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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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Issue Date: 2019-03-21

Discussion

As shown in the previous three chapters, the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius comprises a multitude of elements. It is the material and immaterial reflection of centuries of human activity on and around the island. In this chapter, the key components discussed in the previous chapters will be analyzed to answer the remaining sub-questions set forth in the introduction. To truly understand why things happened the way they did, it is necessary to look at the timing of events and social processes, the role of the natural environment, the intersections of various components, their connection to the outside world, and the ways in which Statia's maritime cultural landscape compares to that of other island colonies in the region.

7.1 Differing timescales

Cultural landscapes are not static phenomena. They do not always have an end point, but can carry on into the present and beyond into the future. As has been shown, the history of St. Eustatius is made up of a series of events, which can form short-term or long-term processes. The maritime cultural landscape is formed by a combination of events, medium length conjunctures, and long term structures. The examination of these three time scales helps to contextualize the island's history and its maritime cultural landscape diachronically. The time scales and temporal changes will be examined for each component separately.

7.1.1 *The defense component*

The turbulent history of St. Eustatius is characterized by many events lasting from a day to as long as several months. Twenty-two such events mark the changes of flag that occurred on the island between 1625 and 1816, when the island changed hands between the Dutch, French, and English until the Dutch finally gained permanent control (Hartog 1976:23). Sometimes an invading force only stayed for a few weeks or months, as was the case with the British invasion in 1781. Other times, the island remained in possession of the invaders for many years. These events were often caused by external influences. Wars that originated in Europe were usually fought in the colonies. When peace was negotiated, overseas colonies became bargaining chips that changed hands. St. Eustatius has been under permanent Dutch rule since 1816. The close of the Napoleonic Wars signaled the end of continuous power struggles in the Lesser Antilles by European nations. As a result, peace finally came to St. Eustatius. These short-term

takeover events did have an influence on the medium timescale. As was shown in Chapter 6, the Statian defense component experienced many ups and downs. Invading forces sometimes built new fortifications, only to be left to the elements after a few years of operation. The Dutch, British, and French all tried to put their mark on the island's defense system in the eighteenth century, but after another change of flag, the newly constructed forts and batteries usually quickly fell into disrepair. The same goes for the artillery employed in them. More often than not, cannon were too rusty to be used, there was no shot available, or their carriages had collapsed. Cannon would often do more harm to the people operating them than to the people they were firing at. Most guns were imported after times of political instability and conquest, particularly during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and in the 1780s (Stelten 2010:68). Changes of flag thus resonated for several years as they provided an impetus for a changing defense component. On a societal level, changes of flag had a profound impact as well. As new powers took control of the island, new laws and regulations were put in place and people had to adapt their way of life to these changing circumstances. Some people may have experienced only slight changes, while for others, such as the Jews in 1781, their lives were turned upside down completely and the entire Jewish community was affected. But conflict could have a deeper impact in peoples' minds as well. Even though most people knew that the forts and batteries could never prevent a large naval force from invading, military installations created a façade to the outside world that put peoples' minds at ease. A successful invasion took away that feeling of security by demonstrating that the enemy had recognized the island's defense system as a sham, thereby prompting the improvement of the defense component.

7.1.2 The commercial component

Wars and the resulting demand in certain commodities influenced Statian trade and the role the island played in trade networks. This changing role could last for many years. The best example is perhaps the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). St. Eustatius played a key role in this conflict between Great Britain and the rebellious North American colonies (Jameson 1903). Through St. Eustatius, large amounts of arms and ammunition were shipped to the American rebels. In addition, much correspondence between the leaders of the revolution and their European allies went through St. Eustatius. In this way, a changing political environment on a global scale heavily influenced the nature of business conducted on St. Eustatius and the island's role in trade networks for the better part of a decade.

Statia's importance in international trade is an ongoing process. Only two decades after the island was settled by the Dutch, it was reported that it contained warehouses holding "all things requisite to life." Statia had become an important trading depot by the 1680s, importing large quantities of sugar and tobacco from nearby islands (Enthoven 2012:252). After St. Eustatius became a free port in 1756, trade increased exponentially and the island became the nexus of the Caribbean and Atlantic World trade networks. Trade quickly recovered after Rodney looted virtually the entire island in 1781, and took on even greater proportions than before (Gilmore 2013:49). There were several reasons why St. Eustatius became such an important transit harbor. It was ideally situated on the busy sea lanes between the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Perhaps more importantly, the island was surrounded by colonies of other European countries

whose trade was restricted by the mercantilist policies of France and Great Britain. This meant that colonies were only allowed to trade with the mother country against set prices. Planters and merchants could obtain much higher profits if goods were sold illegally through St. Eustatius. The island's change of government to French 1795 signaled the end of free trade and started the economic decline of the Golden Rock (Gilmore 2013:49). The Dutch attempted to revive its role as a major transit harbor in 1828 by declaring the island a free port once more (Hartog 1976:106). No import or export duties, anchor fees, or harbor fees were charged to any ships of allied nations.

These processes are still at work today. Since the 1970s, an oil transshipment facility has been operational on the island. One of the determining factors for constructing a 14 million barrel oil storage facility on such a small island was its location close to a point where shipping routes converge. This is known as the point of minimal deviation, which to a large degree determines where large multinationals such as oil companies erect transshipment facilities. Oil tankers from all over the world, including the Middle East, South-, and North America call each day at St. Eustatius to load and offload petroleum products. Not much has changed since the eighteenth century, as Statia remains one of the largest ports in the Caribbean. Nowadays it is also the second largest port in the Netherlands by tonnage.⁴² The cliché that “history repeats itself” is certainly true for St. Eustatius. This interrupted but still ongoing process in Statian history is a perfect example of Braudel's *longue durée*, in that its workings span centuries but the system is not eternal. Statia's importance on the commercial world stage is not a timeless, eternal truth. It had a beginning and it developed in a certain way, with ups and downs, but can cease to exist at any time, never to return again.⁴³

7.1.3 The power component

Changing external influences also had a short- to medium-term effect on the power component. A growing demand for sugar in Europe sparked the construction of many plantations, causing the countryside to change dramatically as forests made way for endless cane fields (Carter et al. 1959:133). Perhaps no aspect of the island's maritime cultural landscape changed as much through time as the power component. Power relations were established as soon as the first colonists landed on the island. As time progressed and trade grew to phenomenal proportions, the enslaved and free black population became more involved in maritime trades and used this changing situation to resist the power of the elite. On the other end of the spectrum, some members of the elite class needed ways to set themselves apart from everyone else on the island. What better way to do this than to mint your own currency that can be used for centuries to come and occupy a permanent role in the *longue durée* timescale?

When sugar prices dropped in the nineteenth century, the planter elite improved their plantations with impressive windmills and arches to convey a sense of continued power at a time when this was increasingly difficult to do. These events served to legitimize the planters' power on the largest timescale, the *longue durée*, by showing

42 <https://docslide.net/documents/general-overview-st-eustatius-facility-operating-for-over-30-years-largest-non-government-employer-for-30-years-second-only-to-rotterdam-for-most-tonnage.html>, accessed on August 12, 2017.

43 Braudel uses the term *la très longue durée* to refer to processes on an extremely long, almost eternal timescale that hardly ever change: a finite planet and 24 hours a day (Lee 1012:13).

they will retain their power, which they had had for centuries, into the future. This was not meant to be, as relations between different groups in society were completely overthrown on July 1, 1863 when slavery in the Dutch colonies was abolished. At this time, all enslaved people became free people of color and could decide what to do with their lives. This event has had a marked effect in the long run, and in many ways still resonates today. On the island itself, many people moved away from the countryside and settled in town and plantations were largely abandoned and ceased to be profitable. Some people took advantage of their newly-acquired freedom to explore the world, enlisting on whaling ships or working on other islands. In the wake of abolition, former enslaved people expanded their horizons and diversified their trades, thereby connecting with the world around them. Nowadays the power relations on St. Eustatius are again being questioned since the island became a municipality of the Netherlands in 2010. Many people on the island feel that this has caused a reversal to the pre-1863 situation, whereby the Dutch are trying to recolonize the island and impose their will on the local population. Foundations as well as the local government are now trying to change the island's geopolitical status again.⁴⁴

7.1.4 *The resource component*

The *longue durée* perspective in the resource component is best observed in the provisioning grounds of plantations, which have a very strong link to the present. As outlined in paragraph 4.3.2., provisioning grounds were crucial to the economic success of the island and the health of its inhabitants. They remained important after emancipation and are still central in the subsistence economy of some islanders today. Many of the crops that were once grown are still being cultivated on the island today. In addition, many houses are surrounded by fruit trees that provide food for its owners and for the hungry passer-by. Cultivating in the countryside invokes feelings of freedom, independence, and affinity with nature (Pulsipher 1990). It provides a continuity with the past, when ancestors worked those same plots of land and grew the same crops, albeit under much harsher circumstances. For enslaved people, provisioning grounds symbolized feelings of autonomy, security, joy, and pride of ownership just as they do in the present. The names of plots of land on the slopes of the Quill where provisions have been grown for centuries, such as Free Gut, Mount Pleasant, and Retreat, convey these ideas very well. These physical places are important cognitive elements in the landscape that create a strong continuity with the past.

7.1.5 *The cognitive component*

Many historical processes have formed an integral part of Statian society over time, and some are still ongoing. Religious dominance in the cultural landscape was for a long time reserved for the Reformed Church. In the course of the twentieth century, Seventh Day Adventism became the island's main religion, followed by Methodism and Roman Catholicism. A Roman Catholic church was built at the top of the Bay Path in the early twentieth century. Just like the Reformed church, the Roman Catholic church had a commanding view of the harbor and occupied an even more prominent place in the urban environment. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new

⁴⁴ <http://caribischnetwork.ntr.nl/tag/brighter-path-foundation>, accessed on August 26, 2017.

Seventh Day Adventist church was erected on the outskirts of Oranjestad. Even though it occupies a marginal location in the urban environment, it is located next to one of the most important roads on the island. Furthermore, it is by far the largest building on the island besides NuStar's oil tanks. Its enormous size and orange color make it the most visible and prominent building in the island's landscape today. In stark contrast to these two churches stands the island's only mosque. Housed in a small building in a quiet part of Upper Town, it is almost invisible to most people on the island, much the same as the Jewish synagogue and the Anglican and Lutheran churches once were. While St. Eustatius has seen many different configurations of its religious landscape over the years, the division between the dominant and the less dominant religions has always been clearly visible through the locations and appearances of their places of worship in the island's landscape.

A type of event that was particularly dramatic was the wrecking of ships. As was shown in paragraphs 4.2.2.1. and 4.2.2.2., dozens, if not hundreds of ships have wrecked in Statia's waters over the past four centuries. Usually only a matter of minutes or hours, shipwreck events reflect the dangers inherent to conducting business in the paths of Atlantic hurricanes. When the roadstead was full of ships, getting out quickly could be a hazardous task. This may be why the five known shipwrecks are all found in the anchorage zone. Wrecking events were almost inevitable without the weather forecasts of today. Shipwrecks, however, represent more than just an event. They signify the creation of new places in the maritime cultural landscape. According to Gould, these so-called events are embedded parts of ongoing processes linked to behavior involving social, economic, and even symbolic activities. The drama of a shipwreck may focus attention on the event, but the conditions that produced the wreck and the consequences arising from it are as relevant as the event itself (Gould 2011:16). This is reminiscent of Braudel's changing view of the event. Braudel first stated that "events are dust", they are infinite in number, they float here and there, scarcely touching the real soil of history. Later, however, he changed his tone by saying that every event, however brief, has to be sure a contribution to make. Events can even have far-reaching consequences (Braudel 1966:901-902).

The best example – a very symbolic one – in this regard is the Blue Bead Wreck. More than a century after its wrecking, people still knew about the event. It may have been for this shipwreck that – according to the legend – upon abolition former enslaved people threw their beads into the sea as a sign of their freedom. They may have done so to send the beads back to where they came from – the ship that brought them to the island in the first place. The blue bead Fenger picked up over a century ago represents a very fundamental place in the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius. Even today, after heavy swells people flock to that particular beach to look for blue beads, and dive shops take tourists to *blue bead hole* to find their own piece of history. Blue bead hunting has become a local tradition and people on the island talk about these enigmatic glass objects every day. Moreover, people that once lived on St. Eustatius proudly wear their blue beads on necklaces symbolizing their connection to the island. Local lore has it that once you are found by a blue bead, you belong to the island and will always return. Blue beads create a continuity with the past, and a way for people to identify with certain aspects of that past. The beads and the shipwreck they came from are tangible and symbolic representations of historical events, which

have been playing a role in people's lives for centuries and will likely continue to do so long after the last bead has been found.

7.1.6 The civic component

There were other ways in which short term hurricane events resulted in medium length conjunctures or even long term structures. Hurricanes and tropical storms did not only wreak havoc on the sea, they were also a threat to the island itself and had the potential to radically change the civic component of the maritime cultural landscape. As shown in Chapter 5, the slave quarters at Schotsenhoek plantation was relocated every few decades. While these relocations may not always be attributed to hurricanes, the fact that the slave quarters were located on the slopes of Signal Hill in 1781 points to the fact that a more sheltered location than before was preferred. The slave quarters that was excavated may very well have been destroyed by a hurricane. This is not unlikely given the fact that much sturdier houses in town were no match for hurricanes either. Accounts of the 1772 and 1780 hurricanes describe that hundreds of buildings were destroyed on Statia (NA 1.05.01.02 – 629, folio 337; Neely 2012:135). These events obviously had a short-term impact, but certainly also one in the long run. Every few decades – and sometimes even years – people had to rebuild their houses, churches, warehouses, and plantations. In some cases, this may have altered settlement patterns. For some, the costs of rebuilding might have been prohibitive, while for others like the Dutch Reformed Church congregation, it presented an opportunity to reach even higher – literally and figuratively speaking. Whatever one's attitude may have been, once every few years the people on Statia were presented with yet another potentially life-changing disaster. Few places in the world experienced such a constantly changing physical environment. As a result, Statian society needed to be very flexible and highly adaptive to the woes of Mother Nature.

These developments are best categorized and understood by Braudel's medium time frame, the conjunctures, or as Braudel calls it: history with slow but perceptible rhythms (Casini 2010:178). The cycle of destruction, rebuilding and reconfiguration, and adaptation to this new situation is one that can span several years, perhaps even a decade or longer. On one end of the spectrum, the cycle is bordered by the catastrophic events as described above, while on the other end, they form a long process, a rhythm that has been ongoing ever since humans first set foot on the island. They can only change when *la très longue durée*, something on an almost infinite scale, changes, such as the path of hurricanes moving due to climate change.

Connected to the importance of St. Eustatius as a commercial hub is the influx of people. When the island was settled by the Dutch in 1636, the population consisted mainly of Zeelanders, Flemings, and Walloons (Attema 1976:16). It did not take long, however, before merchants and planters from other areas settled here as well. When Admiral Rodney captured the island in 1781, he compiled a list of all merchants on the island that included various types of information, such as country of birth which is stated for 163 merchants (Barka 1991:387). This document presents a fascinating look into the cosmopolitan nature of Statian society. Merchants hailed from all over Europe, including England, Ireland, France, Scotland, Italy, Corsica, Hungary, Germany, Prussia, Flanders, and Dantzig. North American merchants came from Boston, Virginia, Philadelphia, Georgia, and Pennsylvania. Caribbean merchants

came from various islands, including Bermuda, Martinique, Curaçao, St. Maarten, St. Kitts, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Nevis, Grenada, and Barbados. Enslaved Africans, not included in the document, hailed from different places in West Africa, including Congo, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, and Nigeria. As these examples show, Statia was home to an extremely multicultural society. The island has continued to attract relatively large numbers of immigrants as a result of employment offered by the oil terminal. Furthermore, people that fall in love with the island after visiting tend to stay. The author knows people of dozens of nationalities that now live and work on the island, including Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts, Saba, St. Maarten, St. Lucia, Curaçao, the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, England, Wales, Sweden, Germany, Austria, and Iran. For centuries, St. Eustatius has thus housed an extremely diverse multicultural and multiethnic community. The influx of people is high compared to mainland areas, as many immigrants tend to stay only a few years due to limitations inherent to life on a small island. This has created a constantly changing social environment that has been a crossroads of people and cultures for centuries.

7.1.7 *The transport and communication component*

The differing timescales are perhaps nowhere as evident as in the transport and communication component, most notably on the roadstead and in port. From a *longue durée* perspective, the location of the roadstead and port has not changed in the past 400 years. The western side of the island was and remains the safest place for ships to anchor. It will likely stay this way until in *la très longue durée* the physical environment changes drastically, for example during a volcanic eruption. The *longue durée*, however, does interact with medium term conjunctures, in that the use of the roadstead changes through time. It could be extremely busy for decades, only to be nearly deserted after a change in economic conditions. The port has also changed as new piers were built which are protected by breakwaters. The size and location of the roadstead on the island's leeward side can change as well. The best example in this regard are perhaps the oil tankers load and offload petroleum products at Nustar, which operates a port facility in the northwestern part of the island. Due to their size, tankers do not come as close to shore in shallow water as wooden sailing ships used to. They anchor further to the north, at the northern edge of the historical anchorage area. On the level of the event, interactions occur with both conjunctures and the *longue durée*. One example, the significance of the blue bead wreck, has already been discussed. Another example concerns the 1830 roadstead regulations, in which it was stated that ships could not drop their ballast on the roadstead. This created a favorable situation in the long run: as long as these regulations were in place, the roadstead did not fill up with ballast as much.

7.1.8 *The recreational component*

Recreational activities are an important aspect of human life. They help people unwind, provide distraction from the rhythms of life, and enhance and maintain peoples' cognitive and physical abilities. Recreational activities are perhaps even more important on small islands than they are elsewhere, as the monotony of life in a confined area can easily affect people in a negative way, a condition called 'island fever'. It is therefore

not surprising that recreational activities have played an important role on St. Eustatius through time. It is interesting to note, however, that besides a few newly-introduced activities such as SCUBA diving, many recreational activities have remained virtually unchanged since colonial times.

As shown in Chapter 5, hiking up and into the Quill and picnicking were favorite pastimes of Statian residents throughout the colonial period. One of the modern trails up to the crater rim was in fact already in use in the eighteenth century, as it is featured on the 1781 P.F. Martin map. The trail leading down into the crater first appeared on a map made in the 1840s, but was undoubtedly in use long before (NA 4.MIKO 3.A.2.5.1. – 645). Hiking the Quill is still one of Statia's visitors' favorite things to do. The same tree in which Lieutenant De Jong carved his name in 1780 is still being used in the same way today, the names of former adventurers serving as testimonies to practices spanning centuries.

The consumption of alcohol has also been a major recreational activity on the island for many years. In the colonial period, people from all classes of society engaged in heavy drinking as was noted by visitors. Archaeological evidence supports the documentary record, as colonial period wine and gin bottles are found all over the island and at every archaeological site, including the roadstead. Alcohol consumption provided a way to escape the monotony of life on a small island, the confinement of a ship, and the horrors of slavery. Not surprisingly, the excavation of the Schotsenhoek slave quarters yielded numerous wine bottle fragments and even two wine glasses.

Nowadays, alcohol consumption remains an important part of insular life for many people. It is a well-known fact that people who move to a small island often drink more than they did at the place they came from, and Caribbean islands feature high in the global alcohol consumption ranking.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, Statia's smaller neighbor Saba is said to have the highest consumption of Heineken per capita in the world.⁴⁶ This might partly be an island's custom, but it can also be explained by the fact that islands themselves have hardly changed in the sense that they are still small rocks in an endless ocean and inhabitants' lives tend to be more monotonous and limited in many ways compared to the lives of people on the mainland.

Despite the fact that recreational activities are remarkably similar throughout the centuries and can therefore be viewed from a *longue durée* perspective, it should be noted that particular recreational events are more in line with Braudel's original idea of the event: infinite in number, floating here and there, and scarcely touching the real soil of history (Burns 2006:256). In a way, this is true for the recreational component. Drinking a glass of rum, picnicking on the volcano, going for a swim, these events are all unlikely to carry on into the future and change the course of history in any significant way such as the blue bead wreck has done. On the other hand, engaging with nature through hiking or snorkeling inspires people and creates awareness of their surroundings and the beauty and fragility of nature, thereby promoting its conservation which can carry on into the distant future. That this is not something that is only relevant in modern times but was also important in the colonial period is illustrated by

45 <https://www.livescience.com/18493-global-alcohol-consumption-top-countries.html>, accessed 20 August 2017.

46 This fact is not officially recognized, but a reputation that Sabans proudly uphold.

the Main Ridge Forest Reserve in Tobago, the Western Hemisphere's oldest national park, which was founded in 1776.⁴⁷

7.2 The natural environment

St. Eustatius is situated in a high-energy environment, quite different from the places where the first European colonizers hailed from. It is an environment characterized by constant heat, high levels of solar radiation, earthquakes, storm surge and tsunamis, tropical storms and hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions. These phenomena created a constantly changing environment that people had to adapt to in order to survive. The natural environment of St. Eustatius is composed of many different elements, including steep, barren cliffs, fertile valleys, beaches, and the seemingly endless Caribbean Sea. In many instances, people were at the mercy of the elements and the natural environment dictated their behaviour in it. Frequently, however, agency of people on St. Eustatius was not – or to a lesser extent – determined by their natural environment. In other instances, the opportunities and limitations of the natural environment were actively utilized by Statians to their own advantage. Landscape manipulation was a key element in the formation of the colony and colonial society.

7.2.1 The civic and commercial components

The civic and commercial components were to a large extent determined by the natural environment. The layout of Lower Town was long and narrow with one road running through it. It was connected to Upper Town by three steep paths. This stretch of land on the bay, however, was and still is a difficult area to settle. To the east, the constantly eroding cliffs cause a dangerous situation whereby falling rocks are a constant hazard and entire buildings can be buried under mud slides after heavy rains. Buildings in Upper Town located close to the cliff's edge only increased the danger, for example when one of Fort Oranje's bastions collapsed (Hartog 1997:29).⁴⁸ The cliffs also blocked the eastern trade winds which made the area much warmer than more exposed locations such as Upper Town. The heat, however, did not deter people from developing nearly every square meter on the bay. To the west, the Caribbean Sea can be very rough during tropical storms and hurricanes. Storm surges can destroy buildings and erode entire beaches in a matter of hours. Despite these threats, the Statian community was determined to make Lower Town the center of the Caribbean trade network. Limited space caused merchants to build warehouses right up to the water. Several large docks were constructed to protect Lower Town from storm surges. These also facilitated easier loading and offloading of goods as landing on the beach was often impossible due to heavy seas. Nevertheless, warehouses sometimes flooded, but as shown in Chapter 4, merchants were ingenious and coped with this situation in various ways. The warehouse excavated by the author in 2013 contained stone foundation piers on which an elevated wooden floor was built, over the original yellow brick floor.

47 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5646>, accessed 20 August 2017.

48 At the time of writing, Fort Oranje is threatened with another collapse as the cliff on which it is built has eroded significantly over the past several years. Plans are now being made to reinforce the cliff.

In the nineteenth century, in an attempt to revive the island's economy, merchants even tried to build a breakwater to improve the landing in front of the weighing house. A completely new pier was constructed a century later to facilitate shipping activities. Despite the challenges the sea and cliffs brought, for centuries Stadians have sought ways to deal with the natural environment, even in the most challenging environmental conditions.

There were times when the natural environment exerted its power over the Stadian community, most notably during hurricane season. Many accounts of strong hurricanes survive, some of the strongest being those that occurred in 1772 and 1780 (NA 1.05.01.02 – 629, folio 337; Neely 2012:135). These caused ships to founder, towns and plantations to be destroyed, and many people to perish. Some things could not be controlled, but the Stadian community rebuilt their emporium time and again, determined to continue their enterprises. In addition, several hurricane shelters were built over time to keep people out of harm's way. One such shelter, located in Upper Town next to the synagogue, is a fine example of workmanship as it is still in a good state of preservation. The natural environment has determined human agency through time, but due to the ingenuity of the Stadian people, their actions were never completely dictated by it.

7.2.2 The recreative component

Another way the natural environment was used by people is found in the recreative component. The Quill is a perfect example of a landscape that is made culturally significant as set forth in chapter 2. The crater was once nothing more than a 'space' which did not exist anthropologically, but was an empirically neutral series of relationships between objects and the environment. However, as soon as people set foot on the island for the first time, looked up at the volcano and wondered what alien world lay within its lush crater, this landscape became culturally significant and was transformed into a 'place'. While at first, this 'place' only existed in peoples' minds, given the curious nature of our species and the need to find resources to maintain the new colony, it probably did not take the first European colonists very long before they ventured up the mountain and the 'place' materialized. As time progressed, it became common practice for visitors to hike up and into the crater of the Quill (Teenstra 1837:338; Wentworth 1835:115). The crater provided a chance to explore a relatively untouched part of the island and for people to have a quiet picnic. Visitors and Stadian residents used the Quill's tranquil environment to escape the hustle and bustle of town. The volcano created a separate, secluded world within the island, which provided people with a welcome break from daily life. These activities gave this landscape meaning and a purpose, and made it a cultural landscape. Its cultural significance was enhanced by its unique, secluded setting and environment which included elements such as noises and smells that separated this 'place' from all others on the island. But it was not just the elite who used the volcano to unwind, runaway enslaved people would often seek refuge in the crater as well. It was the only area on the island where they could escape their daily struggles and where they resisted authority by plotting escapes to other islands (NA 1.05.08.01 – 730). This shows that a landscape is culturally dynamic and is constantly altered depending on which person or group of people experience and use it.

7.2.3 The transport and communication component

The transportation and communication component was almost completely shaped by the natural environment, as is best evidenced by the roadstead. Anchorage zones were heavily dependent on a sandy sea floor. Rocks and rocky outcrops, where anchors did not grip or could get stuck, were avoided as much as possible. The composition of the sea floor thus dictated where ships anchored. Nevertheless, the present survey has documented and analyzed 41 anchors around the island. The majority of anchors were found on rocky outcrops and lava flows surrounded by sandy areas, indicating that it was not always possible to avoid these areas. The natural environment, besides directing human agency, also shuffled elements of the maritime cultural landscape. In paragraph 4.2.4 it was shown that the artifact distribution on the roadstead is more a result of wave action and a dynamic sea floor than it is of past human behavior. Moreover, coastal erosion has caused many artifacts discarded in terrestrial context to end up under water.

Depth was an important factor as well, particularly for large ships. The fact that these could not come too close to shore in shallow waters meant that all goods and people needed to be transported by smaller canoes, thereby increasing the complexity of logistics in port. Furthermore, the exposed nature of the road caused many ships to anchor further offshore, so that in case of a sudden change in weather they could quickly move out of harm's way without running the risk of being driven ashore. The location of the port was also a logical choice considering the natural environment. Located on the island's leeward side, the port was located in the most sheltered location. Conducting maritime activities on the east coast, while at times possible, was not a viable option as this area was too exposed and strong winds and large waves frustrated maritime operations on this side of the island.

7.2.4 The defense and power components

On many occasions, the natural environment was used by people to their advantage. The defense and power components were largely shaped by the island's topography. Steep cliffs created ideal locations for fortifications. These elevated locations in the landscape created a sense of power and domination that these forts and batteries may otherwise have lacked. They provided ideal vantage points from which to protect merchant vessels from privateers that were coming within reach of their guns. The fort on Signal Hill, on the other hand, was used to keep an eye on the population of the island itself. Steep cliffs restricted access to the island in many areas, most notably the Northern Hills. This area was easily defendable by erecting batteries at the only places where landing was possible – in the bays. Nevertheless, as was shown in Chapter 6, enemy forces did manage to get ashore, and they too used the rugged terrain to their advantage. Changes in elevation determined the layout of buildings on plantations as well. The mills were situated on the higher parts so that cane juice could flow to the boiling house with little effort. The planter's house was also situated on the higher parts in order to exert a sense of power over the enslaved workers who were living in the lower elevated areas, thereby reinforcing social relations created and maintained by colonial society.

7.2.5 The resource component

The natural environment had a notable effect on the resource component and people's subsistence strategies as well. Statia's dry climate, coupled with a lack of running water, resulted in the construction of many cisterns and wells. As shown in paragraph 4.3.1, sometimes water was even imported from neighboring St. Kitts. St. Eustatius did hold an agricultural promise. Large areas in the countryside were used to grow provisions to support a growing population and to supply ships. This was mostly done on the slopes of the Quill, which was the wettest part of the island. Moreover, higher rainfall on the Quill also prompted people to plant various crops in the crater. The locations of provisioning grounds were thus heavily influenced by the natural environment.

The reefs around the island, created by the Quill's volcanic activity, were home to large numbers of fish and turtles, and these were heavily exploited by the islanders. Yet not all fish were edible. Ciguatera poisoning ensured that several types of fish could not be eaten safely. In addition to fish, the sandy areas of the anchorage zones were ideal habitats for conch (*Lobatus gigas*) and on the rocks surrounding the island, large numbers of whelks (*Cittarium pica*) were collected. In these ways, the natural environment provided a means to sustain the insular population and attract outsiders, but placed limits on the resource component at the same time.

7.2.6 The cognitive component

The natural environment also shaped the cognitive component of the maritime cultural landscape in various ways. Many place names, such as *Kay Bay*, *Big Stone*, *the Quill*, *White Wall*, and *Little Round Hill* were derived from their physical characteristics. This indicates that people used the physical environment – spaces – as a guideline to create places in their minds. These spaces provide the context for culture, as soon as they are noted and perceived in a certain way. The naming of these culturally significant places based on their physical characteristics serves to anchor them firmly in the cognitive component. This is not surprising on an island the size of St. Eustatius. As everyone lived in close proximity and knew one another, physical characteristics of the landscape were used by people to construct a cognitive social network. Additionally, islands on the horizon may have played a role in people's minds. On most days, depending on one's location on the island, one can see Saba, St. Maarten, Anguilla, St. Barths, Ile Forchue, St. Kitts, and Nevis. Good inter-island visibility aided in expanding the mental map of people beyond St. Eustatius.

7.3 Overlapping components

Given the complex interplay between many components in the maritime cultural landscape, most of these belong to more than one theme. They create complex environments that transcend a purely social, economic, or political meaning. All physical components were imbued with meaning and people created mental maps of these places. As a result, all components had a cognitive aspect to it. Moreover, some components may fall into different realms depending on who is experiencing them. People can experience a particular region or feature differently depending on individual or shared communal experience. From this it follows that all components are the result of personal perceptions. Perhaps the best examples of this are the military installations

that dot the island. They can be seen as a means to defend the island, exerting power and control over anyone passing by. By many sailors, however, they marked a relatively safe zone, where they were protected from pirates and privateers. Internally, the forts and batteries were signs of oppression, used to instill fear into the large enslaved population by acting as visual reminders of colonial power. On the other hand, the power component created a situation in which the enslaved population resisted that authority.

There were many ways in which enslaved people resisted authority. At the intersection of the transport and communication component and the economic component, some enslaved people actively brought the power component into play. Maritime slavery was widespread throughout the Caribbean. On many islands, enslaved people worked as crewmen or even captains on merchant and privateering ships, or were engaged in the construction and maintenance of ships as carpenters, caulkers, and sail-makers (Gilmore 2004:57; Jarvis 2010:465).⁴⁹ In addition, many enslaved people worked in the fishing industry. Maritime slavery was predominant on eighteenth-century Statia as well. As Cecelski has noted in his study of maritime slavery in North Carolina, enslaved maritime workers actually asserted themselves as the experts in their field. They created a dependence on their skills and then used this dependence as weapons against the regime of slavery which they were subjected to. Their mobility and relative independence empowered them and created a community of resistance that undermined the power and authority of the elite class (Cecelski 2001). This was certainly true for St. Eustatius as well. As was noted by several nineteenth-century travelers, enslaved people were experts at maneuvering small boats in the rough swells of Lower Town's landing (Bosch 1829:28; Kidder 1849:31). Their skills in this particular task surpassed those of every European sailor. This empowered the skilled enslaved people and undermined the authority of the elite, as enslaved workers actually used their position to exploit the elite which depended on their skills. As was shown in paragraph 4.1.1, enslaved people charged increasingly high fees for these highly specialized services which were central to the island's economic activities and therefore also the elite's prosperity. These fees became so high that it was necessary to issue a law that set a maximum amount that could be charged for these services in order to stop enslaved people from taking advantage of free merchants.

Where normally owners of enslaved people were able to underline power relations by differential access to luxury goods, the relative economic freedom enjoyed by the enslaved people of Statia enabled them to use similar objects as their masters, as is evidenced by the Schotsenhoek slave quarters excavation in which objects such as expensive ceramics, shoe buckles, folding knives, and even wine glasses were encountered. This somewhat decreased power differences on the island. Symanski describes

49 Perhaps the best example in this regard is Bermuda. Like their Statian counterparts, many enslaved Bermudians were employed outside of the plantations. They worked in shipyards and on sloops, traveling large distances to trade for their masters. Enslaved people also constituted large parts of privateering crews, while some crews consisted almost entirely of enslaved people. This resulted in a system of slavery similar to that on St. Eustatius but very different from other island colonies. The high mobility that characterized maritime work and the relative ease with which enslaved people could escape led most slave owners and ship captains to favor rewards over coercion and confinement (Jarvis 2010:465). Bermudian seafaring enslaved people were paid partial wages by their masters, and as was the case on St. Eustatius, they organized their own commercial enterprises when visiting ports far beyond the horizon.

the continual power struggles on Brazilian sugar estates in terms of strategy and tactics. Strategy refers mainly to the built environment that is used by the elite to exert power over the enslaved population, while tactics refers to instances when enslaved people tried to subvert the hierarchy and order of these spaces, such as the two examples above illustrate (Symanski 2012:144). There were, however, countless other instances in which enslaved people resisted power. One example is found in a proclamation dating to 1797, which prohibits the playing of card games and dice by enslaved people, as these often led to disturbances and had a negative effect on their work ethic (Schiltkamp & Smidt 1979:372). Clearly, enslaved people felt they had the leeway to engage in such activities and exhibit disorderly behavior afterwards. It can be concluded that plantations, the town, and in fact the entire island was a fundamentally contested space, subjected to implicit and explicit power struggles by social actors of all levels of society.

Plantations were at the intersection of multiple components as well. They provided the stage for structured but often tense encounters between enslaved laborers and their masters. On the one hand, plantations were economic units that provided provisions for a growing population and were used to refine illegally exported raw sugar (Gilmore 2004:52). On the other hand, they were powerful and highly visible symbols of oppression, power, and wealth. Slaveholders throughout the Caribbean manipulated the spatial organization of plantations in order to control enslaved people (Singleton 2001:105). On the other hand, enslaved people often tried to resist this authority, sometimes explicitly through maroonage, revolt, and suicide, but more often implicitly through covert acts such as theft, misplacing tools, or storing objects in pits under their dwellings (Singleton 2001:108).

The configurations of plantations were used to exert power over the enslaved by placing their living quarters on a physically lower point than the planter's residence. On the other hand, the fact that slave quarters were usually out of sight from the Great House indicates that surveillance of enslaved peoples' lives may have been limited. This situation has been observed at a number of Statian plantations, including Schotsenhoek, Godet, Fair Play, and Benners. Moreover, the yards surrounding slave cabins, which can be considered an extension of the dwelling, created a mediating space between the public world and the private world of the dwelling (Heath & Bennett 2000:38). Yard spaces placed limits on the intrusions of outsiders into the quarter as they signaled a point of mediation across which enslaved people and owners/overseers could meet (Heath & Bennett 2000:51). In this way the yards somewhat eased the tension of the delicate power balance on the plantations.

Even the materials used in the construction of plantation buildings expressed differences in power and status: while enslaved people lived in cabins made of perishable materials, Great Houses were made of stone and tiles. The durable material used to construct the planter's house gave it a character of temporal continuity, serving to legitimize and reproduce hierarchical social relationships through time (Symanski 2012:131). Plantations, however, also contained other messages intended for different groups of people. When plantations became less profitable during the nineteenth century, expensive additions and improvements to sugar estates acted as signs to the outside world, whereby the old planter elite wanted to convey a sense of continued power and influence at times when this became increasingly difficult to do so. Even

in times of prosperity, rich merchants such as Johannes de Graaff used plantations to set them apart from everyone else with things as extravagant as a duck pond (Barka 1996:46). Perhaps more than any other feature in the landscape, plantations epitomized and reflected changing societal structures and status present in various levels of the community.

Lower Town was the nexus of life on St. Eustatius. It was here that elements from most components were found. Warehouses facilitated the storage of goods so central to the island's economic prosperity. The weighing house ensured that commerce was conducted according to a standardized system. Docks and piers enabled efficient transportation of goods and people. Brothels, taverns, and billiard houses provided a means for sailors to unwind after long voyages at sea. Merchant houses conveyed a sense of wealth and power, and enabled merchants to live at the heart of the commercial center. Besides facilities for commerce and sailors, archaeological research has indicated that Lower Town served different functions as well. Among the warehouses were ovens and rum distilleries, ceramic production sites, cisterns and wells, storage vats, a sugar refinery, and most likely even a slaughterhouse. All these elements from different components combined caused Lower Town to become one of the most cosmopolitan places in the Caribbean, in which people from all social classes utilized different components of the maritime cultural landscape for different reasons and were constantly interacting, thereby creating a unique place on the island.

Life in Upper Town stood in stark contrast to life on the bay. Upper Town was at the crossroads of several different components, where the emphasis was not so much on the commercial component but on daily life, governance, and religion instead. Government buildings such as soldier's barracks and the Governor's residence, religious structures and cemeteries, and residential areas for people of all social classes created an urban area very different from the hustle and bustle below. While Upper Town was undoubtedly crowded and busy at times, it contained a more relaxed atmosphere that must have been more pleasant to live in. Even here, the power component came into play, most notably in the configuration of the religious landscape, whereby the Reformed congregation dominated other religions in terms of visibility and prominence and the Jewish community was forced to mute its presence.

Cemeteries and religious buildings were at the intersection of the power and cognitive components. At these locations, people from a multitude of backgrounds came together in both life and death. The deceased's status was conveyed through various types of mortuary display that could be experienced differently depending on one's status, cultural background, or relationship with the deceased. Some people continued to occupy a place in people's minds through oral history accounts decades or even centuries after their death. Other religious sites, such as the Dutch Reformed church, were built to convey a sense of superiority over other religious groups such as the Jews while at the same time providing religious significance to the Dutch Reformed congregation itself and creating the appearance of religious homogeneity on the island (Miller & Gilmore 2016). The Dutch Reformed church was also a place that reinforced the distinction between different social classes. Entering the church and attending ceremonies was reserved for the elite members of society and was certainly not allowed for the enslaved population. For them, the Dutch Reformed church was a place of exclusion that set them apart from their masters. The multiple meanings and messages contained

at religious sites made them special physical places that contained an equally if not more important immaterial part.

The roadstead was the stage of a complex interplay between the defense component and the transport and communication component. The anchorage zone extended from shore for over two kilometers. It comprised a large area which was often packed with ships. Its large size had a marked effect on safety that could be provided by the island's fortifications to anchored vessels. Several instances are known when ships were captured while at anchor (NA 1.01.47.17 – 48, folio 63; NL-MdbZA_20_649, folio 18). It was impossible for gunners in the forts and batteries to ensure a safe stay to all ships with the limited resources available to them. But even if the resources had been present, the road's large size made it impossible to protect those vessels that were anchored furthest offshore. Their captains and crews must have been well aware of this, but due to the crowded nature of the anchorage or the type of cargo their ships were carrying, people had no choice but to anchor out of the safe zone, thereby running the risk of being captured by English privateers. Occasionally, however, Dutch men-of-war anchored on the road extended the defense component by warding off privateers trying to make a move on anchored vessels that were out of reach of the island's cannon (NA 1.01.46 – 2417, folio 135-169). As demonstrated by the presence of at least two swivel guns on shipwreck site SE-502, some safety precautions were taken on merchant vessels themselves as well. Despite the dangers involved in trading at St. Eustatius, the fortunes that could be made greatly outweighed the risks, even at times when an encounter with the enemy was almost guaranteed. Ships constituted separate entities within the maritime world. They transported goods and people, housed sailors, provided protection, were involved in acquiring resources, and could be expressions of power. Ships and shipwreck sites can be regarded as *the* features of the maritime cultural landscape in which most themes converged.

The transport and communication component was the one that connected all others, linking warehouses with plantations, ships with docks, and roads with forts. It forms the backbone of the maritime cultural landscape. Without a well-developed transportation network, batteries could not be supplied with ammunition, warehouses could not be stocked with merchandise from all over the world, plantations could not be supplied with illegally imported raw sugar, and people from all corners of the island would not have been able to participate in trading activities in port. The transport and communication component, however, fulfilled another function that transcended internal needs: it provided the connection to the outside world.

7.4 Regional and global context

While many different types of local events and processes shaped the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius, the island did not exist in a vacuum. It was strongly connected to other island colonies – and their maritime cultural landscapes – in the region, but also to North America. The maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius was largely geared towards the outside world. These links were maintained by mariners, both free and enslaved. They crisscrossed imperial boundaries exchanging goods, people, and ideas. They also served as informants to local communities about rumors and news from other parts of the Caribbean and beyond. These movements were of-

ten facilitated by merchant houses. The merchant community of St. Eustatius formed part of a complicated network that extended throughout the Atlantic World. Many merchants on St. Eustatius acted as agents for larger firms in the Dutch Republic, North America, and other island colonies. Jordaan & Wilson identified 340 merchant houses on Statia that shipped tropical produce to the Dutch Republic in the period 1781-1795 (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:290).

The Caribbean islands in the colonial period were places where the connections among colonies and the people inhabiting them were as important to the region's identity as what separated them as imperial rivals (Scott 1996:141). In this section, the ties St. Eustatius had with other areas will be discussed in order to provide a regional and even global context to Statia's history and its maritime cultural landscape. In addition, the shipping network centered on the island will be discussed to elucidate Statia's role in the commercial networks of the colonial Caribbean and Atlantic World.

7.4.1. *Shipping and trade*

Shipping and trade for St. Eustatius have been studied extensively by historians over the past three decades (Goslinga 1985; Klooster 1998; Jordaan 2012). These studies focus primarily on numbers of incoming and outgoing ships and the volume of trade of tropical produce such as sugar, coffee, and tobacco with the Netherlands. In his study on Dutch trade in the Caribbean, Klooster includes a small section on Statia's trade with other islands, but by no means is this a comprehensive account (Klooster 1998:92). While these studies are extremely useful in putting trade to and from St. Eustatius in a global perspective, they contain little detail on the intricacies of this network and how it might have shaped the island's maritime cultural landscape. According to Enthoven, the function and character of the island's intra-Caribbean trade is still obscure due to a lack of sources (Enthoven 2012:262). As will be demonstrated below, Enthoven's statement is not entirely true. While it is certainly true that the above-mentioned authors have not focused much of their attention on the *kleine vaart*, the information is certainly there, one just has to take a much closer look at the data contained in shipping records to uncover finer details. By adopting this approach one can move beyond the bigger picture presented in the above-mentioned studies and investigate trade networks in more detail. An example of this will be given below which deals with trade between Statia and Saba.

It has been shown that ship arrivals on Statia increased dramatically during the mid-eighteenth century, from 1,163 in 1744 to 2,016 in 1762, and reaching its apogee of 3,551 ships in 1779 (Enthoven 2012:261; Gilmore 2013:44). It is often said that St. Eustatius' role as the emporium of the Caribbean quickly faded after the British capture of the island in 1781 (Enthoven 2012:242). One might be led to believe this is true by examining shipping records published for 1785, which show that 'only' 1,640 ships dropped anchor on Statia's road in that year (Enthoven 2012:261). Trade on the Golden Rock, however, reached similar proportions in the 1780s to what it did before. As a result, its population increased to a record high of 8,476 people (Goslinga 1985:152). By 1792, the number of incoming ships equaled that of the pre-war years (Jordaan 2012:2). A list of all incoming and outgoing ships for the year 1787 was found in the Dutch National Archives by the author (NA 1.05.01.02 – 1330, folio 2965-3264). That year, St. Eustatius saw a total of 2,755 ships arriving on its road and

2,827 ships departing. This document provides a detailed snapshot of the island's role in Caribbean and global trade networks at the height of its prosperity and provides information on the nature of the connections it had with neighboring islands and ports far beyond the horizon.

In 1787, ships arriving on St. Eustatius hailed from at least 92 different ports in the Caribbean, North America, South America, Africa, and Europe.⁵⁰ Departing ships went to at least 86 different ports. Figure 7.1 provides an overview of the origins and next destinations for ships calling at St. Eustatius. Statia's neighboring islands St. Kitts, St. Maarten, and St. Barths were the point of departure and next destination for most ships, followed by the French islands Guadeloupe and Martinique. Large quantities of sugar, rum, provisions, and manufactured goods were shipped to Statia from these five islands. Curiously, only three ships from Jamaica, one of the largest sugar producers in the Caribbean, arrived on St. Eustatius in 1787. Only six ships came from the Netherlands, all from Amsterdam. Trade with the British North American colonies greatly overshadowed trade with Europe. It is not surprising that vessels coming from neighboring and nearby islands constituted the majority of shipping traffic. Provisions and manufactured goods arriving mainly from North America and locally refined sugar were quickly and frequently distributed to these islands from St. Eustatius in return for raw materials and other provisions.

Most vessels, particularly those involved in the inter-island trade, only stayed on Statia's roadstead for one or two days, while some even left the same day. Some ships had a longer stay, which could be up to three weeks for North American ships or even longer for Dutch men-of-war such as the *Maarszen*, which stayed six weeks. Despite some long-stay guests, the high turnover of ships meant that the roadstead was an ever-changing mosaic of ships, all waiting to conduct their business as quickly as possible so as to continue their legal or illegal ventures elsewhere. Outgoing vessels did not always return to the place they came from. About half of all vessels arriving in 1787 departed for a different destination. What is perhaps most striking in the shipping numbers for 1787 is the large difference between incoming and outgoing vessels for some islands. There were many more arrivals from the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique than there were departures. On the other hand, there were significantly more departures for the Danish islands St. Croix and St. Thomas than there were arrivals, underscoring St. Thomas' importance as a free port. Departures for North America also greatly outnumbered the arrivals. This demonstrates that St. Eustatius was involved in a complicated network of exchange. Some ventures were very structured, involving a back-and-forth journey that was repeated several times a month. This is particularly true for neighboring islands such as St. Maarten, St. Barths, and St. Kitts. Others had a more opportunistic character, whereby ships sailed to different ports to trade Statian merchandise elsewhere or to acquire goods unavailable on the Golden Rock itself.

The frequent inter-island movements were often conducted with only a few different vessels. For example, six different ships made a total of 71 voyages from Saba to St. Eustatius in 1787, of which two only made a single trip. This meant that some captains

50 The exact number of ports could not be determined, as some ships' origins were unknown to the person who composed the document. Some ships simply came 'from the sea'.

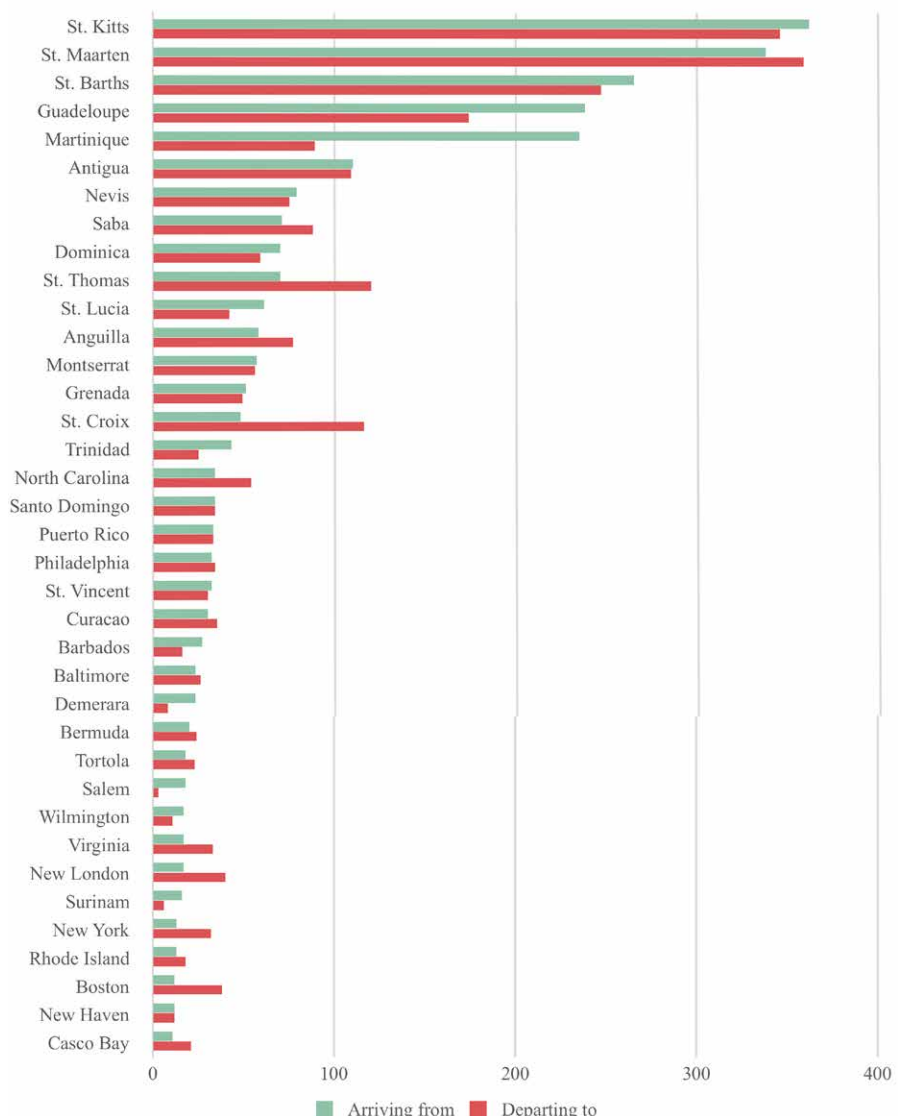


Figure 7.1 Arriving and departing vessels at St. Eustatius in 1787. Over 92 ports of origin and 86 ports of departure were documented. Only those ports involving more than twenty vessels in total are included in the graph. Source: NA 1.05.01.02 - 1330, folio 2965-3264.

were very familiar with Statia’s roadstead and must have known the best places for anchoring without running the risk of their anchors getting caught on a rock or reef. In 1787, total imports from Saba comprised 63 bales of cotton, 52 bags of coffee, 3 hogsheads of rum, 46 hogsheads of sugar, and 47 turtles. As Saba was not a transshipment center, these products would have been produced and caught locally and then traded on St. Eustatius for provisions and manufactured goods. Unfortunately, the shipping log does not specify what was exported from Statia. What is particularly interesting to note is the import of turtles. These were brought from Saba on two vessels, the *Eagle* and the *Seaflower*, in July. On November 19, the *Seaflower* arrived on Statia

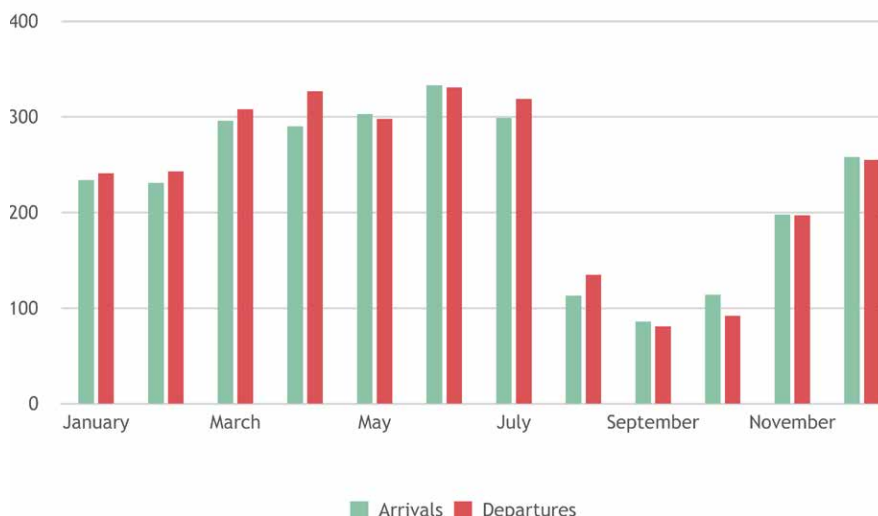


Figure 7.2 Arriving and departing vessels to and from St. Eustatius in 1787. Arriving vessels totalled 2,755, departing vessels totalled 2,827. The sharp decline in August, September and October is a result of the Atlantic hurricane season. Source: NA 1.05.01.02 - 1330, folio 2965-3264.

from Hispaniola with a cargo of 40 turtles. On December 7, the *Eagle* dropped anchor in Statia's road with 13 turtles from Los Roques. This points to two things: first, that there was a demand for turtle meat on St. Eustatius, indicating that there might not have been enough turtles left in Statian waters to satisfy local demand; and second, that Saban captains, after delivering two cargoes of Saban turtles, had learned of this fact as they were actively scouring the Caribbean for more turtles to sell on St. Eustatius. This puts what is known about the role of turtles in the resource component of St. Eustatius into a much broader perspective and indicates that certain aspects of the resource component could encompass the entire Caribbean.⁵¹ Furthermore, the resource component was shaped by complex trade networks and opportunistic endeavors that can only be revealed by studying the intricacies of the shipping network centered on St. Eustatius.

The monthly numbers of ship arrivals reveal the effect of the natural environment, in this case climate, on trading activities. As shown in Figure 7.2, the months of August, September, and October experienced a sharp decline in shipping activities. During these months, the Lesser Antilles are prone to tropical storms and hurricanes. No matter how much money was at stake, these events, or at least the prospect of them, disrupted the shipping rhythms to and from St. Eustatius and caused the island to become less connected to the outside world. This must have had a marked effect, as commercial activities in Lower Town would have been reduced to a minimum, and many people, such as enslaved people, could have engaged in other types of work in different parts of the island. This effect, coupled with the fact that population densities during hurricane season must have been much lower due to a lower number of transients, caused Lower

51 Besides Saba, Margarita, and Hispaniola, turtles were also imported from Curaçao and St. Barths.

Town to become significantly less busy and crowded. At times when the workload was not as high, people could have engaged in more recreational activities or even traveled to neighboring islands or far-flung places to visit friends, family, or business relations. The dark side of this quiet period was that in hurricane season most ships around the island wrecked, and it is not unlikely that the wrecks described in Chapter 4 foundered during these months. Many people on land would perish during these violent events as well, so it was also the most dangerous time of year.

7.4.2 *St. Thomas and St. Barths*

Two islands that had particularly strong ties with St. Eustatius were the free ports of St. Thomas and St. Barths. After economic and social hardships such as the economic decline of the Dutch colonies in the 1790s, many Statians moved to these islands to seek their fortunes (Wilson 2011:20). St. Thomas was colonized by the Dutch in 1657 but after nine years it was conquered by the Danes. A Dutch Reformed church was erected in 1660 and as time progressed, a Dutch creole language developed on the island (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:279). In 1688, nearly half of the island's 148 inhabitants were Dutch. The Danes declared St. Thomas' capital Charlotte Amalie a free port in 1764 (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:282). Merchants from Amsterdam started to provide plantation loans to planters on St. Thomas by the latter half of the eighteenth century. This happened for the first time in 1766, when Pieter Heyliger Jr. borrowed an amount of 140,000 guilders (the equivalent of 1,560,000 US dollars in today's terms) (Deahl 2012:39).⁵² As Heyliger was a common Statian name, it is likely that he hailed from St. Eustatius. According to Lieutenant Cornelius de Jong who visited the island in 1781, Dutch was the most commonly used language, and several Statian merchants had moved there (De Jong 1807:298).

Even though there was a small group of Jews living on St. Thomas, it was not until the British occupation of St. Eustatius in 1781 that there was a permanent Jewish presence here. Several Jews migrated from St. Eustatius to St. Thomas after the British occupation in 1781 and after the French imposed trade restrictions on the Golden Rock in 1795. St. Thomas was home to nine Jewish families in 1789, but this number grew to 60 in 1837 (Deahl 2012:27). The cemetery in Charlotte Amalie contains several graves of Statian Jews up to as late as 1878 (Arbell 2002:188). Not only Jews, but also other merchants and free people of color left the Golden Rock for St. Thomas, where 62 free coloreds from St. Eustatius were living in 1803 (Deahl 2012:63). A sharp increase in the immigration of free coloreds from St. Eustatius to St. Thomas occurred in the 1790s when Statia was losing its economic significance as a transit harbor. At the same time, trade on St. Thomas was growing and the Danish authorities did not have a very strict immigration policy.

When the French island St. Barths became Swedish in 1784, a Swedish trading mission was organized to the newly acquired colony (Wilson 2011:7). The mission did not yield the expected commercial success. Furthermore, it was found that the island was little more than a barren rock with no ground water, so agriculture as the basis of the colony's economy was off the table. The only option for the island was to become a free port, just like neighbouring St. Eustatius. To trade with the sugar-pro-

52 Calculated using the website <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php>.

ducing French islands Guadeloupe and Martinique, however, trading rights needed to be acquired from the French. Another option was smuggling, and this is exactly what Swedish merchant Jacob E. Röhl proposed:

“In any case, I do not doubt in the slightest that such a freedom, which I have described [freedom to trade with the French colonies], is readily to be obtained in secrecy, if only correct and forceful measures are observed. Reason for believing my assumption is given to me by the Dutch on S. Eustache, who understand to procure so-called indulgence for their swindles in the French islands, although they must pay for it without exception.” (Wilson 2011:8)

Clearly the Swedes were using the model of St. Eustatius to establish a colonial economy for themselves, as it was obvious that St. Barths’ only economic success would be through trade and shipping. The decision to establish St. Barths as a free port was made in Stockholm in 1785 (Wilson 2011:9). The island’s capital Gustavia experienced an explosive growth similar to Statia’s Lower Town a few decades before, from 133 buildings in 1791 to 800 buildings in 1800. In a letter to the Swedish West India Company, Swedish judge Johan Norderling commented in 1795 that “All trade in St. Eustache is ruined, all warehouses at the present closed, and the wealthiest houses gone away, some here, some to other islands” (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:300). Anthony Wachter Vaucrosson bought a warehouse lot in Gustavia in 1787, and by 1796 he was listed in a census as the head of a 23-person household (Wilson 2011:16). Vaucrosson was a well-established merchant on St. Eustatius. He had an imposing warehouse in Lower Town as he was the island’s main exporter of coffee and sugar. Another Statian merchant who established himself on St. Barths at this time was the Italian Joseph Cremony (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:302). A shifting focus of the transit trade from St. Eustatius to St. Barths and St. Thomas in the 1790s caused him and many other merchants to seek their fortunes on the Scandinavian islands. Furthermore, Vaucrosson and Cremony became influential people on their new island, being involved in politics as well. Cremony maintained ties with St. Eustatius where an agent of his firm was posted.

Connections between St. Eustatius and the Scandinavian West Indies were bidirectional. In 1784, Swedish doctor Samuel Fahlberg moved to St. Barths where he was employed as a physician and government Secretary. In subsequent years he became the provincial medical officer, customs inspector and cashier, and director of survey of the colony. When a rebellion broke out in Gustavia against the Swedish colonial administration in 1810, Fahlberg’s association with the island’s pro-British faction caused him to be exiled. He moved to St. Eustatius, where he lived from 1810 to 1816 and again from 1829 until his death in 1834. In between, he lived in St. Maarten. On St. Eustatius he was quickly employed as the garrison doctor (Reinhartz 2012). During his time in the West Indies, Fahlberg produced numerous maps, plans, and drawings of the islands, their fortifications, towns, and plantations. On Statia he produced two drawings and a map of the island, and drew plans for a breakwater and barracks. His wife and son are buried in Statia’s Anglican cemetery. Fahlberg had their tombstone erected himself, and on it, he did not forget to mention the injustice experienced by him and his family in St. Barths.

While the connections St. Eustatius had with St. Thomas and St. Barths were to a large extent commercial, Statian merchants had a profound influence on many aspects of life in the other free ports. The economic and social status they had obtained after years of working on St. Eustatius enabled them to quickly move up the political and economic ladders in other colonies. The Jewish community on St. Thomas grew exponentially after the cruelties experienced by the Statian Jews during Rodney's capture. On the other hand, people from these islands, such as Samuel Fahlberg, came to influence St. Eustatius in various ways. These influences left permanent marks in the cartographic record and even in one of the cemeteries, where Fahlberg's struggles in life on the neighboring island are commemorated.

7.4.3 Bermuda

Statia's ties with the outside world went further than the Caribbean, and included many different islands and ports throughout the Atlantic World. As shown above, some relationships went deeper than just commerce, which is particularly true for the island of Bermuda. For the year 1787, only twenty arriving and 25 departing vessels were involved in direct trade between Bermuda and St. Eustatius, yet the connections Statia had with the island in the middle of the Atlantic were very strong (NA 1.05.01.02 – 1330, folio 2965-3264). In the first half of the eighteenth century, many Bermudians moved to Statia to take advantage of Dutch wartime neutrality and free trade. Bermudian agents on St. Eustatius assembled cargoes for shipment and supported their island's mariners when they called at Statia (Jarvis 2012:353). As time went on, some Statians emigrated to Bermuda due to kinship connections they had made through intermarriage.

Locally-built Bermuda sloops were the ships of choice for Bermudian captains, who used these fast vessels in inter-island trade and privateering. Bermuda sloops frequented Statia's road as is evidenced by various eighteenth-century drawings of the island and its anchorage. For example, Figure 4.2 depicts several Bermuda sloops which are easily recognizable by their raked masts. Statian merchant John Coombes hired several Bermuda sloops in the 1720s and 1730s for £40-£50 per month, which is the equivalent of £5,526-£6,907 or 6,900-8,650 US dollars in today's terms (Jarvis 2012:169).⁵³ These were used by Bermudians to smuggle goods from St. Eustatius to British American ports. Merchants on the Golden Rock did not only rent Bermuda sloops, they also bought them. By the 1720s, Bermudians were selling fifteen to twenty vessels a year at St. Eustatius, which accounted for half their production. Statian merchants such as Abraham Heyliger would often pay for the vessels in goods, which were then smuggled to other colonies (Jarvis 2012:170).

Bermudians built warehouses in Lower Town and mansions in Upper Town, where there was even a neighborhood called the Bermuda Quarter. There were several Bermudian merchant houses in Lower Town by 1758. In 1780, Bermudians made up the largest group of British colonial settlers in Statia, outnumbering all those from the Caribbean and North America combined (Jordaan & Wilson 2014:285). Bermudians imported limestone and lime from their own island for the construction of these buildings. In December 1787, the ship *Henry*, coming from Bermuda, entered Statia's road with twenty hogsheads of lime which was undoubtedly used in local construction (NA

53 Calculated using the website www.measuringworth.com, based on the real price commodity value in 1730.

1.05.01.02 – 1330, folio 3254). Strong ties with Bermuda thus influenced the Statian civic component in several ways, from the division of certain groups of people in the urban areas down to the construction materials used in creating the civic environments. Furthermore, several plantations were owned by Bermudians as well. In 1781, Martin Dubrois Godet Sr. owned three plots of land totaling 150 acres on which stood two sugar plantations. The best-known of these is the estate that is still known today as the Godet plantation, located just to the north of Oranjestad. His son Martin Dubrois Godet Jr. owned the imposing Pleasures Estate which included 63 acres of land. Giddy Godet owned a large plantation on the eastern side of the Quill of 115 acres, now known as Industry (William L. Clements Library Image Bank, ID 892).

Many other immigrants from British colonies established themselves on St. Eustatius but Bermudians constituted the largest group. In 1772, Reverend Alexander Richardson moved to St. Eustatius from Bermuda to take over the Anglican Church. Upon his arrival, he found that more than 60 of its members were from Bermuda (Watts 1981:226). By this time, Bermudians had established themselves firmly on St. Eustatius. They even had their own doctor come in from Bermuda in 1773. The Anglican cemetery in Upper Town houses several graves of Bermudians, such as John Packwood (1711-1794) and Henry Jennings (1743-1790). A Bermudian even became Statia's 'First Lady' when Governor Johannes de Graaff married Bermuda-born Judith Godet. As these examples show, many aspects of the maritime cultural landscape of St. Eustatius were shaped by Bermudians and Bermudian influences.

7.4.4 British North America

Perhaps St. Eustatius' most famous connection to the outside world was that with British North America. Long before the American Revolutionary War, St. Eustatius and the thirteen North American colonies had been allies in the war against the mercantilist policies of European powers. For St. Eustatius, North American products were essential to obtain sugar from the French and British islands. For the North Americans, on the other hand, Statia's free port was a market to procure raw materials, consumer goods, and cash. St. Eustatius' economic growth can thus partly be attributed to its American trade relations.

Two types of items traded between St. Eustatius and the North Americans eventually led to war, the first being tea. Increased duties on tea by British Parliament in the 1760s caused many Americans to import tea from other places illegally. By 1770, St. Eustatius had become North America's main supplier of tea. Three quarters of all tea consumed in British North America was imported clandestinely at this time. In 1771, Charles Dudley reported to the commissioners of Customs in Boston: "It is also well known that St. Eustatius is the channel through which the colonies are now chiefly supported with tea" (Enthoven 2012:287). The illegal import of tea from St. Eustatius resulted in the Tea Act of 1773, imposed on the Americans by the British government in an attempt to revive their struggling East India Company whose London warehouses were stuffed with tea. The act reduced the price of the Company's tea which infuriated American tea smugglers. Moreover, the Company's tea was subjected to tax that the North Americans objected to. When a shipment of 500,000 pounds of East India Company tea arrived in Boston at the end of 1773, American merchants threw the tea into Boston harbor – the event known as the Boston Tea Party (Enthoven 2012:288). The events following the Boston Tea Party culminated into the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) seventeen months later.

Connections between St. Eustatius and North America became even stronger during the American Revolution. A year before the war broke out, Americans were already buying arms and gunpowder in the Dutch Republic. The Dutch ban on these practices under British pressure in 1775, however, did not stop them. Instead, war materials were sent to St. Eustatius where North American ships picked them up. Dutch regulations were ignored on Statia as there was too much money at stake. This is aptly illustrated by Abraham van Bibber, the Maryland agent on the island, writing to his superiors when he mentioned that “obedience to the law would be ruinous for the trade” (Goslinga 1985:144). Gunpowder was shipped in boxes labeled as tea or in bales labeled as rice, officials were bribed, and the control by customs officers was faulty (Hartog 1976:69). In this way, Statia became an important supplier of arms, ammunition, and gunpowder to the American rebels. North American ships flocked to the island to buy war materiel, which was hard to obtain locally. In the first half of 1775, they obtained at least 4,000 barrels of gunpowder from Statian warehouses. Some historians have indicated that the majority of shot and gunpowder used by the American revolutionaries during the first few years of the war was procured through direct trade with St. Eustatius (Gilmore 2013:55). The importance of St. Eustatius is aptly illustrated by a quote from Lord Stormont, who declared in British Parliament that:

“This rock [St. Eustatius] of only six miles in length and three in breadth has done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies and alone supported the infamous American rebellion.” (Jameson 1903:695)

Many of America’s Founding Fathers had some relationship to the island. For example, Benjamin Franklin and several others requested that all official correspondence be sent via St. Eustatius as this would facilitate swift communication between the Americans and their Continental allies. Like Franklin, Thomas Jefferson relied on St. Eustatius for quick and safe delivery of his mail. In one instance, he received a letter in Monticello just thirteen days after it left St. Eustatius (Gilmore 2013:53). An original copy of the Declaration of Independence was even sent to the island on the American brigantine *Andrew Doria*. This ship was sent to St. Eustatius to obtain munitions and military supplies. When it arrived on the island on November 16, 1776 she fired thirteen guns in salute. The commander of Fort Oranje, Abraham Ravenné, ordered a return salute of eleven guns to be fired, which was the first time a naval vessel of the independent United States was saluted by a foreign power (Hartog 1976:71). Rodney’s sacking of St. Eustatius put an end to the arms trade with the rebels but it did not signify the end of commercial relations altogether. Figure 7.1 shows that a significant volume of trade was still taking place between Statia and the North Americans in 1787, when 249 vessels arrived from, and 407 ships departed to at least 28 different North American ports. These brought a multitude of provisions and supplies in very mixed cargoes. For example, in December 1787, the *Diamond* arrived from New York with metal bars, lumber, flour, mackerel, meat, and oats (NA 1.05.01.02 – 1330, folio 3258). These provisions, besides being consumed locally, were redistributed to other islands such as Saba in return for their raw materials. The flourishing trade with North America only came to an end after Statia’s role in the global economy faded in the 1790s.