. In 2011, after two internships and one temporary paid position at SECAR, the author became SECAR's director. At this time, a great increase in construction activities resulted in numerous commercial archaeological projects which were led by the author. Prior to proposed development, Schotsenhoek, Benners and Steward plantations were investigated, and a slave quarters was discovered and excavated at Schotsenhoek plantation in 2012 and 2013 (Stelten 2011, 2012, 2013). Another slave quarters was excavated in 2014 at Fair Play plantation. The author also directed several watching briefs in Lower Town and Upper Town, and carried out an underwater survey for NuStar, the island's oil terminal (Stelten 2014, 2015). In addition, the author created an archaeological predictive model of the entire island in cooperation with Leiden University (Stelten 2013).

In addition to extensive archaeological investigations, documentary research has revealed a wealth of information on Statia's past. Historical research into St. Eustatius commenced in the eighteenth century, when several travelers commented on its history in published diaries. Throughout the twentieth century, several short articles on the island's past were published in the *West Indische Gids* (Jameson 1903; Grol 1921; Hartog 1948). It was not until 1976, however, that serious attempts were made to write a comprehensive historical synthesis. In that year, Hartog and Attema both wrote overviews of the island's history (Attema 1976; Hartog 1976). Goslinga followed in 1985, when he wrote a comprehensive volume on Dutch history in the Caribbean and the Guianas (Goslinga 1985). Wim Klooster published a volume on Dutch trade in the Caribbean in 1998, focusing heavily on the free ports of St. Eustatius and Curaçao (Klooster 1998). Various other smaller publications over the years have complemented these major works (Enthoven 2012; Gilmore 2006; Hartog 1997; Roitman & Jordaan 2015).

#### 1.4 Research problem

Despite the fact that a significant amount of archaeological and historical research has been carried out on St. Eustatius over the past four decades, many gaps in our knowledge of the island's history remain. There are three main reasons for this. First, most research has focused on the elite merchant and planter class, their commercial activities, and the archaeological sites related to them. This is particularly true for the first historical archaeological campaigns, which focused on excavating warehouses, religious structures, and Great Houses. Historical research has mainly focused on merchants, trade, the history of Statian monuments, and military history, while largely ignoring the lives of those at the bottom of the social order and daily life in general. With a few exceptions, such as Gilmore's 2004 dissertation and the author's slave quarters excavations, the archaeology and history of slavery has not received much attention. Furthermore, archaeologists working on Statia have employed research methods unsuitable for the study of slave quarters. These sites have only been marginally investigated by excavating 1 x 1 meter units to subsoil by hand. Using this method, it is nearly impossible to develop a comprehensive map of post holes and other features that mark the locations of slave dwellings. The author's research has shown that the best method for obtaining such a comprehensive view of settlement patterns in slave quarters is to excavate a large area using a mechanical excavator that strips the top soil. This method allows entire slave settlements to be excavated in a matter of weeks (Stelten 2013). This method is particularly suitable when later manifestations of slave quarters that did not use post in ground construction methods are expected to have already been disturbed due to plowing or other destructive activities.

Underwater archaeological research has only focused on areas that are relatively close to shore on the island's leeward side, which are situated within practical diving limits. As a result, little to nothing is known about submerged archaeological remains outside of Oranje and Gallows Bays. Furthermore, underwater archaeological research has mainly consisted of surveys of small areas and limited test excavations, which have not provided much insight into the nature of shipping activities around the island and further offshore. For example, to date no archaeological research has attempted to provide insights into the material reflection of shipping activities outside of Oranje and Gallows Bay, which severely limits our understanding of the human utilization of maritime space around the island through time. The present study attempts to fill this gap by presenting the results of a comprehensive underwater survey.

Another topic that has been the subject of comparatively little research is the early colonial period relating to the seventeenth century. This partly has to do with the fact that there is much more historical and archaeological evidence available for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Seventeenth-century sites and deposits are mostly buried underneath eighteenth-century structures and artifacts, and are thus much harder to access. In addition, relatively little archival data exists for the seventeenth century due to the destruction of the islands archives by a hurricane in 1772 and invading British troops in 1781 (Hartog 1976:94). Another reason why this period has received little attention is because St. Eustatius was a fairly insignificant and ordinary colony during the first years of Dutch colonization, very different from the time when it experienced its economic boom and became an important player in a global trade network. To most people, especially those interested in the island's role in world history

and the formation of the United States of America, the study of the latter period is much more appealing.

The second reason why many gaps in our knowledge of the island's history remain is the division between archaeologists and historians. Most research on St. Eustatius has been severely limited in its scope. Archaeological research has been restricted by researchers' limited historical knowledge that allows research results to be properly contextualized. As a result, conclusions derived from archaeological research on St. Eustatius have been largely descriptive with little interpretation. This has, for example, led to incorrect interpretations regarding the size of the historic anchorage area by (amateur) maritime archaeologists. Norman Barka's work, particularly the investigations of the Government Guest House, the synagogue, Princess Estate, and Concordia plantation, are lacking an interpretive framework.<sup>4</sup> There are a few exceptions, such as Gilmore's work on slavery, Miller's research into the island's Jewish community, and Delle's spatial analysis of sugar plantations. Likewise, historical analyses have often only marginally incorporated archaeological data. This has resulted in incorrect conclusions and a view of the past that lacks material data. In an area as rich in archaeological material as St. Eustatius, material data has great potential to nuance, contradict and complement documentary data. The best example in this regard is perhaps Attema's statement that nothing remains of the eighteenth-century weighing house in Lower Town, while this is one of the most prominent and well-preserved buildings in the area (Attema 1976:36). It is therefore of paramount importance for any research into the history of St. Eustatius to combine sound archaeological research with extensive documentary data.

Last, the majority of archaeological and historical studies on St. Eustatius have lacked synthesis and a theoretical register that adequately explains the wide variation in Statia's archaeological record. For example, very few studies have systematically engaged with the island's archaeological record of globalization. For many years, a heavy emphasis was placed on describing site after site and event after event, without examining their precise relations to one another.<sup>5</sup> A lack of theory in most archaeological and historical work has allowed scholars to overlook the complex interplay of social, economic, political, and natural processes that shaped the island's history through time. Moreover, while St. Eustatius' role in the Caribbean and global trade networks is now well documented, this approach has resulted in a dearth of comparative archaeological research with other areas. Comparative archaeological studies between St. Eustatius and other island colonies are few and far between.<sup>6</sup>

The original intention of this study was to investigate submerged archaeological remains around the island, particularly in those areas further offshore where research had not yet been undertaken. In the early stages of the research, however, it became clear that shipwrecks, anchors, and other submerged artifacts and sites did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they were part of a much wider network of human interac-

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4 In his study of Concordia plantation, Barka made extensive use of Johannes de Graaff's probate inventory, but this was the only historical source consulted.

5 It should be noted that Norman Barka published a comprehensive book chapter on Statian settlement patterns through time (Barka 2001).

6 With the exception of Gilmore 2004 and Miller 2011, which are strongly focused on the comparative aspect.



*Figure 1.3 Many artifacts in Statia's archaeological record underscore the island's connection with the sea. This maritime-themed eighteenth-century faience plate from the SECAR collection is one example. Photo by the author.*

tion spheres that included terrestrial sites and artifacts, and even immaterial aspects. Therefore, it was decided to incorporate the analysis of submerged archaeological remains into a study comprising the entire maritime cultural landscape of the island. The terrestrial-underwater dichotomy, which is present in much archaeological work, is one that does not exist historically on St. Eustatius. In its simplest form, describing the physical location of artifacts and sites on Statia is already problematic, in that some sites or artifacts are found on land during certain times of the year and are submerged during others. The dichotomy becomes even more ambiguous when looking at social, economic, and political processes and events through time. Shipwrecks do not exist in a vacuum; they are inextricably linked with the ports from which they departed and those to which they arrived. They are part of local, regional, and even global trade and communication networks. Goods, people, and ideas transported on ships continued their journey on terrestrial roads once they arrived in ports, making water and land a continuous part of the maritime cultural landscape that transcended geographical differences and boundaries. This is exemplified by the fact that artifact assemblages found as cargo at shipwreck sites are similar to those found on terrestrial sites. Perhaps the best example in this regard are Dutch yellow bricks called *IJsselsteentjes*, which were used as ballast on ships and offloaded on St. Eustatius to make room for locally-produced raw materials. The former ballast bricks were then used in the construction of the warehouses and merchant homes that dotted the island's leeward coast. When Statia's economy collapsed, these structures were dismantled and the same bricks were exported by ships to be used in construction elsewhere. These seemingly trivial artifacts provide a direct connection between activities on land and sea, and demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between the colony and the mother country.

People on small islands such as St. Eustatius were constantly looking at the sea and contemplating what was beyond. Many Statian residents arrived on the island by sea, and nearly all relied on the sea for their livelihood. Despite the fact that people on St. Eustatius lived on land, they formed a maritime community. The sea was not a divider, but a connector. It acted as a highway that linked islands, land masses, and communi-

ties all over the world. In addition, the sea was a place where people lived their lives as well. Countless sea voyages were made during the Age of European expansion, some only lasting a few days, while others took months to complete. Hundreds of these ships would sometimes lay at anchor on St. Eustatius' roadstead for varying periods of time. People, goods, and ideas moved frequently between ships and the island, making the roadstead, its ships, and the people on them an extension of the insular community and the island itself. In the same vein, the shipwrecks, anchors, and other submerged archaeological remains reflecting past events and activities on the road can be regarded as an extension of the island's terrestrial archaeological landscape.

In order to truly make sense of the complex interactions, events, and processes that shaped this maritime world, both land and sea need to be studied in relation to each other. In order to do so, this study is embedded in the theoretical framework of the maritime cultural landscape. Over the past two decades, many maritime environments across the world have been studied using this framework, but to date it has not been applied to a Lesser Antillean island in its entirety. Several studies into historical landscapes have been conducted on islands such as St. John, St. Kitts, and St. Lucia, but these focus heavily on plantations and sugar cultivation (Armstrong et al. 2009; Hicks 2007). In this study, all components that make up the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius will be discussed and analyzed in relation to each other and to other island colonies. This will be done using a variety of methods, including terrestrial and underwater archaeological research and an in-depth analysis of the documentary record.

The current research will be complimentary to historical studies in that it will focus on describing and analyzing the social organization of past lives by conducting a social anthropology of the past. By examining various types of sources, a more comprehensive view of the past can be reconstructed. For example, the documentary record can provide information about the slave trade, while the archaeological record in the slave quarters informs us about the lives of enslaved laborers. Documentary data contains information on the motivations for trade, while the archaeological record provides insights into which goods were actually traded. While historical studies have often asked questions of *why* things happened, this study focuses largely on questions of *how* things happened and how this is reflected in the physical environment.

In today's globalizing world, in which people's lives often appear to be affected more by people, events, and developments overseas than those in their immediate vicinity, it is particularly relevant to investigate not only how global trade networks came into being, but also what their effect was on the physical and social environments of the colonies and port cities involved in these networks. In other words, it is extremely relevant to study how the interplay of internal and external forces in an early globalizing world shaped the communities living at the peripheries and how they are continuing to do so today. The following research questions will be used to reconstruct the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius, investigate its internal dynamics, and examine its role on local, regional, and international scales through time.

### **Main question**

In which ways have the complex interplay of local, regional, and global social, economic, political, and natural forces shaped the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius through time?



### Sub-questions

- What are the key elements of the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius?
- Where, why, and when do various themes in the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius overlap and what are the results of these overlaps?
- Which temporal scales characterize the events and processes that created the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius?
- In which ways and to what extent has the natural environment shaped the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius?
- How was the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius connected to other island colonies and the wider Atlantic World, and how was it shaped by these outside connections?

By centering on the maritime cultural landscape in answering these research questions, a refocusing of priorities towards a more inclusive form of maritime archaeology is achieved. In it, the entirety of site types related to St. Eustatius' maritime cultural landscape is studied within a comparative and diachronic framework. It is in this way that the study of the island's past can move beyond an emphasis on descriptive studies and move fully into the realm of interpretation.

It should be noted that the core of this dissertation is formed by section 4.2. The fieldwork conducted for the present study consists of the underwater archaeological survey described in this section. In addition, several other studies conducted by the author in previous years on the island in different capacities will be used to analyse and interpret the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius. The research on a collection of shoe buckles was conducted by the author for his BA thesis during his first visit to St. Eustatius (Stelten 2009). The author's research on cannon and anchors was conducted for his MA thesis a year later (Stelten 2010). As Director of SECAR, the author conducted various commercial archaeological projects, some of which, such as the Schotsenhoek slave quarters excavation and the research in Lower Town, feature extensively throughout this work. The results of these projects are used throughout the dissertation and positioned within the maritime cultural landscape.

The dissertation starts by outlining the theoretical framework of the maritime cultural landscape in which the research has been conducted. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology used in the archaeological and documentary research. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 address the first sub-question by discussing all themes that make up the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius. These are divided into economic, social, and political components. Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the research and addresses the remaining sub-questions. The concluding chapter synthesizes the research presented by addressing the main question.