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Title: Review. *Windward Children: a Study in Human Ecology of the Three Dutch Windward Islands in the Caribbean*, by John Y. Keur and Dorothy L. Keur.

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*Windward Children: A Study in Human Ecology of the three Dutch Windward Islands in the Caribbean.* By John Y. Keur and Dorothy L. Keur, Published in co-operation with the Prins Bernhard Fund Netherlands Antilles by Royal Vangorcum Ltd., Assen 1960.

In 1956-7 the Keurs made a detailed comparative study of the three Dutch islands of St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius. John Keur who is an ecologist concentrated on their ecology. Dorothy Keur investigated their sociology, and both seem to have studied the history of these islands. A husband and wife team, they were able to combine their information and skills with great success, thus producing an account in which sociological and ecological viewpoints and data are closely integrated with one another and with the historical record.

Saba is a volcanic cone about two and a half miles in diameter, rising to a maximum of 2,800 feet. St. Maarten island is about 33 square miles, most of which is French, while the Dutch retain the smaller southern portion. St. Eustatius is about 8 square miles. The three islands are within sight of one another, scattered among the British Leewards. However, they are distinguished by the Dutch from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, on which they depend economically, as Windward Islands. It is typical of Caribbean affairs that the British Leewards and the Dutch Windwards are mixed up together.

In 1957 St. Eustatius and Saba had about 1,000 people each, and St. Maarten nearly 1,600, of whom about 200 were whites, as against half the population of Saba and about 2 per cent of St. Eustatius where the rest are of Negro descent.

Until 1781 St. Eustatius was probably the biggest and richest smuggling centre in the New World, with a population of over 25,000 people, slaves being among the most important items smuggled. Then the British destroyed it. St. Maarten remained primarily agricultural until the Dutch abolition of slavery in 1860, while the economy of Saba has always been based on sea-

faring and emigration. Even in the eighteenth century there were few slaves in Saba. While St. Eustatius traded in slaves it had few plantations; in St. Maarten most slaves were used in agriculture.

Ecological conditions are such that agriculture in these islands is a risky business; rainfall varies, pests flourish, there is little suitable land and communications are poor. In addition, the markets for local crops are uncertain. The Keurs recite an impressive history of economic failures in enterprises of one sort and another in these communities. They show that following on emancipation in 1861 the island economies gradually switched from productive agriculture to dependence on outside subsidies, primarily from Government but also from emigrant natives. Agriculture is now disvalued, wages are high, labour scarce, and prices of local products are non-economic. Land is held jointly by kin who lack legal titles and often leave their holdings unworked to avoid litigation. Class and colour lines are sharp, and seem to be made even sharper by the exclusiveness of the Dutch-born white officials who occupy the positions of highest prestige. Distinctions between Dutch-born whites, native-born upper-class whites, native-born poor whites, the coloured upper-class, the coloured middle-class and the coloured lower-class are important but not exhaustive. Where present, Surinamers may form a separate category. To multiply confusion, although the islands are Dutch, English is the dominant language and is used in a dialect form. Dutch and French are taught in school, apparently to little purpose.

In 1951 under a new Constitution, the islands were linked with Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao to form the Dutch Antilles, and adult suffrage was introduced. Local autonomy is provided for through a Council of locally elected politicians who advise the Administrator. The Keurs show quite clearly how this democratic machinery merely provides means for the expression of local tensions and interests, rather than for the solution of local problems. But perhaps the islanders are not too much to blame for this. Since emancipation they have been administered paternalistically by the Dutch, and they have no tradition of political participation. This cannot be developed overnight, as maybe convenient.

In summarizing these data on the Dutch Windwards, I have tried to indicate the scope of the Keurs' study. By comparing Saba, St. Maarten and St. Eustatius in each particular, the writers show how history has promoted differing adjustments in some particulars and common attitudes in others. In short, an adequate analysis of these units requires an approach which is simultaneously comparative, ecological, historical and sociological.

The text is clearly written and packed with detail, giving a rounded description of life in the Dutch Windwards. Unfortunately it has no index and unnumbered chapters. A more serious criticism is its treatment of the local Dutch administration. The Keurs seem to blame the islanders for their divisive society, their apathy and low levels of performance; but their own historical data seem to indicate that the Dutch are at least

equally responsible for these effects. The societies were set up as colonial enterprises, and retained that status until they were no longer profitable. The racial compositions of the three units gives evidence of this.

Perhaps the book's chief merit is its holistic comparative treatment. For this purpose, the combination of ecological, historical and sociological skills is of special value; and so was the choice of research field. With such minuscule units and populations, this type of treatment is manageable and effective. The Keurs may not have solved many problems of Caribbean sociology, although they show how misleading it is to "explain" these societies in terms of the plantation. They have certainly restated many important problems concerning relationships between ecology, history, population size, and social structure. They have also set high standards of field work and reporting for Caribbean ethnographers.

M. G. Smith.