



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Queer sovereignties

Cultural practices of sexual citizenship in the Dutch Caribbean

Ilenia, W.J.

Publication date

2022

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Ilenia, W. J. (2022). *Queer sovereignties: Cultural practices of sexual citizenship in the Dutch Caribbean*.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

WIGBERTSON JULIAN ISENIA

QUEER SOVEREIGNTIES



Cultural Practices of Sexual Citizenship
in the Dutch Caribbean

Queer Sovereignties
Cultural Practices of Sexual Citizenship in the Dutch Caribbean

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex
ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Aula der Universiteit
op donderdag 23 juni 2022, te 11.00 uur

door Wigbertson Genaro Silvino Julian Isenia
geboren te Willemstad

Promotiecommissie

<i>Promotor:</i>	prof. dr. R.K. Jaffe	Universiteit van Amsterdam
<i>Copromotores:</i>	dr. S. Bala prof. dr. R.M. Allen	Universiteit van Amsterdam University of Curaçao
<i>Overige leden:</i>	prof. dr. K.E. Röttger prof. dr. ir. B.J. de Kloet prof. dr. L. Plate dr. F.E. Guadeloupe dr. F.L. Smith	Universiteit van Amsterdam Universiteit van Amsterdam Radboud Universiteit Universiteit van Amsterdam Brandeis University

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

QUEER SOVEREIGNTIES

Cultural Practices of Sexual Citizenship
in the Dutch Caribbean



WIGBERTSON JULIAN ISENIA

© 2022, Wigbertson Julian Isenia

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form, without written permission from the author.

Manuscript design: Brady Moller

Translation of summary into Papiamentu by Crisèn Schorea'

Cover design by Younesselh based on Felix de Rooy's rendition of Genet's *The Maids* (1979) and (illustrated in an archive), and the back cover is an illustration of actual photographs by Maup Lanjouw of the *Dancing with the Queen* party in 1989 (with the *Handelskade* of Curaçao)



The research for and publication of this doctoral thesis received financial assistance from the Dutch Research Council (NWO). This PhD dissertation is part of the project ‘Cultural Practices of Citizenship under Conditions of Fragmented Sovereignty: Gendered and Sexual Citizenship in Curaçao and Bonaire’ (with NWO project number ALWCA.2016.030) of the research programme ‘Caribbean Research: a Multidisciplinary Approach’.

*In loving memory of my dear friends and lover
Terrence (2016), Vincent (2020) and Joshua (2016)*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Publication history	5
Introduction	7
Listening to gender and sexuality in the archive	12
Queer postcolonial sovereignty	24
Reimagining sexual citizenship	27
Sexual citizenship in the Dutch Caribbean	30
The queer in queer sovereignties	35
Methods, language and sources	41
Chapter outline	44
Part I: Whose queer modernity?	53
Chapter 1	55
<i>Kambrada</i> relations, a travelogue, an ethnography, and a novel, 1882 - 1923	55
The 'local' of erotic words: A Curaçaoan way of doing sexuality	58
Traces of <i>kambrada</i>	61
<i>Kambrada</i> in a changing social landscape	72
Dimensions of <i>kambrada</i>	80
Sociological explanations and 'queer of color critique'	84
Queer sovereignties: Native and Black studies in the Dutch Caribbean	89
Conclusion	93
Chapter 2	95
The <i>mariku</i> , vice squad, sports and medical anthropological research, 1911-1971	95
Article 248bis of the penal code: a discriminating age of consent for homosexuals	100
Introduction of the Children's and Vice Squad	106
"A tumour is growing" Homosexuality among youths	112
The <i>mariku</i> : "Women may give good sex, but we have the better sex"	121
Conclusion	132
Part II: Rethinking Sexual Citizenship	137
Chapter 3	139
Fridi Martina: Plays, speeches and interviews, 1978 - 2006	139
Rethinking sexual citizenship, postcolonialism and queerness	142
"I live and work with a woman but don't call that lesbianism"	150

Art salon Villa Baranka	161
"You shouldn't be here, 'cause you're Black": <i>Colour blind play</i>	172
Conclusion	179
Chapter 4	181
Sociedad Homosexual Antiyano (SHA) and Grupo Homofilia Antiyano (GHA): letters to the editors, a DIY magazine and a play that did not happen, 1971-1984	181
In the wake of 30 May 1969: The consequences of a tumultuous day	185
The Society for Antillean Homosexuals (SHA): 1970s	190
Equal treatment for all? The first public manifestations through the press	191
The Antillean Homophile Group (GHA): 1980s	195
Drag queens, trans* people and homophiles	198
Visibility tactics of the SHA and the GHA	202
Geopolitical tension: The question of language and cultural practices	207
Conclusion	218
Chapter 5	221
Border making and the Dutch nation: a poem, a tv episode and plays, 1996-2019	221
Out of the closet into other boxes: The <i>Uit de Kast</i> TV show	225
Coming out of the closet: A liberalist idea of sovereignty	232
Sovereignty and the politics of recognition	236
The <i>mariku</i> as a Curaçaoan trans*denomination in plays	238
"In the Netherlands, you can do this, but not here": The play <i>Yupi, e ley a pasa, awor si nos por kasa, kiko tei pasa?</i>	239
"I can see that you are real Curaçaoans": <i>Hulanda mi ta bai play</i>	242
Carnival as both empowering and disciplining	247
Conclusion	252
Conclusion	255
Strategic Intimacies	255
Language of queer sovereignty	260
Labour of queer sovereignty	261
Queer Sovereignty as a Distinct Sphere of Sexual Citizenship	262
Bibliography	265
Summary	301
Samenvatting	303
Resúmen	309

Table of Figures

Figure 1: "Baby Wilhelm de Gaay Fortman in a highchair with Mimi and Bimbi (presumably the housemaids)", 1912. (Photographer unknown)	13
Figure 2: "Untitled", around 1946. (Photographer unknown)	17
Figure 3: "Untitled", 2016. (Photograph by Dustin Thierry)	20
Figure 4: Top row book cover Curaçao and its inhabitants by Brusse, programme and guide of the NABLO-fair, newspaper article about the dissertation of Dr. Tjeerd de Reus. Bottom row book cover She Cannot Marry by Kroon, newspaper article about the publication of Kroon's book, book cover Naar de Antillen en Venezuela by van Kol and review of Van Kol's book.	50
Figure 5: Page 55 of Brusse's book with annotations by the author.	63
Figure 6: Page 352 of Van Kol's book with annotations by the author.	68
Figure 7: Map of the NABLO Fair, 1950.	119
Figure 8: Top row Felix de Rooy, Fridi Martina, a cover of GHA's DIY magazine Boletin about women. Bottom row newspaper article on the two-year anniversary of GHA and its activities and a promotional photo from the play Marival.	134
Figure 9: "Fridi Martina", 1990. (Photograph by Gon Buurman)	149
Figure 10: "Madama and Martina". (Photographer unknown)	159
Figure 11: "Madama and Martina". (Photographer unknown)	160
Figure 12: Ad "Immigrant Art: No Interest. Universal Art. Villa Baranka" (1988)	168
Figure 13: "Women's Evening in Villa Baranka. Introductory Classes in Dance Drama". (Fridi Martina, year unknown)	171

Figure 14: Protest in The Hague on 21 January 1969, against Article 248bis. (Photograph by Jac de Nijs) 182

Figure 15: "Founding board of Grupo Homofilia Antiyano (GHA): Ronald, Gibi and Hildo (standing), Wendell and Bart (seated)", 1979. (Photographer unknown) 196

Figure 16: "That one is a homo. How can you tell? You can't tell. You have to know. How do you know? He told me himself. Then what on earth are you being so secretive about?" 1981. 211

Figure 17: "I am what I am", 1981. 212

Figure 18: "Invitation Dancing with the Queen. 30 April", 1989. 217

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could never have written this dissertation without the efforts, attention and care of my supervisors Rivke Jaffe, Sruti Bala and Rose Mary Allen. It was quite a rollercoaster ride and I am grateful to have had you by my side at the end. Jacqueline Martis, you are a wonderful friend. You were one of the first people I emailed in 2015 about your work on sexuality and gender in Curaçao. You will always be an inspiration and I thank you for spending hours on the phone with me for almost seven years (and counting). Chelsea Schields, Eliza Steinbock and Gianmaria Colpani, thank you for reading different versions of my chapters and commenting extensively and skilfully. Together with you, I could wander through the academic world as a young scholar, whether publishing, on panels, brainstorming or celebrating together. Thank you for creating a space with me where we could grow together and support each other. Thank you, Collin Edson, who I could always turn to for friendship, whether I was complaining, laughing or travelling.

A very special thank you to my doctoral committee, Faith Smith, Francio Guadeloupe, Jeroen de Kloet, Kati Röttger and Liedeke Plate, who took the time to read and assess this dissertation.

Rivke's reading group, who have patiently read my work in various constellations since 2017, Afra Foli, Alana Osbourne, Carolina Maurity Frossard,

Ceylin Idel, Dolly Loomans, Erella Grassiani, Faisal Umar, Francesca Pilo', Harry Pettit, Jelke Bosma, Francesco Colona, Frank Mueller, Lior Volinz, Patrick Weir, Rivke Jaffe, Solène le Borgne, Sterre Gilsing, Tahire Erman, Thijs Jeursen and Tracian Meikle. Thanks for allowing me to make mistakes with you. Charissa Granger, thank you for your time, your attention and for reminding me I see and hear, smell and feel, and that I need to reflect that in my research as much as possible. The reading group of the Cultural Practices of Citizenship project in Amsterdam, to name a few Alfrida Martis, Discofoxx/Amandla, Emma van Meyeren, Ghanima Kowsoleea, Inez van der Scheer, Mikki Stelder, Sruti Bala and Tirza Balk. This reading group was a rich environment for me to reflect on theories about the Dutch Caribbean. I thank you for your passion.

To all those who read and commented on my research proposals in the preliminary phase of my PhD, including Jan Lazardzig, Kati Röttger, Marit Bosman, meLê Yamomo and Veronika Zangl. I also thank Jan and Kati for their many letters of recommendation; I am immensely grateful. Liesbeth Echteld and everyone at the University of Curaçao Dr Moises Da Costa Gomez (UoC), I will always remember you fondly. Liesbeth, I remember the many emails and phone calls we made for the various research consortia, but finally we eventually pulled it off. Thanks for your generosity, also for always welcoming me back to the UoC. To Aronnette Martis, Judith Brekelmans and Marlon Reina, thank you for always being there for me.

I would like to thank the UVA-385-Year Scholarship Committee for providing me with a short-term fellowship at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) at New York University (NYU) and for allowing me to research this dissertation at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at NYPL. I would also like to thank everyone at NYU who helped me, pushed me in the right direction, or had coffee with me. I would like to thank Jill Lane, Omar Alejandro Dauhajre, and Marcial Godoy. I would also like to thank the members of the Gregory Sprague Award Committee of the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History (CLGBTH), Zeb Tortorici, Sarah E. Watkins, and Elliott Powell, as well as CLGBTH chairs Julio Capó, Jr. and Emily K. Hobson, who awarded me an honourable mention in 2020 to my article 'Looking for kambrada: sexuality and social anxieties in the Dutch colonial archive, 1882-1923'. I included this article in a revised and expanded form in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank the committee, which includes Alex van Stripriaan, Gert Oostindie and Gloria Wekker who granted me the Sylvia W. de Groot Fund

in 2016 before my PhD project. This fund enabled me to document artistic and cultural practices of same-sex desiring and trans* people in the Dutch Caribbean. This fieldwork involved collecting source material on same-sex desiring and trans* people in literature, film, cultural performance and theatre, combining participant observation, in-depth interviews, archival research and analysis of cultural performance on Curaçao and Bonaire.

All those who have supported me, with whom I have been in conversation and who have inspired me in various ways: Adeola Aderemi, Ajamu X, Albert Schoobaar, Andre Reeder, Anne Krul, Chandra Frank, Christopher Stahling, Daphina Misiedjan, Egbert Alejandro Martina, Felix de Rooy, Gibi Bacilio, Glenn Helberg, Gwendell Mercelina, Isaiah Lopaz, Katarzyna Wojnicka, Kopano Maroga, Lionel Jokhoe, Lysanne Charles, Madama & Ida Guinee, Mario Kleinmoedig, Mariska Gewalt, Mariëlle Smith, Matthea Westerduin, Maup Lanjouw, Naomie Pieter, Nelly Rosa, Richenel (Muz) Ansano, Roel Storck, Sara Houtenbos, Selçuk Balamir, Steven G. Fullwood, Suzanne Kooloos, Tienieke Sumter, Vanessa Agard-Jones and Wayne Modest

I am grateful for all the writing groups, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, that I could attend via Zoom or communities such as Black Pride NL, Black Queer & Trans Resistance NL and the Black PhD Experience. I would also like to thank all the organisations and individuals who invited me to develop my ideas in guest lectures: 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning, IES Study Abroad, IHLIA LGBT + Heritage, International Queer and Migrant Film Festival, KITLV, University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University and Yale University. To all the archivists who helped me with my research at IHLIA LGBT + Heritage, the International Institute of Social History, the Mongui Maduro Library, the National Archives of Curaçao and in the Netherlands, the Royal Library, the Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, the Sound and Vision Archive, the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building and the University of Curaçao. All at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), my research community where I was able to do research for 4.5 years, including Eloë Kingma, Esther Peeren and Jaap Kooijman and the Department of Theatre Studies.

I am forever grateful that I could take a six-month break from my research and work at the Dutch Research Council (NWO) as a policy officer, I would like to thank Amber van der Meij, Arnold Lubbers, Bodille Arensman, Daphne Kortbeek, Dineke Pardijs, Esther van der Hoorn, Hayley Mickleburgh, Jimmy Mans, Jochem Spaans, Joris Voskuilen, Kasper Gossink-Melenhorst, Lieke van Lieshout, Marije Severs, Mariël Schweizer, Mariëlle Osinga, Maudy Lohaus,

Robbert Hoogstraat, Shantie Jadoenath, Stefan Penders and Teuntje Vosters for, to use a word that has been banned from research proposals, a ‘top leading’ time.

My family, who supported me all the way, especially my mother, who helped me transcribe some songs and with whom I could discuss some plays. Also my father, whom I could ask a lot about Curaçao in his youth. Joshua, Terrence and Vincent, you are implicit and sometimes explicit in this dissertation. Without the possibility of a response, writing was the only way to keep you all alive. I am incredibly grateful for the care and love you, Daniel van Dijck, have shown me over twelve years.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Portions of the introduction appeared in: Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Queer Sovereignties: Re-Imagining Sexual Citizenship from the Dutch Caribbean.” In *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, edited by Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog, 274–82. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Looking for Kambrada: Sexuality and Social Anxieties in the Dutch Colonial Archive, 1882–1923.” *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (2019): 125–43.

Portions of Chapter 1 appeared in: Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Looking for Kambrada: Sexuality and Social Anxieties in the Dutch Colonial Archive, 1882–1923.” *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (2019): 125–43; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Loke Mi Wela a Siña Mi/ What My Grandma Taught Me”, in *Sensuous Discoveries*. Edited by Christopher Kurbi and curated by Ajamu X. London: 198 Contemporary Arts (2021): 12-13.

Portions of Chapter 3 appeared in: Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Queer Sovereignties: Re-Imagining Sexual Citizenship from the Dutch Caribbean.” In *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, edited by Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog, 274–82. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Kunstsalon Villa Baranka was als een moederrots”. Atria Kennisinstituut

(2018). <https://atria.nl/nieuws-publicaties/feminisme/feminisme-20e-eeuw/black-achievement-month-kunstsalon-villa-baranka-was-als-een-moederrots/>; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Fridi Martina” IHLIA LGBT+ Heritage With Pride, 2021. <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/fridi-martina/>

Portions of Chapter 5 appeared in: Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Out of the closet and into other boxes”. *Cultural Practices of Citizenship*, 2017. www.dutch-caribbean-citizenship.info/blog/2017/10/4/out-of-the-closet-and-into-other-boxes/; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Felix de Rooy” <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/felix-de-rooy/>; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Felix de Rooy - Het universele niet langer als wit beschouwd” <https://www.theaterkrant.nl/tm-artikel/felix-de-rooy-het-universele-niet-langer-als-wit-beschouwd/>

Portions of the Conclusion appeared in: Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Looking for Kambrada: Sexuality and Social Anxieties in the Dutch Colonial Archive, 1882–1923.” *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (2019): 125–43; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Loke Mi Wela a Siña Mi/ What My Grandma Taught Me”, in *Sensuous Discoveries*. Edited by Christopher Kurbi and curated by Ajamu X. London: 198 Contemporary Arts (2021): 12-13; Isenia, Wigbertson Julian. “Queer Sovereignities: Re-Imagining Sexual Citizenship from the Dutch Caribbean.” In *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, edited by Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog, 274–82. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021