Archaeological excavations at Schotsenhoek plantation, St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands

An early- to mid-eighteenth-century slave settlement at a sugar plantation on the Caribbean’s ‘Historical Gem’
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1. Introduction

In May 2012, the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research was contracted to carry out an excavation on the NuStar property locally known as ‘the Farm’. NuStar’s plan to construct a new laydown area was going to impact an archaeological site identified by the author in 2011 during an initial survey and test. Situated on a slope, the area was planned to be leveled thus impacting any features of past human activity that may have survived in the ground. During the 2011 campaign, the site was determined to be the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century dumping area for adjacent Schotsenhoek plantation. Beneath the thousands of artifacts collected in the test trench, several earlier features (postholes and pits) were discovered.

The main goal of the 2012 campaign was to document any additional features present underneath the deposits from the dumping area. For six weeks in May and June, the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research and several volunteers excavated and documented 188 features and collected and analyzed numerous artifacts.

After analysis of the findings, the site was interpreted as a slave village. The investigators suspected that there were still parts of the slave village that had not been excavated. Therefore, in January, February and March 2013 a field school was set up and the remaining parts of the settlement were investigated with the help of students and volunteers. In these subsequent campaigns, another 175 features were excavated and documented. In this report, the combined findings of the 2012 and 2013 campaigns are described in detail and an interpretation as to the nature of the site is given.

Figure 1. Location of the trench in red on NuStar’s property in the Cul-de-Sac area.
2. Historical background

It was Wednesday 13\textsuperscript{th} November 1493 when Christopher Columbus, on his second voyage to the New World, sailed by St. Kitts and became the first European to lay eyes on St. Eustatius. He did not land here, but he gave the island a name: \textit{S. Maria de la niebe} (this name was later given to the island currently known as Nevis). Later explorers called the island by its possible Amerindian name \textit{Aloi}, meaning ‘cashew island’. Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the island appeared on charts and in documents as \textit{Estasia, Estaxia, St. Anastasia, St. Eustatius, Statia, Eustathio} and \textit{S. Eustachio}. In the end, two of these names are still used today.

In the sixteenth century the Spanish, who constituted the majority of Europeans in the Caribbean, did not settle on Statia. One of the reasons for this is that the island did not have the things that the Spaniards were looking for: treasures like gold and silver. Furthermore, it did not have many (if any) Indian slaves who could be employed to mine these precious metals. Not surprisingly, other European powers came to have a presence in the area as well during the sixteenth century, and over time they were successful in making dents in the Spanish monopoly in the Caribbean. The Spanish, forced to defend their major ports and the treasure fleets, directed their attention to the Greater Antilles. The Lesser Antilles, including St. Eustatius, served as entry points for pirates and buccaneers, but later also for merchants, leading eventually to a presence in the Caribbean for, among others, the English, French and Dutch. They soon saw the value of the islands beyond points from which to attack the Spanish. In the early seventeenth century these European powers started to see potential in agriculture and commerce, resulting in rapid colonization of the Lesser Antilles. The organization that facilitated the first permanent European settling of St. Eustatius finds its origin in a war between the then most powerful European empire and one of the richest areas in Europe that started in the preceding century.

\textit{The founding of the Dutch West India Company}

The story of the first permanent European colonization of St. Eustatius begins with the founding of the Dutch West India Company (\textit{WIC}). The events leading up to its foundation can be traced back to 1568, when the people of the Seventeen Provinces started the so called ‘Dutch Revolt’ against Philip II, the king of the Spanish empire to which they were subjected. The main reason for this revolt was the persecution of Protestants by the Spaniards during the Protestant Reformation. The revolt resulted in the Eighty Years’ War, started by William the Silent to liberate the Calvinist Dutch from the Catholic Spaniards. In 1581, the northern provinces signed
the Union of Utrecht and the Act of Abjuration, which can be seen as a Dutch declaration of independence. The provinces which declared themselves independent of Spain called themselves the Republic of the Seven United Provinces.

Due to the war that was going on between this newly formed republic and Spain, the Dutch could no longer trade with Spain and its dominions (which also included Portugal). Until this time, the Dutch had distributed goods imported from the overseas colonies of Spain and Portugal. One of the main commodities they imported from Portugal was salt. The prosperous Dutch herring industry required large quantities of this commodity to conserve the herring. When the trade of salt with the Iberian peninsula was forbidden in 1598, the Dutch merchants had to build up an independent trade and search for salt elsewhere. Due to the former trade with Spain and Portugal they were well acquainted with the riches of the West Indies and South America where Spain and Portugal had a number of colonies. Moreover, the Dutch had a large number of sailors, capable ship-owners and sufficient capital. After the Twelve Years’ Truce, the Dutch Republic founded the First Dutch West India Company (WIC) in 1621. The WIC was a trading company that would increase trade with the West Indies and South America and establish settlements there which would be used as permanent trading posts. This was, however, not its main goal, since the WIC was an explicit instrument of war against Spain. This was to be, at all times, its main objective. The aim of the Dutch was not so much the occupation and colonization of the many easily available islands, as the gathering of information concerning the movements of the Spanish treasure fleets (Goslinga 1979:21). This information was used to capture the cargoes of Spanish ships, such as the famous silver fleet seized by Admiral Piet Heyn in 1628.

The Dutch merchants started an illicit trade with the Spanish colonies. As early as 1629, the Dutch had begun obtaining salt regularly on Tortuga. Salt was also obtained from St. Martin, Anguilla, the Curaçao islands, and the lagoon of Punta de Araya and the coastal area around the Uribe River in Venezuela. This aroused Great Britain’s jealousy since they were conducting illegal activities in the area as well, despite the monopoly position of Spain.

**The early years**

In the 1630s the Dutch began to colonize various Caribbean islands. St. Maarten was colonized in 1631, Curaçao in 1634, Aruba, Bonaire and St. Eustatius in 1636 and Saba around 1640. In December 1635 the Zeeland merchant Jan Snouck and his partners received permission to establish a colony on St. Croix. They fitted out a ship, appointed Peter van Corselles as leader of the future colony and sent him with sufficient men to the West Indies. On arrival the island appeared not to live up to expectations regarding fertility and anchorages, so they concentrated
on the nearby St. Eustatius. This island was occupied by the Dutch in the spring of 1636. The expedition found the island uninhabited. The Amerindians who had lived there had probably died out or moved to other islands.

The English were the first Europeans to settle on St. Eustatius in 1625, but they moved soon after, probably due to unsuccessful agriculture (Alofs et al. 1997:76). Van Corselles and his men found the ruins of a deserted bastion on the island, on which they built Fort Oranje.

The bastion Fort Oranje was constructed on was built in 1629 by the French. In this year they temporarily settled on Statia, because they were afraid that the Spanish were going to use the island as a base from which to attack the French settlement on St. Kitts. Insufficient quantities of drinking water made their stay a short one. The Dutch strengthened the French fort with some cannon (Goslinga 1979:79). In 1636 the new population of St. Eustatius consisted of 40-50 people. These were mainly Zeelanders, Flemings and Walloons. They set up tobacco, sugar cane and cotton plantations and called the island ‘Nieuw Zeelandt’. Coffee and indigo were also grown on the island. As the plantations increased, so did the number of imported black and red slaves. Because of the international trade, several European merchants settled on the island as well, although the emphasis in this century lay on agriculture. In 1665 the population had grown to 330 white people and 840 Negroes and Indians. The yields from the plantations, which by 1650 were even to be found on the slopes of the hills, were exported to Zeeland. Prosperity increased steadily, but it was probably not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that urban development started to take place. Habitation in the seventeenth century most likely consisted of scattered farms around the fort (Purmer 2003). There were also a few warehouses built indicating small-scale trade. All this Dutch activity on the island caused Great Britain to be envious, particularly since a royal patent of 1627 declared Great Britain the owner of St. Eustatius. Despite these irritations these first few decades were very peaceful.

**Turbulent times**
In 1663 peace was disrupted when the Englishman Robert Holmes sacked the island. The English occupied St. Eustatius in 1665 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War after an attack led by Edward Morgan. In 1667 St. Eustatius was given back to the Dutch after the Treaty of Breda. In 1672, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, Statia was under English control again, but a year later the Dutch took over the island. At the Treaty of Westminster in 1674 it was officially returned to the Netherlands, but the English were afraid it would fall into French hands, so they held on to it. This was agreeable to the Heren XIX, the board of the West India Company; in this way they did not have to spend any money on the defense of the island (Attema 1976:18). In 1679 it was taken back into Dutch hands. In the same year though, the French attacked the island.
and destroyed the whole settlement. A year later a joint English/Dutch attack placed the island in Dutch hands again.

At this time the West India Company thought St. Eustatius would be very suitable as a transit harbour for slaves. Until now, Statia had been owned by various ‘patrons’. These were individual merchants and representatives of the Zeeland Chamber, who had a large capital at their disposal and were responsible for law and order and the appointment of a commander. In 1682, the island became completely the property of the Second Dutch West India Company. The Zeeland merchants who had owned the island gave it to the Second WIC, since the constant disruption to planting and trading activities by pirates and privateers proved too difficult for them. In 1689, St. Eustatius was captured by the French during King William’s War. They hauled away a booty close to two million dollars. By 1697 the Dutch found themselves again in possession of the island, after the English recaptured it for them (Goslinga 1979:81). The poor state of the island’s defense, including cannon that refused to fire or would even explode, was one of the main reasons why it was often given over without any significant opposition during the last four decades of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the inhabitants over time lost the will to resist, since the Dutch Republic most of the time failed to supply them with sufficient ammunition.

The multiple changes of power and an economic recession led to great poverty on the island at the end of the seventeenth century (Purmer 2003). People sometimes did not even have money to buy shoes. Because land was extremely cheap, people from other islands started moving to Statia. Between 1705 and 1715 the population on the island more than doubled from 606 to 1,274 inhabitants. Because of this population increase and the prevailing poverty, in 1717 the Statians wanted to colonize St. Croix, but an answer from the States General of the Republic was never received (Hartog 1976:35). During the first three decades of the eighteenth century family feuds and rivalries increased dramatically, ruining all chances of good and stable government and undermining a solid basis for prosperity. Since Statia was not very productive at that time, the Heren X did not really care about this turmoil.

Forts and batteries
The first record of a fort other than Fort Oranje is found at the end of the seventeenth century. It was in this period that the Waterfort was built, although the exact year of construction is unclear. It contained sixteen cannon but was hardly ever used. As a result, it quickly fell into disrepair. In the late 1680s a battery was built on Gilboa Hill, overlooking Tommelendijk (Tumble Down Dick) Bay. When Isaac Lamont accepted the post of commander in 1701, he found the forts in a
sad state. He asked the *Heren X* of the WIC for building materials and craftsmen to strengthen them, but his needs were never met. In 1709 French filibusters captured the island. Out of joy at their easy conquest, they wanted to fire off a cannon, but not a single one was fit for use (Hartog 1976:33). The French soon took off with a large booty, after which Lamont resumed possession of the island. By this time there were three other batteries in use apart from Fort Oranje: Dolijn, Tommelendijk and a new fort between Tommelendijk and Oranje. Nearly 30 years later, during the command of Isaac Faesch, not much seems to have changed, for the forts were still in a poor state. In 1737 the taxes were raised to finance their repair and the WIC sent 30,000 bricks for the forts’ renovation. The walls were strengthened and the platforms for the cannon were rebuilt, but despite from that everything remained much as before (Attema 1976:24).

In 1748, during the command of Johannes Heyliger, the citizens voluntarily raised a sum of money for the building of some new coastal forts. Two new forts were built: Hollandia and Zeelandia. The *Heren X* supplied the forts with cannon, but they forgot to send the cannonballs. Fort Oranje was renovated as well, but by 1755 its condition had again deteriorated. The original plan of Fort Oranje incorporated four bastions, one of which eventually collapsed along the cliff edge. Drawings dating to 1765 clearly depict the current three-bastion design. Enclosed within Fort Oranje were magazines and barracks.

In the mid-eighteenth century, commander De Windt built various batteries along the northern coast of the island: Turtle Bay, Concordia, Corrie-orrrie and Lucie. In the south he built a battery named after himself: Battery De Windt. By 1781 fourteen military sites were present on the island, all in severe disrepair. At the end of the same year the French, who had taken over the island, restored the neglected forts and built four new ones: Panga, Jussac, Royal, and Bouille. They also constructed a network of roads linking the forts and batteries. By the end of 1782 Johannes de Graaff mentions that the island had been brought ‘in a formidable state of defense’ (Hartog 1976:97).

All these sites were not used simultaneously. The Statian garrison numbered around fifty men of a low standard. They were vagrants, ranging from seventeen year old boys to 67 year old men. The attitude of the WIC was one of the reasons why the fortifications time and time again fell into negligence. Everything had to be done as cheaply as possible. This was not exceptional in the Caribbean, since defense works of the British and French islands fared no better.
Figure 2. Drawing by Jan Veltkamp depicting slaves working on a Statian sugar plantation around 1750. Source: National Maritime Museum, Amsterdam.

Figure 3. Drawing by S. Weuijster depicting slave traders in the roadstead of St. Eustatius in 1763. Goods and people are being transported between ships. One of the sailing ships bears the name Sara Helena. Source: Atlas van Stolk collection, Rotterdam.
**Slavery and the slave trade**

In the 1630s the Dutch conquered parts of Brazil and Guinea. From this time on they improved their position as slave traders. In the period 1660-1670 Curaçao developed into an important slave depot for the West Indies. After 1730 everyone was allowed to export slaves from the Dutch West African coast, but had to pay tribute to the WIC to do so. The WIC lost a lot of money to smugglers who did not pay and could offer slaves for a cheaper price. On St. Eustatius these smugglers sold a lot of slaves, since the WIC failed to supply slaves time and time again. Already in 1675 St. Eustatius provided the French, Spanish and English islands with slaves (Hartog 1976:49). By 1725 the Dutch shipped 2,000 to 3,000 slaves per year to the island, almost all in transit (Figure 3). Slave ships brought their cargo to Statia to be auctioned to buyers from the surrounding islands. Fort Amsterdam, at Oranje Bay’s northern end, hosted slave auctions and served to store slaves. Initially, the main building was only one storey; however it was expanded to two in 1742 to accommodate additional slaves. Sometimes the slaves were transferred from one ship to another without even coming ashore.

Slaves were delivered dressed, and if you wanted to get a good price for a slave, he/she needed to be well fed. The Statian slaves worked not only on plantations (Figure 2), but also as crewmen on ships, ship workers, transporters of goods to and from ships, and as servants. They possibly also helped in making illegally imported raw sugar into rum. The slave trade reached its peak in the early 1770s. Towards the end of the eighteenth century people started to protest against this trade. The slave trade in the Dutch colonies was ended in 1814, but it was not until 1863 that the Dutch abolished slavery. In town, slaves lived both in and around the merchants’ homes; various inventories indicate that slave dwellings were part of these properties in addition

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Figure 4. Het Eyland St. Eustasie. View of St. Eustatius in 1759. Cultivated land can be seen extending high up the slopes of the Quill to the right. Source: National Archives, The Hague.
to other outbuildings. There is also strong evidence that a large number of freed slaves lived in areas at the periphery of Oranjestad. On plantations slaves lived in little villages, often referred to as ‘slave quarters.’ Interestingly, whereas on most other Caribbean islands the slave dwellings were in sight of the plantation owner’s house, on Statia this was not the case, suggesting that surveillance of the slaves’ home lives was more limited. Owners could have, as was found elsewhere, placed slave housing in an area that was more easily observed. However, the owners may have felt no need to constantly watch their slaves due to the small size of Statia. As a result, slaves probably enjoyed a much different physical and social environment that those living on other islands. On Statia, slaves moved between the plantations and throughout the trading district with relative ease.

Thus the living conditions were likely less difficult for slaves on Statia compared to those in other places. Here they could earn money with which they could purchase their freedom. These so called ‘free blacks’ would sometimes have a few slaves of their own (Gilmore in Haviser & MacDonald 2006:78). Nevertheless, it often happened that slaves tried to escape, not always without success. In 1750, a ship named the Young Elias lay at anchor at St. Eustatius. The only people on board were four slaves, who hoisted sail and escaped to Puerto Rico, where, once they were baptized, they did not have to worry about being sent back.

Growing prosperity and the Golden Era
The economic situation of Statia changed for the better after 1730. In 1739 a synagogue (Honon Dalim) was built in the center of Oranjestad for the growing Jewish community of the island. Most people, however, were Christian, resulting in the building of various churches over time. By the 1740s it was no longer possible to expand agriculture, since all arable land was under cultivation. The demand for sugar soared in this decade. As a result, the plantations growing cotton, coffee and tobacco were converted into sugar cane plantations. A 1742 map of the island shows 88 plantations and/or landholdings. Nearly four decades later, in 1781, this number had diminished to about twenty, indicating an economic shift from agriculture to trade. On Statia, plantations were designed for two primary purposes. First, to process illegal sugar for re-export and second, to grow provisions for re-supplying ships and for slaves on other islands.

The residential and commercial areas on the island were enlarged in the eighteenth century despite various setbacks and difficulties like lazy workers, conflicts about landownership and devastating hurricanes in 1772 and 1780. The bay area, where Lower Town is located, was extended by reclaiming land from the sea and Upper Town by newly built merchant houses on a stretch of land called the ‘Compagniessavane’, a West India Company owned plantation above
Figure 5. View of St. Eustatius from the northwest as it appeared in 1774. The large building in Upper Town is the residence of Jan de Windt. To the left of the church tower is the town hall. The first building (with the blue roof) at the front of Lower Town is the weighing-house. The building behind the weighing-house is the headquarters of the Dutch West India Company. Watercolour by Emants, after a drawing by A. Nelson. Source: SECAR collection.

Figure 6. View of St. Eustatius from the southeast as it appeared in 1774. The house left of the church tower, with the flag, is the governor’s house. Between this house and the church tower Fort Oranje is situated. Saba can be seen in the background on the left. Most ships are flying the Dutch tricolour, but there are also English flags (the St. George’s Cross) to be seen on the ships. Watercolour by Emants, after a drawing by A. Nelson. Source: SECAR collection.
town. The latter was laid out in lots approximately 0.1 hectares in size. Lower and Upper Town were divided by high cliffs. Several steep paths connected the two parts of the town. Lower Town started to become a trade locus towards the end of the first half of the eighteenth century. Due to steady population growth, housing was scarce and rental of a house was very expensive. This caused merchants to build houses on the bay after 1760, some of which were of palatial dimensions.

Besides the residential houses new warehouses, trade offices and a new weighing house were built. In the latter half of the eighteenth century building activities and trade increased resulting in a strip of an estimated 600 two-storey high warehouses that stretched for one and a half kilometers along the bay (Figures 5 & 6). They were sometimes so full that the doors could no longer be used. An account from the Scottish lady Janet Schaw dating to 1775 shows Lower Town to have been a continuous market displaying goods of different types and qualities sold by people from all over the world:

“From one end of the town of Eustatia to the other is a continuous market, where goods of the most different uses and qualities are displayed before the shop doors. Here hang rich embroideries, painted silks, flowered Muslins, with all the Manufactures of the Indies. Just by hang Sailor’s Jackets, trousers, shoes, hats, etc. The next stall contains the most exquisite silver plate, the most beautiful indeed I ever saw, and close by these iron pots, kettles and shovels. Perhaps the next presents you with French and English Millinary wares. But it were endless to enumerate the variety of merchandise in such a place, for in every store you find every thing, be their qualities ever so opposite.”

(Journal of a Lady of Quality: Janet Schaw, 1731-1801)

After 1760, the number of ships arriving on Statia numbered between 1,800 and 2,700, reaching a maximum of 3,551 ships in 1779. They came from Europe, Africa and the Americas. Almost 20,000 merchants, slaves, sailors and plantation owners were crowded on this small island in its heyday (a large proportion of these were temporary residents). In the 1770’s imports exceeded the capacity of the island’s warehouses and sugar and cotton were piled up high in the open air (Klooster 1998:96). This was the time at which St. Eustatius reached its greatest prosperity and earned its nickname the ‘Golden Rock’.

In these years Statian society was composed of a small group of long-term residents and a majority of people who were short-term immigrants from Europe and the Americas, hoping to become rich in a short time. This resulted in a constant influx of new goods and ideas. Both politically and economically, Statia was dominated by a small elite group of men who controlled
the trade. Dutch, Spanish, French, English, Swedish, ‘Italian’, and Jewish merchants, participating in commerce on a massive scale, formed this community. The wealth and power of these men was symbolized and transmitted to the Statian population. This resulted in a culture focused on material possessions such as large numbers of slaves, extensive landholdings, large houses, and fancy objects such as Chinese porcelain. Johannes de Graaff, the commander of the island from 1776 to 1781, is a perfect example of this. His personal possessions included an army of slaves, chests filled with gold and silver coins and even a duck pond. It was not unusual for wealthy residents to own several properties, both in town and on the countryside.

A distinction can be made between those who owned and operated plantations and those who were merchants and resided in town. However, the available evidence suggests that Oranjestad was similar to some other colonial towns in the Americas, in that wealthy individuals would establish “urban plantations” containing all of the architectural elements of a typical rural plantation, including outbuildings and sometimes even small plots where crops were grown, just on a reduced scale. On St. Eustatius, one such home was constructed by one of the wealthiest merchants, Simon Doncker. He built on a substantial lot in very close proximity to the town centre. Towards the rear of the property he grew crops, and outbuildings were built between these and the main house. Other smaller homes, such as the one known as the Godet property, were condensed even further. Still standing on this property are the kitchen, hurricane house, cistern and outhouse, all built of hewn stone and imported yellow Dutch brick.

There were several reasons for Statia’s economic success. First, it had an ideal location on the busy sea-lanes between the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Second, the harbour was ideally situated on the leeward side of the island and geological conditions inhibited the condensation of rain clouds on The Quill. This reduced the quantity of rainfall, restricting the quality and quantity of tobacco, sugar cane and other farm products that could be produced on the island. Left with no agricultural promise, trade was the best option for the residents (Gilmore in Reid 2008). Third, the island was surrounded by colonies of various European countries. These colonies were dependent on supplies from their mother countries according to the monopoly system, which were not always sufficient or on time. Every colonial power tried to monopolize trade with its colonies in order to keep the prices high (Alofs et al. 1997:77). Since it was a Dutch custom to favour free trade and the Republic was in a neutral position in many European wars, in 1754 St. Eustatius was made into a free port which was in an excellent position to ship not only slaves but also other illegal supplies such as sugar, tobacco, foodstuffs, gunpowder, and weapons to these colonies. This illicit trade between the Caribbean islands, the Spanish-American mainland and the North American colonies is termed the *kleine vaart*. On Statia this took on enormous proportions. For example, around 1770 Statia produced about 600,000 lbs of sugar annually, but
it exported 20 million lbs. The remaining 19.4 million lbs were brought over from other islands and sold tax free on St. Eustatius to maximize profit (Gilmore 2004:49). Weapons and gunpowder, originally coming from Europe, were shipped in great numbers to the English colonies in North America in exchange for commodities such as sugar and tobacco. This trade reached its peak during the American War of Independence. The outbreak of this war in 1774 brought as many as twenty North American ships at a time crowding into the small bay at St. Eustatius to buy supplies needed by the rebels. Even the English merchants on the island were willing to sell whatever the enemies of their country needed. In 1775 the export of arms and war equipment to North America from Dutch ports was forbidden by the Dutch government under pressure from Great Britain, but on Statia this was ignored and the illegal trade continued to flourish. This is aptly illustrated by a letter from Abraham van Bibber, the Maryland agent on the island, written to his superiors, saying: ‘obedience to the law would be ruinous for the trade’. 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 (Goslinga 1985:144). These three factors caused the island to become the major trading center in the Atlantic World during the late eighteenth century.

The turn of the tide
On 16th November 1776 Johannes de Graaff, the commander of St. Eustatius at the time, ordered a return salute to be fired to the Andrew Doria, an armed North American brigantine flying the colours of the rebelling thirteen colonies. Although this counter salute was insufficient for a recognition of the sovereignty of a foreign state (it was not in accordance with protocol) and De Graaff did not have the slightest competency to do such a thing, the act was interpreted by the English as clear recognition of the rebellious colonies’ newly found state by St. Eustatius. The English were furious and felt betrayed by the Dutch because Statia, the representative of what was at that time still an allied state, chose the side of their enemy (Jameson 1903). The Statians, however, just wanted to make as much profit as possible, and ships like the Andrew Doria always came to buy arms and ammunition (Hartog 1976:72). Moreover, it was not the first time that a ship flying the Grand Union Flag received a return salute. Earlier that year it also happened on St. Croix and St. Thomas (Jameson 1903). The big difference with Statia was that here the flag was flown by a commissioned naval vessel whose captain, Isaiah Robinson, was a Captain of the Navy. The Statians had no idea of this, because the Andrew Doria did not look like a naval vessel by outward appearances (Hartog 1976:70).
Nevertheless, this event, together with the capture of an English ship by the American ship *Baltimore Hero* near Statia in 1776, the continued saluting of North American ships buying arms by commander De Graaff whom the English wanted to be fired, the constant equipping and fitting-out of privateers to prey on British commerce, and the steadily growing envy of the English to the prosperity of St. Eustatius led to increased conflict with Great Britain - which declared war on the Republic in December 1780 - and the capturing of the island by Admiral George Brydges Rodney in February 1781 (Jameson 1903). Together with Sir Samuel Hood and General Vaughan he arrived on St. Eustatius with 3,000 men in 23 ships of the line, five frigates and a number of smaller ships (Figure 7). The odds were clearly against the Dutch garrison of fifty men in their neglected forts and batteries and the two Dutch men-of-war lying at anchor. Nevertheless, a few shots were fired for honour’s sake before the island surrendered. Rodney kept the Dutch flag flying from Fort Oranje for a month in order to seize the cargoes of unsuspecting ships arriving on the island. The warehouses were sealed and all shops had to remain closed. When Rodney landed, the yearly rent on the warehouses totaled £1,200,000. Over £3,000,000 was realized from goods that were auctioned from the warehouses in what the 1783 Annual Register described as “one of the greatest auctions that ever was opened in the universe.” In addition to this sum, over £4,000,000 in bullion was confiscated from island residents. All of these figures are in eighteenth-century terms. They represent the largest single booty taken in ti-
me of war by any nation during the eighteenth century. The intended destruction of the island, which Rodney called ‘a nest of vipers which preyed upon the vitals of Great Britain’, did not take place (Attema 1976:40).

Towards the end of 1781 the French managed to take over the island with a surprise attack. At this time, France and the United Provinces were allies against Great Britain. St. Eustatius returned to Dutch control in 1783. In 1784, after the actual change of government had taken place, St. Eustatius again became a free port and trade recovered, causing the economy to flourish even more than it had done so in the previous decade. The population increased to a record breaking 8,000 at the end of the 1780’s, of which almost 5,000 were slaves.

Around 1795 the importance of St. Eustatius as a transit harbour declined. The United States had become independent and trade moved to North America. To make matters worse, the end of the slave trade was looming. On top of all this the French captured the island in 1795. The French policies governing trade inhibited the free transactions that built the island's wealth. These events signaled the end of prosperity on what a mere fifteen years earlier was the richest trading centre in the Caribbean. In 1801 the English seized St. Eustatius again, but a year later Dutch rule was reinstated with the peace of Amiens. In 1810 St. Eustatius surrendered to the English. In 1814 Great Britain agreed to return the six Caribbean islands to the Dutch. The actual change occurred two years later, causing the Dutch flag to reappear in the West Indies. In the following decades the warehouses that used to be stuffed to their roofs decayed, just like the forts and batteries. The houses in Upper Town fared a bit better. In 1840 there were just ten plantations left. The size of Oranjestad rapidly decreased along with the population density.
After the abolishment of slavery, slaves left the countryside to settle in the town and as a result the cultivation of crops came to an end. In order to provide some income 80,000 warehouse bricks were exported in 1855. Another way the people on the island made money in these years was by exporting trass, a volcanic earth that makes good mortar, to other Caribbean islands. Devastating hurricanes in 1898, 1899, 1900, 1923 and 1928 caused a lot of damage and increased the rate of decline. The population decreased from 2,668 people in 1816 to a mere 921 in 1948. The island that was once known as one of the leading ports of the world became an almost forgotten community.
3. Research methodology

The site was investigated during two campaigns, each in three phases. In 2012, a 45 x 15 meter trench was excavated in three phases. The first phase consisted of removing the top soil on a 45 x 5 meter strip using a mechanical excavator with a 2 meter wide smooth bucket. Two trenches of 45 x 5 meter each were later added to the original trench. The trench was located on a slope: the thickness of the layer of top soil ranged from 60 cm in the northern, lower part of the trench to 20 cm in the southern, higher part of the trench. Immediately below the top soil, a yellow layer of soil and gravel appeared in which a large number of features were identified.

Based on the results of the 2012 campaign and the area that was still available for excavation (many things are stored around the site), it was decided to expand the existing trench in three phases. The first two phases consisted of expanding the trench in the east-west direction by adding two 45 x 4 meter strips. The third phase comprised an expansion of 8 x 12 meter on the southeastern corner.

All features deeper than 5 cm were photographed and drawn in section, and a site plan of all features was drawn. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D3100 digital SLR camera. Drawings were made on weatherproof DECAL PS 097 drawing paper and digitized in Adobe Illustrator. All artifacts and ecofacts recovered from the features were collected and analyzed in the SECAR laboratory and subsequently stored at the SECAR storage facility.

Figure 9. The first phase of the excavation. Scale: 1 m.
4. Results and interpretation

The plan view of the excavation (Appendix I) shows 363 features comprising at least nine structures. Features included pits, plough scars, ditches, a hearth, and two animal burials, but the majority of features were postholes. On the basis of the spatial relationship of the features, artifacts found in them, and the sites’ location in the landscape and in relation to the neighbouring plantation buildings, the findings are interpreted as a slave settlement on the basis of the following evidence:

- **Spatial relationship of the features:** As shown in Appendix I, many posthole features form rectangular structures, sometimes with pits inside. All structures except for structure 6 are interpreted as slave dwellings. They consisted of postholes forming rectangular structures with areas between 8 and 21 m². There were several ditches inside and around the settlement. The two parallel ditches in the southern part of the excavation probably mark the edge of the settlement. In the center of the excavation, three features filled with charcoal and burnt clay mark the location of a hearth. In the northern part of the excavation, a fence likely marks the location of the provisioning grounds. On the northern and southern edges of the settlement, two contemporary animal burials were encountered.

- **Artifacts from the features:** More than half of the features contained artifacts, which provide clues as to the material culture used on the site. The majority of artifacts were ceramics, and of these, the third largest category was Afro-Caribbean wares (Figure 14). The many nails found in the excavation indicate that some dwellings in the Schotsenhoek slave village were, at least partly, constructed of wooden boards, as is shown in Figure 10.

- **Location in the wider plantation landscape:** On most plantations in the Caribbean, plantation owners wanted to keep a close eye on their slaves. On Statia, this was the exact opposite. The configuration of plantation buildings on Statia was usually as follows: the Big House was located upwind from all other buildings; downwind from the Big House was the industrial complex (mill, boiling house, curing house, rum distillery), downwind from the industrial complex and out of sight from the Big House was the slave village. This configuration can be seen on many plantations on the island including the large English Quarter and Fair Play plantations and neighbouring Benners plantation. The same configuration is also present at Schotsenhoek plantation: the excavated site is located downwind from all other plantation buildings and out of sight from the Big House.
Documentary evidence provides some clues about slave villages on Schotsenhoek plantation and other plantations on the island. Zimmerman L'ainé, a traveler visiting St. Eustatius in 1792, briefly described the slave villages on the island: “On each plantation there is usually a village of 30 to 40 little huts, where the poor creatures live.” Thus, the Schotsenhoek slave village might be substantially larger than the seven dwellings found during this excavation. On the 1781 P.F. Martin map, many slave huts are depicted; there was a slave settlement at every plantation on the island. Zimmerman also made a sketch of a slave village (Figure 11), which gives some idea of what they would have looked like.

The 1781 P.F. Martin map shows the slave village on Schotsenhoek plantation to be located on the northern side of Signal Hill. An inventory of all possessions of Mr. Venancio Fabio, dating to 30 April 1811, lists Schotsenhoek plantation (called Naples at the time). According to the inventory, on Schotsenhoek there were “two rows of negroe houses built of wood, consisting of fourteen apartments”. The inventory further lists the names and occupations
of 68 slaves living and working on the plantation. This description might refer to the slave village shown on the 1781 map, but it is more likely that the village was relocated again, as the slave dwellings are listed amongst other buildings related to the sugar plantation. This suggests that, at least in some instances, slave villages were never in the same place for a very long time.

Figure 11. Sketch of a Statian slave settlement made by Zimmerman L'ainé in 1792.

Figure 12. Part of the 1781 P.F. Martin map, showing the Schotsenhoek plantation complex (right) and the slave village in the top left on the slopes of Panga (or Signal) Hill.
Over 2,000 artifacts were found during the excavation. The vast majority of ceramics found in the features were tin-glazed earthenwares (62%). Pearlware and creamware fragments only represent a very small portion of the total ceramic assemblage (3% and 3.7% respectively), and were nearly all found in the southern part of feature 418, a ditch which in its southern part was only covered by about 15 cm of top soil. It is very likely that the pearlware and creamware fragments found in this ditch were ploughed into the feature after the slave village fell out of use, thus they can be viewed as contamination and should not be used in the analysis. Several plough scars just to the east of this ditch support this interpretation. Thus, the absence of pearlware suggests a pre-1780s date for the use of the settlement. The absence of creamware pushes the date back even further, and suggests that the site dates to before the 1760s. Afro-Caribbean wares represent 7% of the total ceramic assemblage.

Eight Dutch pipe bowls with heel marks were found, two of which date to the periods 1679-1768 and 1684-1743, and six that have *terminus post quem* dates of 1720, 1726, 1731 and 1740. A drinking glass found in feature 191 dates to between 1705 and 1715, while another drinking glass from feature 418 also has an early eighteenth-century date. Part of a shoe buckle found in feature 191 has a *terminus post quem* of 1720. Several other finds, including many wine bottle fragments and two drinking glass stems, also fall into the early to mid-eighteenth century date range. The pipe fragments and other finds thus indicate that the site was in use during the early to mid-eighteenth century.

Furthermore, a total of 86 iron nails were found, which indicate that some dwellings may have, at least partly, been made of wooden boards. Appendix I includes a site plan with nail distribution. This plan shows that the majority of nails were found in the southern parts of the excavation. Features that contained most nails were actually not part of any dwelling.

The large variety of artifacts indicates that the enslaved population of Schotsenhoek plantation had access to many European goods, and were using relatively little locally made ceramics. Artifacts such as fish hooks, buckles, and grinding stones, provide a glimpse of the day to day lives of slaves working and living on this plantation. Whether slaves acquired these goods through stealing, trade, or were perhaps gifts, is unclear, but historical records point to a combination of these.

It was not possible to determine whether all structures were in use simultaneously. Given the spatial relationship between them, it seems that several might have been. However, the large number of postholes in the southeastern part of the excavation might indicate the location of several dwellings built at different times. In this area several alignments of postholes can be seen, however, no clear house plans can be identified.
Figure 13. A total of 566 ceramic fragments were collected from the features, the majority (353) of which were tin-glazed earthenwares, followed by slipwares (55), Afro-Caribbean wares (42), coarse earthenwares other than Afro-Caribbean wares (33), stonewares (23), creamwares (21), pearlwares (17), porcelain (16), and whitewares and prehistoric ceramics (both 3).

Below, the structures and individual features are described in more detail. Close-up plan drawings of each individual structure and section drawings of their features can be found in Appendix II.

**Structure 1**

The northernmost structure (in red) measured 5 meters in length and 3.25 meters in width, a total area of approximately 16.25 m². It was oriented roughly east-west. There was no clear indication of the entrance. The structure consisted of eighteen postholes, all comprised of dark grey and dark brown/grey loamy sand. All but one were sectioned; number 4 was not sectioned because it was only four cm deep. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#70) was 8 cm deep, the deepest (#7) 38 cm. Four postholes exhibited a post mold.

Six postholes contained artifacts and ecofacts: several fragments of tin-glazed earthenware and Afro-Caribbean ware, one fragment of Rhenish stoneware, several small glass fragments, one large nail, several pieces of coral and shell, and two pipestems.
Structure 2
The structure south of structure 1 (in green) measured 5.3 meters in length and 2.25 meters in width, a total area of approximately 12 m². It was oriented roughly east-west. The entrance might have been located on the structure’s northern side between posts 15 and 90. The structure consisted of eighteen postholes, all comprised of dark grey and dark brown/grey loamy sand. All but two were sectioned; numbers 94 and 203 were not sectioned because they were only four and five cm deep respectively. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#57) was 11 cm deep, the deepest (#15, 59, 91, 95) 30 cm. One posthole exhibited a post mold.

Five postholes contained artifacts and ecofacts: two fragments of tin-glazed earthenware, one fragment of Rhenish stoneware, one fragment of slipware, two glass fragments, three pipestems, one fragment of Afro-Caribbean ware, one fragment of iron, and one piece of coral.

Figure 14. Structure 3 looking southwest. Scale: 1 m.
Structure 3
The southernmost structure (in purple) measured 4.25 meters in length and 2.5 meters in width, a total area of approximately 10.5 m². It was oriented roughly east-west. The entrance might have been located on the structure’s southern side between posts 146 and 148, or possibly between posts 37 and 58. The structure consisted of nineteen postholes, all comprised of dark grey and dark brown/grey loamy sand. The fill of the postholes on the structure’s southwestern side all consisted of dark brown/grey loamy sand. All but one were sectioned; number 37 was not sectioned because it was only four cm deep. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#70) was 11 cm deep, the deepest (#45 and 149) 34 cm. One posthole exhibited a post mold.

Five postholes contained artifacts and ecofacts: three fragments of tin-glazed earthenware, one fragment of Afro-Caribbean ware, one large fragment of Fulham stoneware, one fragment of salt-glazed stoneware, three pipestems, one pipebowl fragment, three nails, two fragments of glass, two bone fragments, one whelk, and one piece of flint.

Figure 15. Part of structure 7 looking southwest. Scale: 50 cm.
Structure 4
The structure furthest to the northwest (in dark blue) measured 6 meters in length and 3.5 meters in width, a total area of approximately 21 m². This was the largest structure encountered, and was oriented north-south. The entrance might have been located on the structure’s northern side between posts 83 and 159. The structure consisted of sixteen postholes and one pit (#173), all comprised of dark grey loamy sand. Postholes 161, 162 and 163 were not sectioned, as they were only 3, 5, and 5 cm deep respectively. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#160) was 12 cm deep, the deepest (#83) 42 cm. The pit had a maximum depth of 20 cm. The deepest postholes of this structure were found on its eastern side, the direction of the prevailing winds. Postholes 83, 158 and 159 may mark the posts that formed a small porch.

Nine features contained artifacts and ecofacts: five fragments of slipware, one fragment of Afro-Caribbean ware, one fragment of tin-glazed earthenware, two nails, one fragment of scrap iron, three pipestems, one piece of coral, two bone fragments, three brick fragments, two undetermined stone artifacts, one half of a grindstone, one glass fragment, and a large chunk of mortar with plaster on one side.

Structure 5
The structure furthest to the southwest (in light blue) measured 7 meters in length. It was not completely recorded, as too much soil was removed by the excavator in order to expose the ditch. The structure seems to have been oriented north-south. The part of the structure that was documented consisted of fifteen postholes and one sub-floor pit (#190), all comprised of dark grey loamy sand. Postholes 187, 193 and 195 were not sectioned, as they were only 5, 4, and 5 cm deep respectively. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#204) was 12 cm deep, the deepest (#188, 189, 196) 48 cm. The pit had a maximum depth of 32 cm. The deepest postholes of this structure were found on its eastern side, the direction of the prevailing winds.

Nine features contained artifacts and ecofacts: four fragments of tin-glazed earthenware, one ceramic gaming piece, one fragment of slipware, four bone fragments, two pipestems, four glass fragments, one piece of coral, one nail, and one piece of Afro-Caribbean ware. The sub-floor pit (feature 190) contained fourteen fragments of tin-glazed earthenware, three fragments of Afro-Caribbean ware, seven fragments of slipware, four pipestems, three pipebowl fragments, seven bone fragments, two fragments of stoneware, three nails, nine glass fragments, and one piece of coarse earthenware.
Structure 6
The row of posts in the northwestern corner of the excavation was almost certainly a fence given the fact that the postholes were perfectly aligned, relatively shallow, and were located on what is believed to be the edge of the settlement. It might have been a fence linked with the slaves’ provision grounds. It is highly likely that part of the structure continues further west of the excavation. The part of the structure that was documented consisted of eight postholes, all comprised of dark grey loamy sand. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#66) was 8 cm deep, the deepest (#156) 16 cm.

One feature two artifacts: one fragment of tin-glazed earthenware and one fragment of Afro-Caribbean ware.

Structure 7
This structure (in yellow) is located between structures 1 and 2. It seems to be a connection between the two structures. As there is no clear sign of a doorway into the other structures, it might have been a shed. The structure consisted of twelve postholes, all comprised of dark grey loamy sand. Postholes 85 and 87 were not sectioned, as they were only 5 cm deep. Posthole 86 was an estimated 12 cm deep, but had already been disturbed too much to record. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#88) was 10 cm deep, the deepest (#14) 18 cm.
Two features contained artifacts: one glass fragment and one fragment of tin-glazed earthenware.

**Structure 8**
This structure, located at the excavation's western part, measured approximately 4 x 2.5 meters, a total area of about 10 m². Oriented north-south, the structure's entrance was facing north. It consisted of 19 postholes, all comprised of dark grey loamy sand. Feature 453 exhibited a post mold. Features 449 and 463 were not sectioned as they were less than 5 cm deep. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#457) was 9 cm deep, the deepest (feature 464) was 30 cm deep.

Only one posthole (#454) contained artifacts. These consisted of four fragments of tin-glazed earthenwares, one pipestem, and one fragment of *cittarium pica*.

**Structure 9**
This was the smallest dwelling, located between structures 4 and 8. It measured approximately 4 x 2 meters, a total area of about 8 m². Oriented north-south, the structure's entrance faced north. It consisted of fourteen postholes, all comprised of dark grey and dark brown loamy sand. Features 415, 417, 420, 486, 487, 488, 490, and 491 were not sectioned as they were less than 5 cm deep. The shallowest sectioned posthole (#416) was 6 cm deep, the deepest (#413) was 36 cm deep.

Three features contained artifacts: two pieces of glass, one fragment of *cittarium pica*, one piece of tin-glazed earthenware, and one brick fragment.

**Other features**
Several other features are worth noting. Feature 100 was an animal burial. While it was not possible to identify the species because of the deteriorated condition of the bones, the positioning of the bones indicates it was a quadruped. No artifacts were associated with this feature. Feature 468 was an animal burial as well, which, after analysis, was found to be a donkey (Figure 16). This feature contained many artifacts, including ceramics, shell, and glass. The presence of creamware indicates that the slave village predates this burial.

Feature 110, with a depth of 3 cm, contained a large amount of charcoal. Nearby features 107 and 108, both postholes, contained charcoal fragments and burnt clay. Feature 110 was thus most likely the site of a hearth.

Features 21, 191, 408, 418 and 429 were ditches with depths of 26, 26, 20, 22, and 5 cm respectively. Features 21, 408 and 429 contained surprisingly few artifacts, while feature 191 and 418 contained many. This may indicate that the latter two features mark the edge of the settlement.
Features 133, 134, 505 and 579 were plough scars between 2 and 5 cm deep.

In addition to the numerous eighteenth-century finds, a twenty-minute search on the spoil heap resulted in the recovery of twenty Pre-Columbian ceramic fragments, all dating to the late Saladoid period, contemporaneous with the Golden Rock site excavated near the airport in the 1980s. This indicates there is likely a prehistoric habitation site close by, although its exact location could not be determined.
Figure 18. Section of feature 191. Scale: 50 cm.

Figure 19. Feature 408: a ditch in the northwestern corner of the excavation. Scale: 2 m.
5. Conclusion

From May 2012 to March 2013, a slave village was excavated at Schotsenhoek plantation on St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands. During the investigation, seven dwellings were identified, in addition to five ditches, a hearth, two animal burials, several plough scars, and numerous post holes. The features were clearly visible in a yellow layer of sand and gravel immediately below the top soil. On the basis of the artifacts found during the excavation, the site was dated to the early to mid-eighteenth century.

The village was located on a slope downwind from the plantation’s industrial complex and big house, and out of sight from the great house. This configuration can be seen on many sugar plantations on St. Eustatius and suggests that Statian slaves may have enjoyed more freedom than slaves on other islands.

Over 2,000 artifacts were found in the excavation, which shed light on the lives of the enslaved population of Schotsenhoek plantation. The site was dated based on these artifacts, which point to an early- to mid-eighteenth-century date for the use of the settlement. They clearly indicate that slaves were using a wide variety of European goods in addition to some locally made ceramics. Whether these European goods were acquired through trade, stealing, or were perhaps gifts, is unclear, but historical records point to a combination of these. The favourable economic climate on St. Eustatius would have enabled slaves to acquire many goods that may have been out of reach for slaves on other islands. This is evidenced by the artifact assemblage from the Schotsenhoek slave village.

Historical and archaeological evidence shows that slave villages, at least in some instances, were not permanent settlements, but often moved from one place to another on a particular plantation. As slave dwellings were usually made of wattle-and-daub or wooden boards with thatched roofs, the structures were very vulnerable in tropical storms and hurricanes and needed to be rebuilt frequently. When the slave village found in this investigation was abandoned, it started to be used as a dumping area for the plantation, as is evidenced by the thousands of late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century artifacts found in the top soil.

This excavation has provided many new insights into slave habitation sites, and is one of the largest excavations of slave quarters in the Caribbean. Furthermore, it was shown that Dutch excavation methods – excavating a large area by removing top soil with a mechanical excavator until features are clearly visible in the layer below – are the way forward in Caribbean historical archaeology. This way, large habitation sites can be completely excavated in a relatively short period of time. In addition, a very good overview of the site is given by the large trenches that are opened.
The settlement was not completely excavated because part of it was not under threat by development. The presence of Saladoid ceramics in the spoil heap further indicates that there is probably a Pre-Columbian habitation site nearby. It is thus likely that many more structures, both prehistoric and historic, are present in this very rich archaeological area.
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Appendix I: Site plan and nail distribution
Appendix II: individual structures
Structure 1: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 2: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 3: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 4: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 5: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 6: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 7: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 8: plan view and posthole sections.
Structure 9: plan view and posthole sections.
Appendix III: Artifacts
Feature 191. Polychrome Dutch Delftware plate, dating to 1730-1740. Eight of these plates were found on top of each other, all with the same decorations. The picture shows several pieces from different plates overlaid.
Feature 191. Drinking glass, dating to the period 1705-1715.
Feature 191. Coarse earthenware storage jar.
Feature 191. Copper alloy shoe buckle with iron alloy backpiece, dating to 1720-1800.
Feature 167. Grindstone.
Feature 157 (top) and feature 191 (bottom). Two folding knives.
Feature 408. Fish hook and an unidentified metal object.
Early eighteenth-century wine bottle fragments from various features.
Afro-Caribbean ware fragments from various features.
Late-Saladoid ceramic rim fragments from the spoil heap. Drawings by Menno Hoogland.
Appendix IV: Reconstruction drawing
Reconstruction drawing of the slave settlement and adjacent plantation based on archaeological and historical evidence. In the foreground, the seven dwellings found during the excavation can be seen. To the left are the provisioning grounds. In the center of the settlement is the hearth. Located upwind from the slave settlement was the industrial complex with an animal mill, a boiling house, curing house, well, and storage building. The buildings in the background are the great house and kitchen where the plantation owner lived. The planter’s cemetery can be seen on the left. Drawing made by Andy Gammon, June 2013.