"The riches of St. Eustatius are beyond all comprehension." So wrote Admiral Sir George Brydges Rodney, Commander of the British Fleet in the West Indies, after his capture of this small island on February 3, 1781. Statia, as the island is commonly called, was seized soon after Great Britain had declared war on Holland.

One might update Rodney's phrase and say that "the archaeological riches of St. Eustatius are beyond all comprehension," in terms of the large number and variety of archaeological sites present on the island. For nearly a decade the College of William and Mary has carried out a program of archaeological and architectural research on a variety of sites on the island, including sugar plantations, domestic and warehouse sites, in cooperation with the Government of St. Eustatius and the St. Eustatius Historical Foundation. A four year study of a newly discovered complex of 18-19th Century buildings in the historic core of Oranjestad, the town of Statia, is currently coming to an end; this project has yielded valuable structural information and large quantities of artifacts by which to study the lifeways of 18-19th Century urban Statians. The archaeological work has been funded by the William and Mary Archaeological Field School and OKSNA.

The present paper will briefly explore the economic and trade situation of Statia in the late 18th Century, with particular emphasis on archaeological sites relating to trade, the merchants who carried out this trade, and some concluding remarks on the interpretation of archaeological assemblages.

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Statia, a relatively dry volcanic island some 11 square miles in area, is situated c. 160 miles southeast of Puerto Rico between St. Maarten on the north and St. Kitts on the south. Although sugar cane and other products were grown on the island, it was Statia's trade in commodities that made the island both wealthy and infamous.

St. Eustatius, often called the Golden Rock, for years had been a thorn in the side of Great Britain. Controlled by the Dutch as a free port, Statia was the supermarket of the Caribbean and one of the leading ports of the world, trading huge quantities of goods with Britain's enemies and other nations. In 1780, it is known that no fewer than 3,217 ships had entered her harbor. More than 150 ships, "of all Dominations," were in port of the day of Rodney's capture.

"It is a vast capture," wrote Rodney on February 4, 1781. He was speaking mainly of the warehouses in the Lower Town, whose rents, Rodney was informed, amounted to L 1,200,000 a year, and contained goods reputedly worth L 3,000,000.

Statia became a major center of trade between the American continent, the French and British islands, and Europe, especially during the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the American Revolution. Much of the commerce took the form of smuggling or illicit trade. For example, England attempted to restrict trade in French
sugar to the North American British colonies. But French sugar was repacked in Statia in order to appear as British sugar to avoid duties imposed on foreign produce. Arms and gunpowder, supposedly declared for shipment from Holland to Africa, in reality went to Statia where it found quick sale to the American rebels. During the American Revolution, even British supplies could be purchased on Statia by American merchants.

Goods from North America, the islands and Europe sold on Statia included the following: fish, lamp oil, barrels of pork and beef, lumber, bread, flour, turpentine, horses, indigo, wine, rum, cannon, cloth, ceramics, gunflints, tobacco, and many others. Statia was also a major importer and seller of slaves.

Janet Schaw, a traveler from Scotland, provides the only detailed eyewitness account of goods sold in the Lower Town, in her description of January 19, 1775:

"From one end of the town of Eustatia to the other is a continued mart, where goods of the most different uses and qualities are displayed before the shopdoors. 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. Next stall contains most exquisite silver plate, the most beautiful indeed I ever saw, and close by these iron-pots, kettles and shovels. Perhaps the next provides you with French and English Military wares. But it were endless to enumerate the variety of merchandize in such a place, for in every store you find every thing, be their qualities ever so opposite. I bought a quantity of excellent French gloves for fourteen pence pair, also English thread-stockings cheaper than I could buy them at home. I was indeed surprised to find that the case with most of the British manufactures..."

In addition, Statia served as a major route for mail and travel from North America to Europe. Secret diplomatic correspondence between North American revolutionaries and their representatives in Europe were routed through Statia.

Another event that irked the British occurred on November 16, 1776. The Governor of St. Eustatius, Johannes de Graaff, directed that the cannons of Fort Oranje fire a salute to the American ship Andrew Doria when the latter entered the harbor. This salute constituted the first foreign recognition of the American flag.

THE LOWER TOWN

The actual area on Statia that housed these economic developments was the Lower Town, a 1-1/2 mile stretch of beach on the Caribbean or west side of the island. A combination of written and visual documents, though very sparse, and archaeological evidence, gives us some insight into the general pattern of warehouse distribution.

Today, scarcely any standing warehouses remain; the vast majority are buried sites, some are above ground ruins, and others have been destroyed by modern construction activity. In the late 18th century, nearly all space in the Lower Town was crammed with warehouse structures. Eighteenth and early 19th century prints show an abundance of structures built from the shore to the cliffs and from one end of the beach to the other. The buildings are freestanding, with hipped or gable roof styles, some have two stories and porches. Only one building has definite Dutch decorated gables.
Several eyewitness accounts of the Lower Town date to the late 18th Century. Janet Schaw remarked that "... the town consists of one street a mile long, but very narrow and most disagreeable, as every one smokes tobacco, and the whiffs are constantly blown in your face".

De Jong, a ships officer who visited Statia in 1780, observed that there were a large number of warehouses along the sea front. Some of these warehouses served as living quarters, others had two stories and were joined to houses across the street by a bridge. Due to insufficient warehouse space, goods were stored under tarpaulins and cotton and sugar were often left in the open air. Sometimes the warehouses were so full that the doors could no longer be used, and the goods were lowered out through a hole in the roof. De Jong further reports that most of the warehouses were of poor quality, quickly put up from rough boarding and rented for scandalously high prices.

Another contemporary account is by a man known as Zimmerman the Elder. In a letter dated July 10, 1792, he calls the Lower Town "Little Amsterdam" and estimates the total number of warehouses at about 600.

Archaeological evidence corroborates the fact that the Lower Town is the most concentrated archaeological zone on Statia. In 1981-1982, a total of 121 ruins and structures in the Lower Town were mapped, photographed and studied; these were visible, above ground remains, all ruins except for four standing, relatively complete structures. Hundreds of other warehouses lie buried underground.

The best preserved area is the central area of the Lower Town, below Fort Oranje, a roughly 400 by 250 ft. area into which at least 30 warehouses had been built, some 5-6 deep. This same area is shown in an 1829 painting.

The visible warehouse ruins are usually built of local volcanic stone, Bermuda stone, and/or yellow-red Dutch brick. Dimensions vary, but an interior width of 20 ft. is especially common. Sizes vary form 41 x 20 ft., 45 x 20, 53 x 20, 36 x 20, 38 x 16, 100 x 38, 33 x 8, etc.

In order to assess below ground potential, four warehouse locations have been partially excavated. One area adjacent to the cliff was tested in order to assess cliff slumping and resulting warehouse coverage/preservation. A complex stratigraphical situation was found, together with well preserved structural features of what appeared to be at least several warehouses, at depths greater than 8 ft. below present ground level. Cultural materials dated to the late 18th and 19th centuries.

A trash deposit located in an alleyway between two warehouses yielded a significant deposit of ceramics, glassware, and animal bone dating to the late 18th - early 19th centuries.

Cuts were made into two structures situated adjacent to the shore. One revealed a yellow brick floor three feet below grade dating after c. 1740. A second excavation into another ruin revealed redeposited strata dating to the 19th century, but more significantly a possible section of a stone seawall, 4 ft. in width, which predated the warehouse. This wall was subsequently traced for a distance of c. 40 ft. A similar wall, 7.4 ft. wide and traced for 73 ft, had been noted along the beach in other parts of the Lower Town.
Given the high concentration of warehouses, who were the occupants of these structures? Who were the merchants of the Lower Town, and what, if anything, do we know about them?

We are fortunate to be able to get some insights from documents that relate to Rodney’s capture of Statia in February of 1781.

Apparently all merchants were made to register with Rodney soon after the capture of the island. Through two surviving documents, both dating from February 20, 1781, we know the names of 833 merchants and certain information about each of them.

Document 1, the shorter of the two, lists the names of 163 burghers present of Statia in the period August 5, 1780, to January 29, 1781, and where they were from (country, often province and sometimes city of town). This information can be organized and summarized in a number of ways, as follows: 1). by number of male and female merchants; 2). by month of registration; 3). by country of birth.

1). All registered merchants appear to have been males.
2). There is a fairly even distribution of names in the six months covered, except for the month of October, 1780, when fewer burghers were listed.
3). Besides the actual names of the burghers, their place of birth is perhaps the most interesting data supplied in the document. One hundred and one of the burghers (62%) were born in Europe, 20 (12%) in North America, 38 (24%) in the West Indies, with 2% unknown. The majority of European-born merchants (48%) were form England (27) and Ireland (22), with 15 from France, 13 from Scotland, and 9 from Italy. The remaining 13 merchants are identified as having come from Corsica, Hungary, Germany, Prussia, Flanders, Dantsig, and other areas of Europe.

North American-born Statian merchants were mostly from New England (70%), with 11 identified as coming from Boston. Two were from Virginia, 1 from Philadelphia, 1 from Georgia, and 1 from Bristol, PA.

Thirty-eight (24%) of the burghers were born in the West Indies, the majority (20 of 53%) from Bermuda. The remaining 18 came from Martinique, Curaçao, St. Martin, St. Christopher, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Nevis, Grenada and Barbados.

Document 2 presents more detailed and different census information on an additional 670 merchants. For each merchant, the following information is presented: name; whether married or widowed; number of sons and daughters of each merchant; the number of slaves each merchant owned (divided into number of male slaves, female slaves, boy slaves, girl slaves); and how many units of polls tax each merchant paid. This information will be briefly summarizes, as the document gives insights into domestic situations, slave populations, and relative wealth of the merchants of Statia.

Names

The 670 names are divided alphabetically, but within each letter the names are not alphabetized. Most are individual male names, with only one female name being recognizable as such. Several company names are listed as well, such as Booen and Pelerin, De Noble et Lindos, De Vyvery en Graves, and others.

Place of origin is not indicated. However, one can surmise from first and last names some information as to nationality/place of birth. There are many Jewish names of probable Portuguese/Spanish origin; also Dutch, English, French, Irish,?
North American and others.

Marriage
Two Hundred fifteen or 32% of the merchants listed were married. Forty-two (6%) are listed as widows. When combined, a total of 257 or 38% of the merchants were married in 1781 or had been married.

Children
The number of merchants with at least one son or daughter was 184 or 27.5% of the total sample, which meant that 72.5% of the merchants had no offspring. However, those who were married (32%) tended to have children (27%).
Two hundred sixty-four people were identified as sons and 277 as daughters. Sixteen percent of the merchants had 2 or more sons and 10% of the merchants had 2 or more daughters. François van Tosch had the greatest number of children - a total of 14,7 sons and 7 daughters.

Slaves
Some of the most interesting data pertains to the number of slaves held by the merchants of the Lower Town. A total of 1,340 slaves are listed, classified as follows: male slaves (379 or 28% of total slaves); female slaves (445 or 33%); boy slaves (274 or 21%); girl slaves (242 or 18%). Three individuals (who composed on 0.5% of the total number of merchants) owned a combined total of 185 slaves, or 14% of all slaves listed: Governor Johannes de Graaff owned more slaves than anyone else, a total of 78 or 6% of total slaves; the widow of Johannes Heyliger owned 60 (4%) and Abraham Heyliger owned 47 (3.5%). Fourteen merchants, or 2% of the total, owned 461 slaves or 34% of the total; these individuals had a minimum of 20 slaves each, with a range of 20 to 78.
A total of 407 merchants (60.7%) had one or more slaves. Of these merchants, the majority owned one (231 merchants) or two (147) slaves only. Four hundred seventy-four merchants owned one to five slaves each, 33 owned 6 - 9 slaves each, and only 15 merchants owned 10 or more slaves.
Two hundred sixty-three merchants (39.3%) owned no slaves.

Poll Tax
A separate category of poll tax is listed in the document, recorded in units of 1 to 20. It is not certain at this point what the poll tax measured, but it, along with the number of slaves owned, gives a scale by which relative wealth can be measured in merchant society. As previously noted, 407 burghers had at least one slave, but 414 burghers paid a poll tax; so at least 7 persons who did not own slaves paid poll tax. Conversely, six burghers who had slaves paid no poll tax. Therefore, it appears as if slave ownership was not a prerequisite for the poll tax.

The poll tax is recorded in units from 1 to 20. The vast majority of merchants who paid the tax paid only 1 unit - 347 merchants or 84% of the total. Another 44 merchants paid 2 units. Thus, merchants paying one or two units of poll tax comprised 94% of the total (391 merchants). The other 6% paid anywhere form 3 to 20 units of poll tax. Governor de Graaff, who owned the most slaves, paid the highest amount of poll tax recorded - 20 units. Except for de Graaff, there is no exact correlation between the relative scales of slave ownership and the amount of recorded poll tax. The widow of Johannes Heyliger, ranked second in slave
ownership with 60 slaves, ranked sixth in the amount of poll tax paid (5 units). Conversely, Laurens Salomans, who owned 22 slaves (and there ranked ninth in slave ownership), paid 9 units of poll tax, ranking him 4th in that category.

Summary of Document 2

In summary of the February 20, 1787 document, a total population of 2,766 individuals is recorded, divided into the categories of merchants, wife, sons, daughters, male slaves, female slaves, boy slaves, girl slaves (Table 1).

Of this total, slaves numbered 1,340 individuals or 48% and non-slaves (merchants, wife, sons, daughters) comprised 1,426 people (52% of the total). Among the slave population, males numbered 653 (49%) and females 687 (51%); adult slaves (male slaves, female slaves)(824 or 61.5%) outnumbered non-adult slaves (boy slaves, girl slaves)(516 or 38.5%).

The number of these people who actually lived in the Lower Town is unknown.

Table 1.

<table>
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<th>category</th>
<th>number</th>
<th>percentage of total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sons</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daughters</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male Slaves</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>13.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Slaves</td>
<td>445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boy Slaves</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Slaves</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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CONCLUSIONS

St. Eustatius has been a Dutch island throughout most of its existence, since it was first settled permanently by Europeans in 1636. Since that time, Statia changed hands between Holland, England and France a total of 17 times. If one looks at the period 1636 to 1900, Statia was Dutch for 229 years (86.7%), English for 23.5 years (9.0%), and French for only 11.5 years (4.3%). In the 18th century, the island was in Dutch ownership for 92 years, French 7 years and English 1 year.

During the period of major warehouse developments, from the mid- to late-18th century, the documents and other sources discussed in this paper reveal that a large, diverse, and international group of merchants sold a huge variety of goods on St. Eustatius. Dutch control enabled the operation of an open port system, whereby any type of merchandise could be sold to anyone who had the necessary cash to...
buy those goods. Given the large amount of ship traffic in and out of Statia, the Lower Town must have supplied a large assortment of the latest material goods available in Europe.

This has interesting implications for archaeological research on a Dutch island. At least for the 18th and 19th centuries, and more specifically from c. 1750 onward, the vast majority of material culture assemblages archaeologically excavated on Statia thus far are English in origin. It is difficult to distinguish a Dutch material assemblage, either in the Lower or Upper Towns. Even though Dutch in ownership, Statia had become an international island, but with a dominant English material culture, reflecting a combination of several developments: 1). the dominance of English island markets; 2). the dynamic English industrial and marketing capacity of the time; and 3). especially the adaptability and capacity of the Dutch economic system.

A hypothesis currently being tested can be stated as follows: after c. 1750, a Dutch island will reflect a greater variety of non-Dutch material culture than islands dominated by other nationalities.

Analysis of artifacts excavated from a variety of domestic and warehouse sites in the Upper and Lower Towns is nearing completion. The results of this study, as applied to this hypothesis, will be forthcoming in the near future.

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Sanders, Suzanne

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Tuchman, Barbara W.

NOTES

1. Patricia Lynn Kandle, *St. Eustatius: Acculturation in a Dutch Caribbean Colony* (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary, 1985), p.65. Much of the historical information used in this paper is taken from this source, unless otherwise noted.


5. Rodney p.10.


12. Kandle describes these cultural finds in detail.

13. This preliminary paper will summarize the information in these documents. A subsequent, more detailed paper will include a listing of the names of the 833 merchants along with associated information.

14. The role of merchants and the Lower Town in Statian society is discussed by Kandle.