

Bonaire's road infrastructure development as experienced through the lens of colonisation

How has the development of the island's road infrastructure shaped the economic development and stability among different cultural & social groups throughout the Dutch colonisation period (1634-1954)?

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Abstract

Throughout over 300 years of Dutch colonisation, there has not been one single time when the indigenous or (freed) slave people of Bonaire have benefited over the colonists or been aided by the colonists. This is especially clear when looking at the development of the infrastructure. Many colonies nowadays still suffer from past colonial interventions regarding their road development (Marein, 2022; Ng et al., 2019; Gardner and Roy, 2020; Dorosh et al., 2011). These past studies also discuss how the lack of mobility and accessibility decreases the chances for economic growth. This paper aims to extrapolate the conclusions drawn by past studies and, along with journals, images and maps, explore how the evolution of Bonaire's road infrastructure has affected, especially, the non-Europeans living on the island. This paper focuses on the period in which Bonaire was colonised by the Dutch, so the effects of colonial interventions can be critically analysed. The paper aims to focus on the materiality & quality of the roads, who used them and how they were used. By analysing the colonisation period through the lens of the road infrastructure, recurring patterns of discrimination and segregation can be identified. This is especially between the Europeans and the indigenous and (freed) slave people on the island. This discrimination has, in turn, led the non-Europeans on the island to be constantly prevented from developing economically and, therefore, left them completely dependent on Dutch investment.

Keywords

Road infrastructure, (Neo-)Colonisation, Bonaire, Segregation

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Introduction

The road infrastructure of a country greatly defines its social and economic development (Dell & Olken, 2017; Ng et al., 2019; Marein, 2022; Dorosh et al., 2012). In former colonised countries that rely on agricultural economies, decreasing people's travel time to the nearest city by 1% shows an increase in production by almost 3% (Dorosh et al., 2012). In some of these colonies, we can identify an increased education level among people living near old colonial roads (Dell & Olken, 2017). What is evident across most colonies is the agglomeration of people, and therefore the urbanisation, along colonial roads (Ng et al., 2019; Gardner & Roy, 2020). Hence, we can assume that the implementation of roads *by colonists*, in colonial countries, shapes the development of a country. This normally happens due to colonial hegemonies, where the colonists are generally more developed than their colonies, which "creates bridges between geographies, temporalities and people" (Lambert, July 2024).

This paper aims to look at how Bonaire's road infrastructure has been shaped by the Dutch colonisation period (1634-1954). It will especially focus on the qualitative value and materialisation of these roads and how this has affected the social and economic development of the people living on the island. This should, in turn, reveal social and economic patterns between the colonists, the slaves and the indigenous people of Bonaire. There are currently few papers that discuss Bonaire's infrastructure in relation to its colonisation, and those who do mainly focus on either water, educational, linguistic, or economic infrastructures (see papers by Broek, 1995; Dijkhof & Pereira, 2010; Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat & Departementaal Coördinatiecentrum Crisisbeheersing, 2018; De Jongh, 2024). This research aims to bridge the topics of road infrastructure and colonialism and how these have influenced the economic and social development of a colony. It will rely on research done for other colonies as a backbone to the proposed correlations, and will simultaneously look into journals, photographs and maps of Bonaire to define the road quality at the time.



Figures 1.0 & 1.2. The first shows the road towards Rincón (the town in the north of the island, where most of the indigenous & 'freed slaves' live) and the latter shows the road leading from Kralendijk to the salt pans. Source: van de Poll (1947)

Literature Review

Foster et al.'s (2023) paper does an extensive literature review on all relevant papers that research the effects of infrastructure (in general) on both the economic and social development of a country. They conclude that, when looking into past colonial countries and especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is very evident that improving rural roads and access to bigger cities and economies helps the poorer social groups grow economically. Similarly, Dorosh et al.'s (2012) research further supports

this statement by concluding that many agricultural economies in Sub-Saharan countries flourish when improvements are made to the road infrastructure. Dell & Olken (2017) write an extensive paper that defines the relationship the Dutch colonists had with the locals on Java, Indonesia. They argue that many of the towns surrounding sugar factories (implemented by the Dutch Cultivation System) show much further infrastructural and educational advancements than other towns do. Additionally, these towns were also better connected to the port and administrative cities on the island because of the economic value that these factories had.

These three papers clearly define a *positive correlation* between road infrastructure and the social/economic development of the people living within a past colony. Nonetheless, Gardner & Roy (2020), along with Ng et al. (2019) and Marein (2022), perform broader empirical studies where the positive correlation seems less perfect and rather also influenced by other factors. Ng et al. (2019) state that economic development is tied to both social (temporal) factors as well as road infrastructure. Marein's research, which looks into Puerto Rico, complements this by concluding that towns along the Spanish-built main roads have developed better than those that weren't, but that later American-built roads did not have this same effect¹. This shows how *the amount of roads* doesn't always increase the social and economic growth of a country, but rather that the *first (good) roads* define the way that these markets develop. Equally, Gardner & Roy (2020) argue that the dispersion of settlements within a colonial country is affected by the development of the different places and, in turn, by how these are connected.

Where Foster et al. (2023) and Dorosh et al. (2012) look at the relationship in a very quantitative manner and therefore clearly conclude a positive linear relationship; Dell & Olken (2017), Ng et al. (2019), Gardner & Roy (2020) and Marein (2022) analyse this relationship in a slightly more empirical manner by considering other factors that might be of influence (such as education, physical capital or social status). Accordingly, even then, a positive correlation can be found between the development of road infrastructure and the economic development of different social groups within a past colonial country, but this is not always a perfect one-to-one correlation. Road infrastructure rather stimulates development in a certain place or towards a certain direction.

Methodology

With these conclusions, the paper will further dive into Bonaire in the form of a case study. The focus will be on road infrastructure development and how this has defined where we can find which social groups and how, in turn, these social groups have developed economically (through these infrastructures).

To perform this empirical research, the paper relies greatly on descriptions within the journals of European colonist voyageurs, commanders, informants or other relevant visitors (see Appendix 1 for a more extensive source analysis). One of the reasons for using this type of data is the timeframe of the paper. Between 1634 and 1898 we cannot find any visual data of what Bonaire looked like, due to the lack of photographs or drawings made of the island. There are also few maps made of Bonaire, with the first one dating sometime in the early 19th century, with a more detailed one only being made in the late 19th century. The other reason for using journals is to identify social and political constructs on the island. Within the journals, Europeans describe the routes and movements of people and things, and more specifically, they also neglect writing about certain social groups as opposed to others. This neglect doesn't just create a certain bias, but it also translates the social and political structures into tangible descriptive texts.

Based on these journals, there are three main road (quality) types described throughout the colonisation period: the pedestrian dirt tracks (which are not particularly defined routes), wagon-sized

¹The American-built roads, in the 20th century, were meant to connect the interior mountainous areas while the Spanish-built roads, in the 16th century, were meant to connect economical routes (Marein's, 2022).

sand & dirt roads and asphalt roads. The latter only really developed towards the end of the colonisation period, which is why this chapter, as opposed to the other two, will be more of a reflection on the transition towards an independent country and the current state of affairs.

Firstly, the paper will shortly introduce the different social groups present on Bonaire throughout the Dutch colonial period (1634-1954). After that, the attention will shift towards the road infrastructure, where the materiality and the quality of the roads will lead the narrative. In some cases, comparisons will be drawn between the quality of the roads as well as the architecture to further ground the argument. The social structures and living conditions will therefore be defined by the available road infrastructure, which will be highlighted once more throughout the conclusion. The conclusion will also aim to bring to light how the dependency on colonial infrastructures in the past has led to Bonaire's development to still be dependent on the Netherlands nowadays (De Vos, 2023).

People of Bonaire

Throughout history, Bonaire has been inhabited by different ethnic groups (Universiteit van de Nederlandse Antillen, Curaçao, 1986). To understand who these groups are and how they came to be on the island, this chapter will focus on providing further insights into the historical context of the paper.

First of all, we can identify the *Caiquetío*'s, who originated from South America, especially Venezuela. They are one of the clans that derived from the Arawak people². They crossed over from Venezuela to Bonaire, most probably with a rowing boat, and settled in various places on the island, some of which are marked on the map below (Hartog, 1957). They are considered the first inhabitants of the island. In many historical texts, they are referred to as 'indians', but for this text, we will refer to them as *indigenous people*.



Figure 2.0., 2.1. Map of Bonaire that points out the main settlements of the indigenous people of Bonaire. The purple highlighted dots are those where paintings were found done by these communities (visible on the image next to the map).
Source: Own adapted map, with information from Alofs (2018) & Hartog (1957), image from van de Poll (1947).

From 1502, the island became a colony and sequentially experienced an influx of people inhabiting the island. First of all, the island was colonised by the Spanish, up until 1634 and then by the Dutch. Most historical books (Hartog, 1957; Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023) even describe short periods (2-7 years), between 1634-1954³, in which the British and the French colonised the island. People

²It is thought that the *Caiquetío* probably spoke the language of Arawak-Maipure (Hartog, 1957). The carvings & paintings found within the caves of Bonaire mostly resemble this language (see these paintings on figure 3.1).

³1954 is the moment the Dutch Kingdom, at the time run by Queen Juliana, officially recognises the Netherlands Antilles & Suriname as independent countries within the Kingdom and therefore officially severs colonial ties with them (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 2017). Nonetheless, after Suriname, Curacao & Aruba gained independence from the Netherlands throughout the late 20th Century, Bonaire, Saba & St. Eustatius remained

originating from any of these colonising countries will hereafter be referred to as either *colonists* or *Europeans*.

Lastly, as occurred in many of the Caribbean colonies, the colonists imported slaves from Africa to increase the labour force on the island (Lewis, 2025). On Bonaire, this was mainly to help with the harvesting of the salt on the island. There is no mention of the Spanish already doing this, but it can for sure be concluded that the Dutch imported enslaved Africans from 1648 onwards (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). The enslaved Africans imported to Bonaire & the other Windward Islands are thought to have originated from Cape Verde (Schermer, 2023). In 1840, the Dutch governor decreed that slaves were not allowed to work for more than 8 years, and after that, they would be freed (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). Therefore, the transatlantic slave trade made for two new groups of people on Bonaire: the *slaves* and the *freed slaves*, both with originally African roots and speaking a creole language⁴.

Within this paper, we will discuss the four above-mentioned social-ethnic groups residing on Bonaire (the *indigenous*, the *colonists/Europeans*, the *slaves* and the *freed slaves*). It is also important to keep in mind that many of these groups interweaved with each other throughout history, creating multiracial children and therefore citizens. This was especially the case between the indigenous, slaves and freed slaves since, as stated in the colonial report, in 1867, over 99% of the island's inhabitants were born on the island.

Koloniaal verslag.
(Regeringsverslag.)

De bevolking was naar de geboorteplaats onderscheiden als volgt:

WOONPLAATS.	G E B O R E N				Totaal.
	op het eiland.	elders in West-Indie.	in Nederland	in andere landen.	
Curaçao	19 645	347	376	334	20 702
Bonaire	3 808	3	13	9	3 833
Aruba	3 487	116	16	33	3 652
St. Eustatius	1 769	91	15	5	1 880
Saba	1 765	34	6	1	1 806
St. Martin	2 779	130	18	18	2 945
Totaal	33 253	721	444	400	34 818

Figure 2.2. Segment of the Colonial Report done by the Dutch Government. Source: Tweede Kamer, 1867.

part of the Kingdom (Verton 1986). In 2010, the term Netherlands Antilles was no longer used, and Bonaire, Saba & St. Eustatius are declared 'special municipalities' within the country of the Netherlands since they are unable to set up a functioning independent political & economic system (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat and Departementaal Coördinatiecentrum Crisisbeheersing, 2018).

⁴The creole language spoken by the slaves on Bonaire is known to be a mix between African native dialects and Portuguese. This is the language which later evolved into Papiamentu in combination with the Maipure language & the Dutch language spoken by the other people on the island (Van Buurt, 2015).

Movement on the pedestrian dirt tracks

Earlier, the paper mentioned the *Caiquetío*'s as the first inhabitants of Bonaire. They settled all over the island (see map, *figure 2.0*), probably leading to different cultural developments within each settlement. Additionally, we can presume that the indigenous people needed fresh water & food, which led to the first movement on the island (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). On the west coast of the island, within the caves of Boca Spenlok & Lagun, researchers have also found wall paintings (see *figure 2.1*). These paintings indicate yet another reason for people to move around, as a way of marking their territory or sheltering when the weather was against them (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). Many movements, like getting water, hunting or traveling home, can be considered habits of human nature, which is why the first settlers probably made paths and routes within the landscape by repetitive movement done to survive.

In 1499, the Spanish colonists discovered Bonaire⁵. In 1526, the Spanish founded the town of Rincón, which overlooked the whole island because of its position, on top of a plateau. Simultaneously, some of the enslaved indigenous people who had been deported were brought back to work as animal and plant farmers (Hartog, 1957). Around the same time, Bonaire appeared on maps for the first time (see *figure 3.0*). Throughout the Spanish colonisation, there were few Spaniards on the island. There were about 200 'workers' farming the lands, living near Fontein (De Laet, 1625; Bosch, 1834). At the time, the 'workers' were never described as slaves, and according to De Laet's journal, were allowed to keep their own animals & to have their own gardens, but they were the people who had initially been enslaved.



Figure 3.0. Map of Spanish discovered land from 1519, especially regarding the north of South America, the Caribbean & Africa. In the top right corner, we can spot what we now would describe as Spain. Circled in orange, we can spot Bonaire on the map, named 'Boj Naj' after the native pronunciation of the island's name. Source: Maggiolo (1519).

⁵ They then declared the island 'isla inutil' since there was nothing there that they valued. They therefore proceeded to enslave the indigenous people, and deported the slaves to the Dominican Republic, at the time La Española (Sealy, 2020).

report describes how 'many of the workers were injured and had open cuts on their feet and legs', probably due to walking these paths. In Bosch's report, 10 years later, he also describes the ground and paths as being covered in sharp & pointy rocks. The lack of attention towards roads mainly used by workers gives further insight into how the Dutch government has, from the very start, created a separation between the colonists and the indigenous and slave people on the island.

The quality of the roads wasn't the only element that separated the European colonists from the indigenous people & (freed) slaves. We can also retrace this separation from the beginning by looking at the materiality of the houses. Klomp (1990), states that the 'first Bonairian houses ... were made of branches and straw' (p. 82) and that these most often belonged on the 'kunubu's' (the Bonairian word for a grange which accommodated space for farming as well as having a shed/house to live in). When it was just the *Caiquetío's* living on Bonaire, they used to build with stone foundations (Huijgers and Ezechiëls 1992). After the African slaves had been imported, the houses were more often made from clay/mud and sticks, since that is what they knew from back home (Hartog, 1957). On the other hand, in van Dissel's visit in 1878 and Bosch's visit they both specifically mention the colonist Europeans living in houses made of stone, covered with white chalk.

Throughout the longest part of the colonisation period, people walked from place to place, and all the merchandise was transported on foot. It used to take slaves up to eight hours to walk from Rincón to the salt pans, their workplace, which is why oftentimes they slept in little shacks or in the open air near the salt pans. It was simply not possible to make the walk home and back within the hours they had off (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023).



Figure 3.2. & 3.3. On the left, huts made of brushwood, clay or loam with a corn straw roof. On the right, houses made of (coral)stone and mortar, plastered with lime and with a tiled roof (as described by Groenenboom (2021) & Temminck Groll (1977)). Both are situated in the surrounding areas of Rincón & Kralendijk. Source: Pater Hendriks, 1907 (from magazine *Neerdelandia*, Issue 1907)

Movement on the wagon-sized dirt & sand roads

After the Spanish had introduced the horse, the Dutch also introduced the donkey. The purpose of the donkey was mainly to aid the transportation of the salt to increase the salt exportation process (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). The Dutch colonists later introduced the wagon to transport salt (and other goods) in a safer and even quicker way. This form of transportation called for better and wider roads. These types of roads are those discussed throughout this chapter.

The first of these roads was developed from Kralendijk to the salt pans in the south⁷. Dampier mentions that '*the road* is on the south-west side, near the middle of the island' (p. 48) during his visit in 1681. He describes this road as *the road*, inferring that this was probably the only road on the island at the time. This road probably led to the salt pans, reflecting the governmental priorities when it comes to developing the colony's infrastructure.

When van Uytrecht visited in 1825⁸ (almost 130 years later), he only states one additional wagon-sized road in his report. This road was built by skipper F.M. de Jongh and led to his farmyard, where he farmed donkeys. He was one of the only Europeans allowed to farm on Bonaire, as the island had been run only by the WIC (West-India Trade Company) and later the Dutch government (Hartog, 1957). Donkey farming, done by the indigenous people⁹, was deemed essential for a higher salt exportation. Therefore, roads had to be improved, as well as widened, so that the donkeys could walk alongside the slaves transporting the salt and later so they could pull wagons, full of salt, to the port in Kralendijk. This called for more and better roads.

After his visit, in his report, van Uytrecht makes a suggestion 'to create roads towards those areas where it was still possible to harvest wood or to farm animals'. The roads he proposed are visible on the map below.

⁷ Initially the salt pans in the south were the only ones used commercially, and they were referred to as the 'Blauwe Pan' or 'Saliña Abau'. These pans formed (almost) naturally. Later, throughout the 18th century, the Dutch also created salt pans in the north, in Slagbaai; and further salt pans in the south, the 'Oranje Pan', also known as the area of Pietiké. Finally, in the 19th century, Lieutenant Governor van Raders also created an additional salt pan in the south, the 'Witte Pan' or Cabajé (van Meeteren, 1949; Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023).

⁸ Casper Lodewijk van Uytrecht, as a General and an old member of the Police Council, was requested (in 1824) to go to Bonaire and report the current state of affairs. He had been trusted with this job due to him having done a similar report in 1819 (van Meeteren, 1949).

⁹ Most of the indigenous people worked on the animal or plant farming of the island (Dampier, 1698) since they were 'free' people and were considered 'too fragile' to work on the salt pans. They also knew most about the island's species which is why it seemed most logical to place them on these kinds of jobs. The slaves on the other hand worked on the salt pans, which, in their words, was described as 'the white hell' (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023).

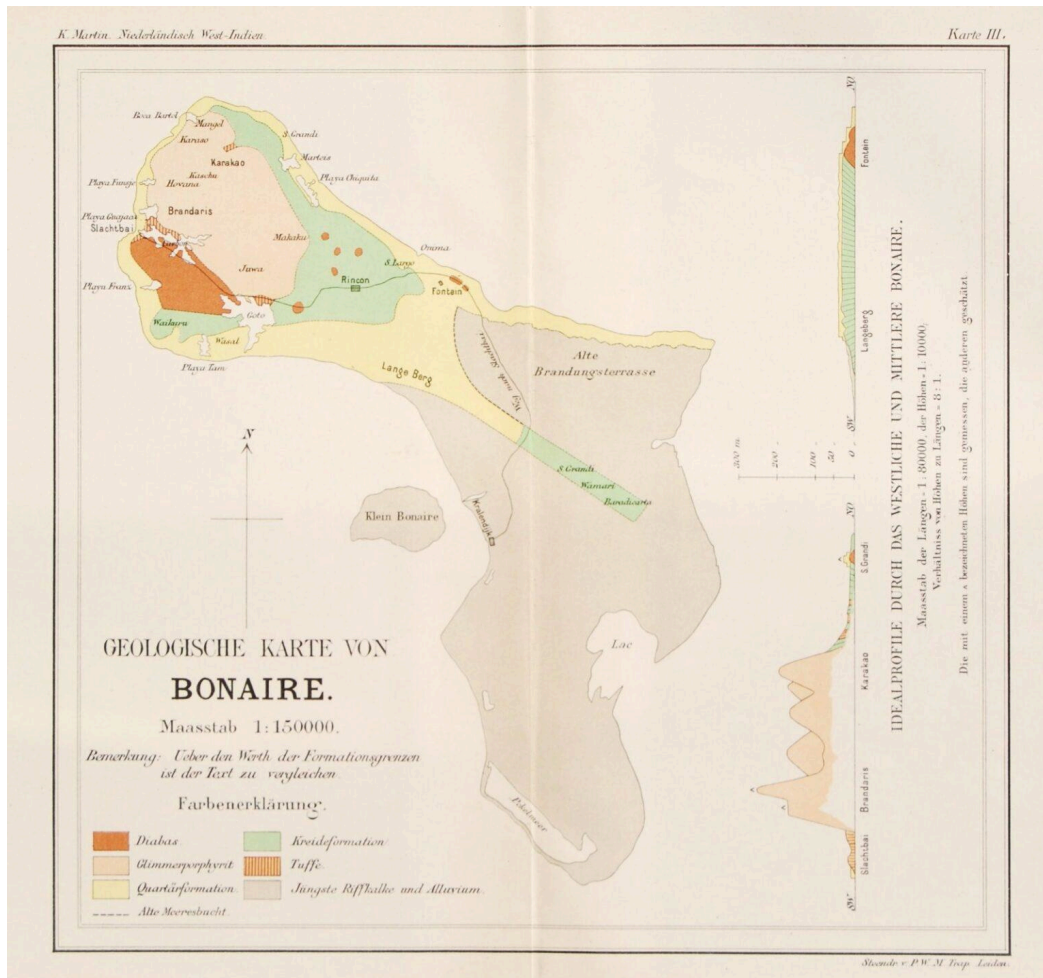


Figure 4.1. Geographical map of Bonaire that depicts the first 'official' road on the island. It runs from Kralendijk, to Fontein (Porta Espagnol), to Rincón, onto Dos Pos (the orange dot in the north west where the road runs through), until finally reaching 'Slag-' and 'Druifbaai' in the north. Source: Karl Ludwig Martin, Bonaire Antieke Kaart 1888 (1888).

The suggested roads mainly benefited the indigenous people, the slaves and the freed slaves. As mentioned earlier, many of them had cuts and bruises on their feet from having to walk from Rincón to Kralendijk. Thus, van Uytrecht suggested that they should be the ones working on the roads using indentured labour. This again shows the disregard towards the indigenous and (freed) slaves on Bonaire, and how it was basically up to themselves to improve the standard of the paths and roads they had to use.

Throughout the end of the 19th century, most of van Uytrecht's proposed roads had been developed (see figure 4.2.). The roads had been flattened and hardened with sand (see figure 4.3.). These sandy roads ensured a more comfortable & 'rapid' route, especially when riding by carriage. In Krijt's article, written in 1907, he describes a carriage riding the road to the 'Witte Pan' to be 'calmly rolling over the hard sand paths' (p. 199). Sadly this wasn't the case for all the proposed roads, since in the same article, Krijt also writes that the road between the 'Witte Pan' and the 'Oranje Pan' is a little 'less beautiful & refined' (p.200) and that they have to slow down their pace to make the ride comfortable.



Figure 4.2. Map of Bonaire end of the 19th century that details all the farmyards (in yellow) and the road infrastructure in red lines along the island. Source: 6578 Kaart van Bonaire en Klein-Bonaire. 19th century. Nationaal Archief.



Figure 4.3. Image of a broad sand road in Kralendijk. The presence of a light post accentuates the importance these roads had, and the fact that probably most people using them were well off. Source: Krijt, 1907 (from magazine *Neerlandia*, Issue 1907)

Even though this improvement made for a relatively shorter travel time, in 1885, it still took two days to send news from Rincón to Kralendijk. In 1898, the trip could be made there and back in a day. On most occasions, it was not recommended to try this, especially in a carriage, because the road was still very bumpy (Hartog, 1957). In his journal, Lieutenant Governor van den Brandhof mentions that he attempted to make the trip to Rincón and back to Kralendijk in one day, but ‘the fast pace made him tumble out of the carriage and severely injure his arm’. This meant that (even) in the early 1900s, it was not realistic to, for example, live in Rincón and work in Kralendijk. The lack of both transportation and road quality was also a colonist’s way of making sure that most of the indigenous and free slaves who already lived in Rincón¹⁰, remained in Rincón as opposed to moving to Kralendijk.

The separation between the colonists and the indigenous & (freed) slaves is further reflected in the form of religion and access to education. In Monseigneur Niewindt’s visits to Bonaire, between 1830-1870, he finds that most of the colonists are protestants (due to their Dutch background) while the indigenous and (freed) slaves are catholic (due to their Spanish & Portuguese ties); which can also be found back in the governmental report in 1867 (see *figure 4.4.*). Around the 1830s, Bonaire had already received funds to build a protestant church (see *figure 4.5.*) and had a functioning protestant school in Kralendijk¹¹. Niewindt (especially after his visit in 1824) attempted, no less than 3

¹⁰ Most of the slaves settled near Rincón once they had been imported by the Dutch because this way they could be surrounded by the indigenous ‘free’ people as opposed to the colonists (Hartog, 1957). Later, this was also due to family ties because the slaves, and freed slaves, started to have families with the indigenous people of Bonaire, which as explained earlier, lead to people with mixed ethnicities. There have also been some attempts, performed by the colonists, to move slaves from Rincón to either Nikiboko or Terra Cora. This was initiated mainly throughout the early 1800s when the slaves revolted and protested against the Dutch governor especially due to bad working conditions (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). It is also thought that this resettlement took place to increase the salt economic revenue. By moving the slaves (also the workers) closer to the salt pans the colonists would gain ‘free’ working hours because the slaves would have less travelling time from their homes to their working place (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023).

¹¹ The teachers at the protest church were paid 800 gold coins (gulden), per year, while the government would offer no money at all for a catholic school to open at the time. Finally, in 1851, the catholic church (of which

times, to gain funds from the government for both a catholic church and a public school on the island near the area of Rincón, but didn't succeed until the 1850s. This school was finally built in 1856 and was made so 'poor, slave, indigenous and freed slave children could attend and ... could learn the Dutch language, reading,...' (p. 326, Dahlhaus, ed. 1868).

De verdeeling der bevolking op de onderscheidene eilanden, naar de kerkgemeenschappen, was als volgt:

Op	Protestanten.	Roomsch-katholijken.	Israëlitien.	Niet opgegeven.	Totaal.
Curaçao	1797	18 027	878	"	20 702
Bonaire	197	3 631	5	"	3 833
Aruba	344	2 793	23	492	3 652
St. Eustatius	1830	50	"	"	1 880
Saba	1334	472	"	"	1 806
St. Martin	2298	647	"	"	2 945
Totaal	7800	25 620	906	492	34 818

Figure 4.4. Extract from the governmental report in 1867 stating the religions (and their followers) present on the island. Source: Tweede Kamer, 1867

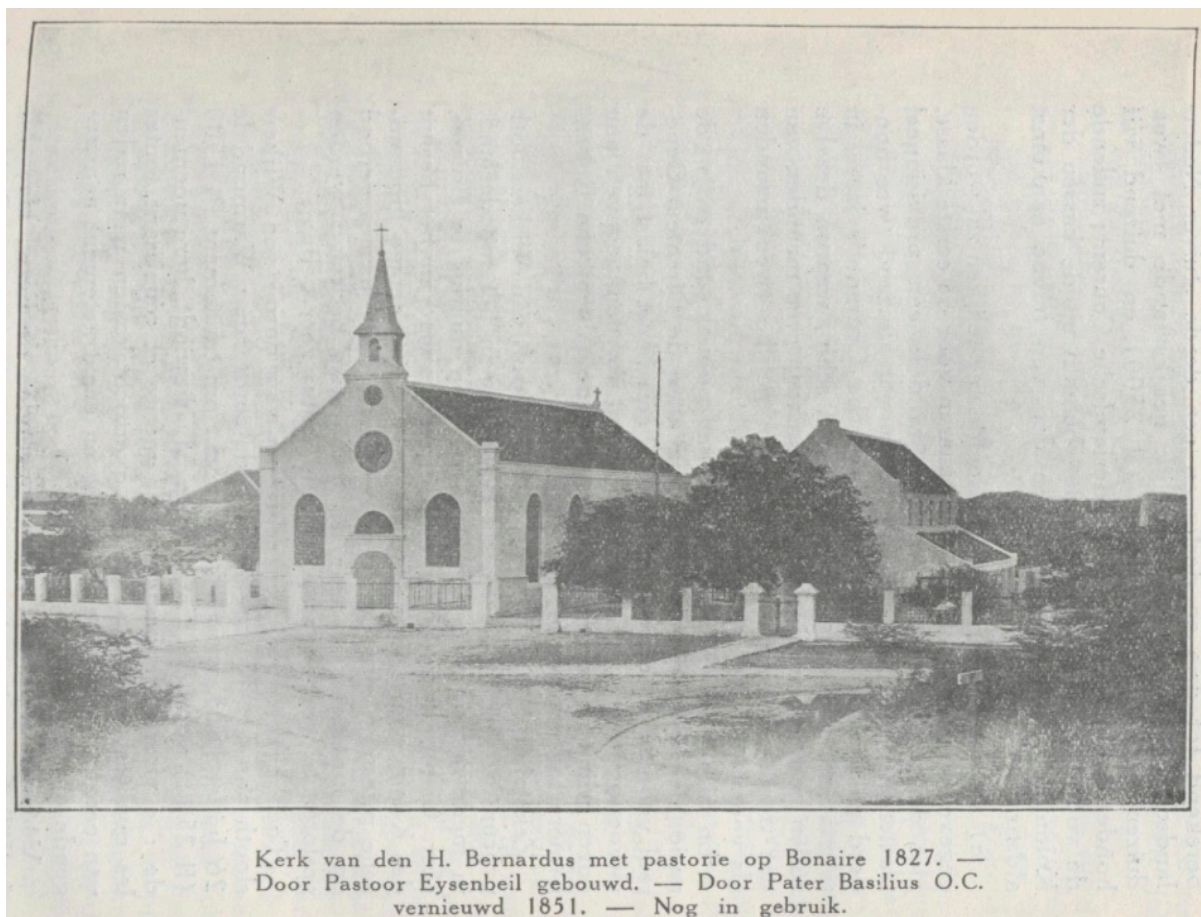


Figure 4.5. Impression of the protestant church and parish in 1827. At the time, this had mainly been used by the colonists, and the slaves, freed slaves and indigenous people had on occasion visited (even though being catholic) to be christened. Source: Dahlhaus, ed. 1868.

Monseigneur Niewindt was part of) was permitted to be built under strict rules but was offered no further financial aid (Dahlhaus, ed. 1868).

Movement on asphalt roads

By the time slavery was officially abolished in Bonaire, in 1863, the Dutch government did not see the use of the island anymore. They segmented the island and auctioned these segments out to the highest bidder (Ministerie van Koloniën, 1868). These segments can be seen on the map below (figure 5.0.). The privatisation of the island, along with the abolition of slavery, made it hard for Bonaire to grow economically (and independently) towards the end of the 19th century (Stelten and Antczak 2022). The island had long been reliant on the economic benefits of the salt production, which relied on slaves as workers.

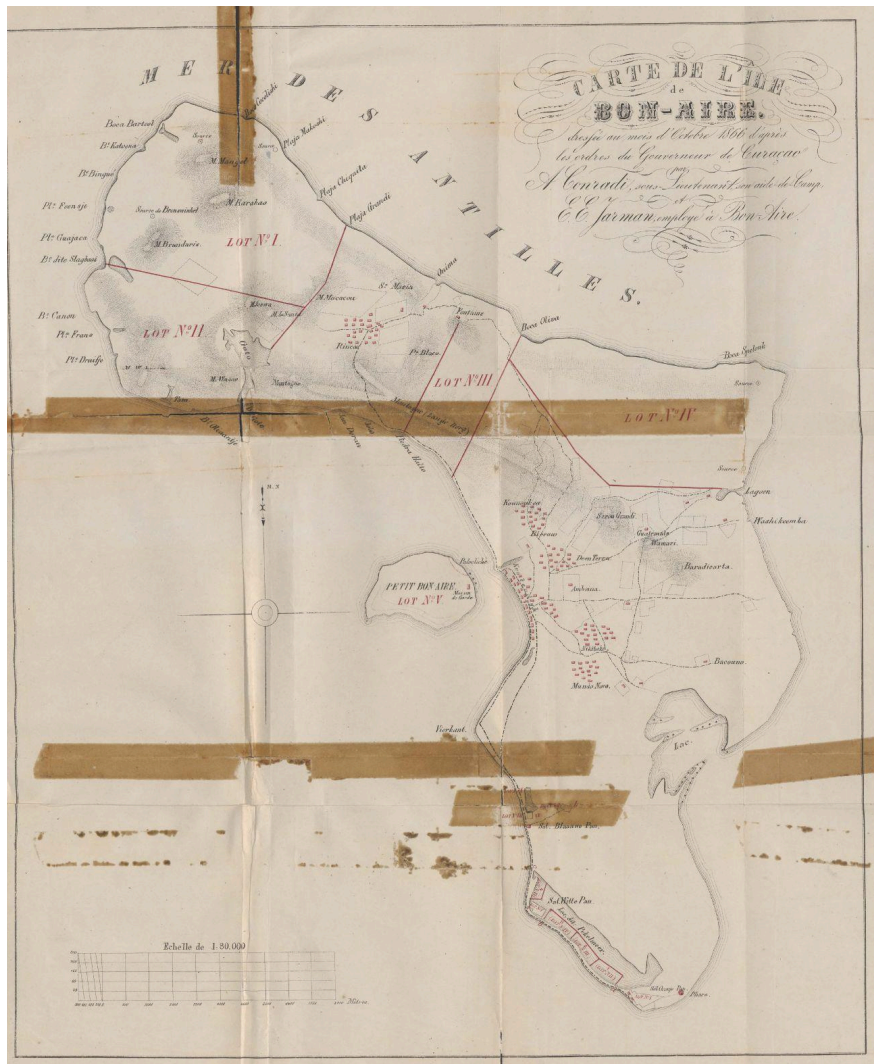


Figure 5.0. Map that details the auctioned plots in 1868. The plots run from 'Lot I' to 'Lot V' in terms of farm land and from 'Lot I' to 'Lot IX' in terms of salt pans. Source: Ministerie van Koloniën, 1868.

It wasn't until the early 20th century that the economy started to flourish again. The government instructed that, as van Uytrecht had done previously, Prof. Went create an executive report in 1901 that aimed to help Bonaire advance technologically as well as financially (Universiteit van de Nederlandse Antillen, Curaçao 1986). This report, along with the Neerlandia article (in 1907), boosted Bonaire's economy to grow, but in a different way. Where previously the island had relied on the primary sector, especially regarding its salt production, now the island was shifting more towards the tertiary sector (Universiteit van de Nederlandse Antillen, Curaçao 1986). By 1915, the first automobile was imported to Bonaire (Hartog, 1957). In 1922, the first tourists arrived on the island, and by 1936, the first commercial plane landed on Bonaire (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2025). Bonaire started to become a holiday destination instead of just a salt production plant.

This economic shift, sadly, did not aid all social groups living on the island. It brought with it many Dutch immigrants and, therefore, Dutch-owned companies. Many of the hotels were owned by Dutch citizens, and many of them were also created around the area of Kralendijk (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2021a). Many of the indigenous and freed slaves still tended to work on the salt pans (now privately owned) or on the land (see *figures 5.1., 5.2.*). On occasion, they owned their own shop in which they sold local products (Hartog, 1957; Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). This economic transition, and the areas in which it happened, is, once again, reflected in the road infrastructure. By 1945, the first asphalt roads were implemented in and around Kralendijk (see *figure 5.3., 5.4.*). It wasn't until the end of the colonisation period, in 1954, that asphalt roads were made towards Rincón (Hartog, 1957).



Figure 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. & 5.4. The top images show indigenous/freed slaves working on salt pans & agricultural land. Bottom images shows asphalt roads in and around Kralendijk (left: Wilhelminaplein, right: road towards salt pans). Source top left: *Nederlands West-Indië. Bonaire. Zoutwinning, 1930s.* Source top right: *KITLV, 1940s.* Source bottom: *van de Poll, 1947.*

The development of Kralendijk, as opposed to Rincón, enhanced the separation between the Europeans and the indigenous & freed slaves once again. Many facilities weren't available in Rincón, which forced people to still have to move between the two. Schooling is an example of this. Up until 1954, most children could not travel to Kralendijk for school. There was no form of public transport

and many of the people in Rincón did not own a car¹². Children attending the school had to either stay with relatives or friends in Kralendijk throughout the week or hope for someone to be driving back to Rincón at the end of the day (Hartog, 1957). The roads between Rincón and Kralendijk remained very hard to drive by car, until after 1954 (see *figure 5.5.*). Many of the indigenous people & freed slaves did not have the money to own a car anyway, so moved by donkey (see *figure 5.6.*).



Figure 5.5. & 5.6. The left image shows the road to Rincón. The right image pictures indigenous/freed slave people travelling by donkey. Source: van de Poll, 1947.

The slow development of Rincón and its connection with Kralendijk is another example of how, on Bonaire, the priority has always been to aid the colonists or Europeans residing on the island, as opposed to the indigenous people & (freed) slaves. This continuous negligence and undermining of the majority of the population (the indigenous & freed slaves) has both segregated the two social groups and has also been a constant barrier towards economic growth for this majority. Even now, we can see that it has taken over 50 years to improve the roads since their construction in 1957 (see *figure 5.7.* for an indication of the quality of the road now. They first started by improving the road traffic regulations in 2019 (Hendriksen 2019), and only a month ago, they started the improvement of the asphalt road between Rincón and Kralendijk (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2025).



Figure 5.7. Road around Rincón. Source: Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2021b.

¹² According to Hartog's (1957) calculation there were about 50 cars per 1000 people on the island of Bonaire by that time.

Conclusion

In summary, the movement on Bonaire has been on foot for the majority of the colonisation period (Antoin & Luckhardt, 2023). Then, improvements were made to widen the roads leading to the salt pans and private farmyards, as stated in van Uytrecht's report (Huijgers and Ezechiëls, 1992). After which, asphalted roads were introduced in Kralendijk by 1945, along with the development of the port and the creation of an airport (Hartog, 1957; Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire, 2025). Additionally, the first school and church built was protestant, even though most of the indigenous Bonairian population, and (freed) slaves, were catholic (as Monseigneur Niewindt mentioned in his visits). The houses built for the governors and their families were built in stone, while the indigenous people lived in stick and clay shacks (as both Bosch and van Dissel mention). By the end of the colonisation period, most Europeans on Bonaire travelled by car while the indigenous people and freed slaves mostly travelled on foot or by donkey (see *figure 5.6.*). Throughout over 300 years of colonisation, there has not been a single time when the indigenous or (freed) slave people have benefited or been aided by the developments of the colonists. In most cases, they were even expected to improve the infrastructure themselves, if it only benefited them (like van Uytrecht suggested).

Within the selected time frame, it is hard to accurately picture the quality of the roads, since most texts are descriptive and provided by Europeans (in some cases also colonists). Nonetheless, even though these journals have a certain bias, the descriptions still provide a clear image of the road quality and the relationship between the different social groups on the island. They show that time and time again, the indigenous and (freed) slave people have been purposefully segregated and indirectly kept from developing economically. The disconnection between the developing town of Kralendijk and Rincón has also been a guiding theme for this segregation. Both Gardner & Roy (2020) and Dell & Olken (2017) support this by stating how the dispersion of people and their disconnection (in terms of accessibility) with the economic centre of a country affects the colony's development negatively.

Conclusively, the development of Bonaire's roads has affected not just the way that people move on the island but also the way the island has developed and grown economically. It has aided those living in Kralendijk, the European (colonist), and has made it hard for those living in Rincón, the indigenous and freed slave people. The connection between these two towns has and remains one that is unkept and of low quality (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2025; see *figure 5.7.*). The difficulty to move between Rincón and Kralendijk has left the indigenous & freed slave people unable to learn new skills, like the Dutch language, by going to school in Kralendijk; unable to reach higher paying jobs within Kralendijk; and unable to save up money to built their own company or house (Samson and Samson, 2023; De Vos, 2023). It has left them completely dependent on the Dutch immigration & government (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire 2021b), along with all the other colonies discussed within Ng et al.'s (2019), Gardner and Roy's (2020) & Dorosh et al.'s (2011) research.

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Appendix 1

The journals that will be referenced are listed in the table below. They have been sorted by their timeframe and the road (quality) type defined within the journal.

Journal Source	Journalist	Timeframe	Road (Quality) Type
De Laet, Joannes. 1625. "Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien: Nova Francia." Print. In <i>Nieuwve Wereldt, Ofte, Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien</i> , 39. Leyden, Netherlands: In de druckerye van Isaack Elzevier. https://archive.org/details/nieuwvewereldtof00laetrich/nieuwvewereldtof00laetrich/page/n3/mode/2up	De Laet (Dutch voyageur)	1625 (beginning of Dutch colonisation)	Pedestrian dirt tracks
Dampier, William. 1698. "Chapter III : His Traverles among the West India Islands and Coalts, and Arrival in Virginia." Print. In <i>A New Voyage Round the World</i> , 3rd Edition Corrected, 25–66. London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Crown in St Paul's Curch-yard. Accessed January 20, 2025. https://qutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0500461h.html#ch3	Dampier (British voyageur)	1698 (after having set up the first Dutch run economies)	Pedestrian dirt tracks & First wagon-sized dirt and sand road
Van Meeteren. 1949. "Bonaire in het Begin der Negentiende Eeuw." <i>De West-Indische Gids VII–X</i> (30th): 217–36. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41848597	Van Uytrecht (Dutch informant)	1825 (towards the end of the Dutch economy)	First wagon-sized dirt and sand road
Bosch, Gerardus Balthazar. 1834. "Het Eiland van Bonaire." Print. In <i>Reizen in West-Indië, En Door Een Gedeelte van Zuid-En Noord-Amerika</i> , Kostbare Collectie, Biblioteca Nacional Aruba, II:255–339. Utrecht, Netherlands: L. E. Bosch. https://archive.org/details/BNADIGKOSTBARE0388II/page/n5/mode/2up	Bosch (Curaçao governour)	1834 (towards end of Dutch economy)	Wagon sized dirt and sand roads
Dahlhaus, ed. 1868. <i>Monseigneur Martinus Joannes Niewindt, eerste apostolisch vicaris van Curaçao: Een levensschets: 27 aug. 1824 - 12 jan. 1860</i> . Print. http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1004027	Niewindt (catholic priest)	1824-1860 (towards the end of the Dutch economy & privatisation)	Wagon-sized dirt and sand roads
Van Dissel. 1868. "EENIGE BIJZONDERHEDEN OMTRENT HET EILAND BONAIRE." Print. In <i>Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië</i> , 3rd ed., III:470–86. Brill. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25735917	van Dissel (Dutch voyageur)	1868 (end of Dutch economy & privatisation)	Wagon-sized dirt and sand roads
Van Den Brandhof, Arend. (1898) 1910. <i>Journalen van den Brandhof</i> . Print (Handwritten).	van den Brandhof	1898 (private landowners)	Wagon-sized dirt and sand roads
Went. 1902. "omtrent den toestand van land- en tuinbouw op de Nederlandse Antillen." <i>Koloniaal Verslag</i> . 's-Gravenhage, Netherlands: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij. Accessed January 20, 2025. https://archive.org/details/bibliotecanacionalaruba	Went (Dutch professor & informant)	1902 (starting private economies)	Asphalted roads

<p>Snijders Jr, Euwens, Krijt, Boeke, and Victor Zwijsen. 1907. "Neederlandia: Bonaire." Edited by Sintiago. Directed by Bestuur der Groep Ned. Antillen. <i>Neederlandia</i>, 1907.</p>	<p>Mostly Krijt, otherwise 'Dutch magazine'</p>	<p>End 19th-1907 (starting private economies & tourists)</p>	<p>Wagon-sized dirt and sand roads & asphalted roads</p>
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