



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Onderhorigheid en separatisme, koloniaal bestuur en lokale politiek op Aruba, 1816-1955

Alofs, Lucas J.

### Citation

Alofs, L. J. (2011). Onderhorigheid en separatisme, koloniaal bestuur en lokale politiek op Aruba, 1816-1955. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17992>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License:

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17992>

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

## Summary in English

*Translation: Annemiek van Vliet*

This book describes the history of colonial government and local politics in Aruba between 1618 and 1955. The island territory of Aruba gained a subordinate position in the colony Curaçao. In the twentieth century the aspiration for separation from (the colony) Curaçao raised its head: *Separacion!*, was the cry of this aspiration.

After the dissolution of European trade companies such as the West Indies Company there came, after the example of the European civil nation state, 'colonial states'. Under the colonial state, I understand colonial government as it developed after European countries took over the government of overseas territories from former trade companies until the formal decolonization after the Second World War. Colonial states are governmental unities that, without approval of the population involved, form part of European imperial empires – empire states, imperial nation states – that have a subordinate and dependent place therein en where the colonizer has a decisive vote in the government at the cost of the local (colonized) population. Pacification and unification of the colonized territory are conditions for the existence of colonial states. They have the structure of European nation states, but are not sovereign and lack a democratic administration. Colonial states can have several names, such as dominions, territories, conquered countries, overseas provinces or overseas territories.

Part 1 relates the Aruban experience with colonial government as of the start of the Kingdom of The Netherlands and the reinstatement of Dutch power on the islands in 1816 until 1922. Aruba developed into a modest colonist society with a population of approximately 9,000 people in 1922. The role of slavery in comparison to other Caribbean societies was slight. In 1863, 496 Arubans were set free; less than 20 percent of the population. They integrated quickly in the free society. The colony was a territory or conquered country of the Dutch State and Aruba was subordinate to the government in Curaçao, where the Lieutenant Governor was the center of government, even though he also was strongly bound to the policy and instructions from Holland. The legislative Colonial Council had few competencies and consisted of appointed citizens and (till 1901) civil servants of the Advisory Board. The islands outside of Curaçao were not represented in the Colonial Council. The Council was a colonial proto-parliament without much say.

On the islands outside of Curaçao a commander, after 1848 a district commissioner, governed on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor. There existed several governmental bodies such as the Peace Court, the Advisory Council, the district court and the Police Council. The legislative and judicial authorities of these bodies were small. The administrative power always dominated the legislative power and the district commissioner was practically always the head of the government institutions. Functional or institutional separation of powers was as such undone on the personal level. Members of the bourgeoisie by way of an honorary function had a seat therein, but due to their little governmental power they hardly had any political influence. The introduction of the right to vote for the Police Council in 1869 hardly brought on any change. After the beginning of the twentieth century, district-courts men such as L.C. Kwarts and C. Eman pushed for reform of the administrative subordination and for more investments for the benefit of the economic development of the island.

In Saint Martin and Curaçao voices were heard to reconstruct the colonial state, for example by separation of Saint Martin from the colony (Saba and Saint Eustatius stood aside) and direct placement under The Netherlands or by the

administrative division of the colony in a Leeward and a Windward part. The amendments of the Constitution of 1901 and 1922, laid down that legislative activities for local government more than ever before had to take place in the overseas Territories instead of in The Hague and acknowledged the former colonies as independent judicial communities. They contained the promise of colonial reform, but this didn't materialize due to a lack of political interest in The Netherlands. The colonial bonds pressed, but the reform was delayed.

The second part describes the rise and (temporary) downfall of the Separatist movement between 1922 and 1955. In 1924, the oil industry established itself in Aruba. Thousands of immigrants from all parts of the world came to the islands in search of a better livelihood. Aruba and Curaçao – where a refinery was established in 1915 – have since then been among the most thriving islands in the Caribbean. On Aruba, this fact put an end to the matter of course of the subordination to Curaçao in future government. Worldwide colonialism came to an end. After the Second World War the United Nations formulated the right of self-determination. This right meant that nations (actually: colonies) had the right to self-determination and could opt for full independence, association with another country or integration in another country.

The reform of the colonial system took three decades. As of 1947, the Aruban nationalists strived for separation from the colony Curaçao and a direct bond with The Netherlands: *Separacion!* In 1948, there was some sympathy for the Aruban aspiration. The Aruba-Curaçao committee under the leadership of professor Van Poelje suggested a federate bond between the islands, but a direct bond with The Netherlands wasn't realized.

The Aruban separatists came off the loser. The Netherlands and Curaçao rejected the Aruban wish for separation and in Aruba the Separatist movement lost support, namely among the local voters, but also in the districts. In 1954 and 1955, the separation leaders of the Aruban People's Party lost the elections; party leader Henny Eman left politics. In 1954, the Constitution of The Kingdom of the Netherlands was instituted and one year later the Constitution of the Netherlands Antilles. Therewith the separation movement came to an end; the wish for separation returned in the political arena of the seventies.

In the epilogue the development in Aruba and the former Netherlands Antilles since 1955 are discussed. Disturbance of precarious power scales made that separatism manifested itself again after 1969. On January 1, 1986, now 25 years ago, Aruba acquired what it had requested in 1947: a separate position in the kingdom and a direct bond with The Netherlands, that is to say the Kingdom: *Separacion* or: *Status Aparte*. After the withdrawal of Aruba the remaining Antilles of Five also fell apart. As of October 10, 2010 (10-10-10) Curaçao and Saint Martin also have a separate status and Bonaire, Saba and Saint Eustatius integrated in The Netherlands.

The idea of a shared Kingdom is vulnerable and disputed as a consequence of scale differences between the component countries, the social positions of kingdom migrants in each other's countries and negative visualization by politics and media. A post-imperial vision on the Kingdom is still lacking. This dissertation therefore concludes with a reconnaissance of the possibilities of lasting bonds and shared identification with the Kingdom in all the member countries and islands of the Kingdom. If it is so desired, and that varies per country, political party and nation, possibilities for functional, normative and emotional forms of identification with the Kingdom could be enforced among both governors and citizens in all parts of the Kingdom.