CURAÇAO CELEBRATIONS

SINAYA WOLFERT

CARNIVAL

One hundred years old 1901-2011

Gran Marcha/ Jump In/ International MissCarnival/ Children's Parade/ Horse Parade/ Farewell Parade/ Tumba/Queen/ Prins & Pancho

DATE: AROUND FEBRUARY, MARCH (PRIOR TO LENT)
LOCATION: START AT THE CROSSING OF JAN NOORDUYNWEG AND WINSTON CHURCHILLWEG, PARTLY THROUGH OTROBANDA ENDING AT PATER EEUWENSWEG NEAR HOLIDAY BEACH HOTEL

Carnival in its present set-up with a Tumba Festival, a Gran Marcha (the main parade) and a Marcha di Despedida (the farewell parade) has existed in Curaçao since 1970. The "father" of this carnival celebration is Omalio Merien, a civil servant of the Tax Department, who came up with the idea to organize carnival in a spectacular way. Originally the Government contributed with a modest subsidy. 'In those days carnival did not have the substance it has at present', this according to the then Commissioner of Culture and ex-Minister Plenipotentiary Mr. Edsel "Papi" Jesurun. 'As carnival has developed into a major tourist attraction the organization receives financial support from the Government.'

Quite some time before Merien started with his carnival parades Curaçao had known its carnival celebrations. Jesurun mentions the masked balls that took place in the fashionable clubs of the island as of 1901. They were clearly influenced by the South Americans living on the island. 'The guests had to be dressed up for the parties and it was the intention that the masks had to be taken off at midnight. Only then would you see with whom you had been dancing the whole evening.' Jesurun emphasizes that this event was purely for an elite group of people, celebrated in private circles. 'It was a party for people

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Franceen Westmaas, Reina di Carnival participant 2010,
wearing a design of various leaves from Curaçao nature

KITING

LET'S GO WITH THE WIND - BAN K'E BIENTU

PERIOD: DURING LENT (FEBRUARY, APRIL, MAY)
LOCATION: COMPETITION SITES; TERRAIN OF NOORD-ZAPATEER AND TERRAIN SALU

All the people from Curaçao know it: when the Lent period starts on Ash Wednesday for the Catholic inhabitants of Curaçao the kiting period also starts. It is the period with the strong winds, also called the *Bientu di Kuaresma* (Lenten winds). You will see kite sellers at many spots along the roads. Most of the time they will be selling their self-made kites. That is how Jorge Jansen started, together with his sister Carol Jansen, owner and founder of *Fli Kòrsou* (Curaçao Kites). This must have been around the early eighties. Jansen: 'In 1990 I could start with a real kite shop, at the same spot where it is still located, at Seru Loraweg. In those days the shop was called the Flyer Hobby Shop. In 1994 my sister Carol founded the *Fundashon di Fli Kòrsou*. Every year the foundation organizes kiting competitions, as well as workshops for children where they can learn how to make their kites. They mostly come from the surrounding neighborhoods such as Sint Joris, Abraham and Rooi Santu, but sometimes even from Buena Vista.These are mainly neighborhoods where the families are going through rough times and that is why I look for sponsors for the purchase of kite materials. Kiting is a real 'national sport' in Curaçao.

Jorge Jansen

In 2011 Edward (Watty) de Lannoy (1939) received a certificate of appreciation from Jorge Jansen for his kiting achievements that go back till 1971. De Lannoy has won many prizes with his creative kites in the adult category. He started with kiting at the age of ten and made his own kites. De Lannoy: 'My older brother taught me how to fly a kite, but very soon I beat them all. I still remember Mrs. Lay, who was employed by the then St. Augustinus (Educational) Bookstore. She started the kite sales in Curaçao and she organized kiting competitions. The children could win articles sold in the bookstore. That was a good thing. Kiting was a fun activity and at the end of the day the children would take useful articles home their parents could not afford otherwise.'
Jansen: 'The first international kiting competition was organized in1995. More recently there was one in 2009. Not only did the participants come from the then Netherlands Antilles, but there were also representatives of the Netherlands and the United States. It is a pity that the various kiting organizations in Curaçao cannot join forces; teaming would prove very helpful to the kiting events.

Chateko
Curaçao N.A.
NC-106-W

HOLI PHAGWA

PERIODE : AROUND THE MONTH OF MARCH
LOCATION: AT THE ZUURZAK HINDU TEMPLE

Each year in March the Hindu community of Curaçao comes together to celebrate the Spring Festival of Holi Phagwa. They then throw colored powder and colored water at each other. The night before there is a bonfire in front of the temple.

Before explaining about the festival of Holi Phagwa, Gansham Bhagchandani, in 2004 co-founder of the Zuurzak Hindu Temple and now the caretaker of the temple, considered it important to dwell on the Hindu religion. 'It is often thought that Hindus worship many Gods. But in fact, Hindus worship one God only. It looks as if there are more Gods, but they are all forms of the one supreme God.'

'There are three primary forms of God', the Hindu Pundit, dr. Munindra Kumar Iha, continued. 'Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, also known as Lord Shiva. 'The three also go by the name *"Trimurti"*. In them creation, maintenance, and destruction are personified: Brahma being the creator, Vishnu the maintainer or preserver and Shiva the destroyer or transformer.
The pundit explained that Brahma founded the universe, after which Vishnu began creating men, plants, flowers and everything on earth. Then came Lord Shiva, who saw to it that all things on earth must come to an end and that men have to die.

Vishnu plays a role in the story behind the joyful festival of Holi Phagwa, marking the end of winter. On Curaçao Holi Phagwa is celebrated at the Hindu Temple, because a lot of people do not want to dirty their houses, Bhagchandani told. 'But it is always a joyful event where the whole community comes together. We forget all ill-feelings and settle our disputes. Of course there is special food and we have lots of sweets.'

The story behind Holi Phagwa is as follows: Once upon a time there was a King Hiranyakashipu, who had one son: Prahlad. The king was an enemy of Lord Vishnu and would never allow anyone to worship this deity. But when his wife got pregnant, she was visited by a pundit who came from Lord Vishnu. He blessed her and told her that her child would be a true believer.

When the king's son grew up, he sent him away for further education. There Prahlad met the same pundit and started to say prayers to Vishnu. Of course his father didn't like this, so he tried to kill his son in several ways: he threw him into the sea, but Prahlad survived; the king ordered his son to be trampled by

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YEAR END RITUALS

DATE: DECEMBER 31ST
LOCATION: BRIONPLEIN OTROBANDA

The Curaçao authority par excellence of herbs, Dinah Veeris, knows how to enter the New Year. More than anybody else she is familiar with the traditions of taking a bath with *awa dushi* and the cleansing with incense made of seven types of herbs. Since 2003 she has been taking care of the ingredients of this New Year's ritual at Brionplein.

New Year's Eve celebration starts with the traditional cleansing with *awa dushi* that is herbal water. Dinah explains that to prepare this you pour boiling water in a washtub with several herbs and several types of perfume. 'On the boiling water you place a saucer with a burning candle and you then ask for the strength for the New Year.'

Dinah: 'You then clean the house with awa dushi. After this you fill a bucket with herbal water, which you place in the bathroom. After having taken a bath you scoop a calabash full of herbal water, which you pour over your body. This is always done top-down. In a way you sprinkle yourself with it thus cleansing yourself.' In accordance with a good custom you put on new clothes after having taken your bath, whereby it would be a good idea to wear your knickers back to front. Dinah says that by doing so you keep all bad things at bay.
This is followed by another tradition: burning incense to the house and jumping incense. Dinah: 'You do this by placing charcoal and seven types of herbs in a *konfó* (coal stove). By walking through the house with the incense you cleanse all over the house from all negative things. After this you place the konfó in the middle of the room and before midnight all family members will jump cross-wise across the incense. By doing so you cleanse yourself and you enter clean into the New Year. You are also encouraged to cast all your troubles.'

Thanks to Dinah the people can participate in both old traditions. That means that people can take a bath at home with Dinah Veeris's awa dushi. Each year again around five o'clock some 300 bottles of herbal water are picked up at Brionplein on New Year's Eve. After the cleansing ritual the people return around ten o'clock. At that time Dinah has the stoves with the incense ready. This is partly placed in a deep shovel, because people also did that in the past if they had no coal stove.

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The illuminated boat parade

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FUIK DAY/ RIDE SWIM AND WALK FOR THE ROSES/CHINESE NEW YEAR/CARNIVAL ONE HUNDRED YEARS/KITING: LET'S GO WITH THE WIND - BAN K'E BIENTU/HOLI PHAGWA/CURAÇAO CHALLENGE/SUNFISH WORLD/DRAGRACING/FIRST HOLY COMMUNION RESIBIMENTU/MARITIME DAYS/BOXING/ CYCLING/TINY KIDS GRADUATION/ DAY OF THE FLAG - DIA DI BANDERA/ 10-10-10 CURAÇAO, A NEW HORIZON/ WABI CLUB/JEWISH WEDDINGS/ HEINEKEN REGATTA/SANTA CLAUS SAINT NICHOLAS/CHRISTMAS/ CHRISTMAS AT PAGARA REFINERIA ISLA/ PARTIES/ YEAR END RITUALS