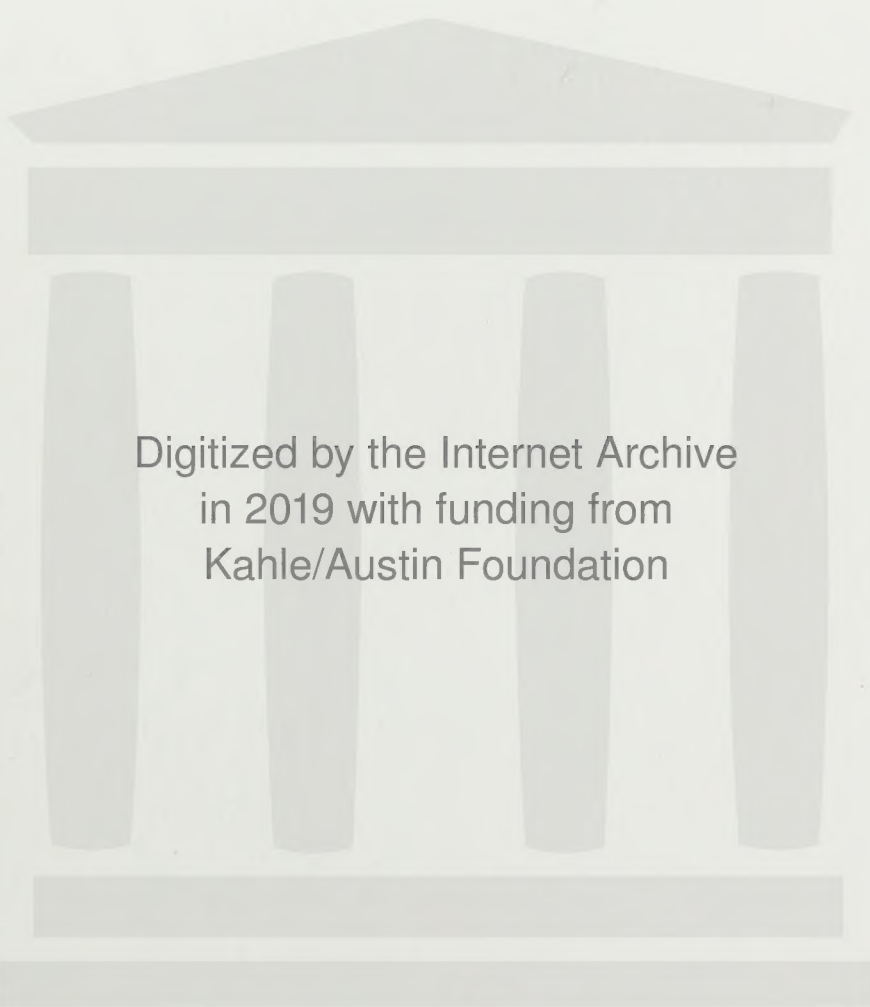


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Resistance and Rebellion in Suriname: Old and New



Studies in Third World Societies

PUBLICATION NUMBER FORTY-THREE

F 2402. Roy 1990

STUDIES IN THIRD WORLD SOCIETIES

is devoted to the study of cultures and societies of the Third World. Each publication contains papers dealing with a single theme or area, addressed both to scholars and laymen as well as to teachers, students, and practitioners of social science; the papers should be of value also to applied social scientists, planners, demographers, community development workers, and other students of human cultures and societies.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 90-085530

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**RESISTANCE AND REBELLION IN SURINAME:
OLD AND NEW**

Studies in Third World Societies

The College of William and Mary

Gary Brana-Shute, Editor

Department of Cultural Anthropology
University of Utrecht
The Netherlands

CONTENTS

Publication Number Forty-three

November 1990

	PAGE
List of Maps	ix
List of Figures	ix
Gary Brana-Shute	
Introduction	1
Wim Hoogbergen	
The History of the Suriname Maroons	65
Humphrey Lamur	
Slave Religion in Suriname	103
Rosemary Brana-Shute	119
Legal Resistance to Slavery in Eighteenth Century Suriname	
Rosemarijn Hoefte	137
The 'Usual Barbarity' of the Asians? Indenture and Resistance in Suriname	
H. U. E. Thoden van Velzen	159
The Maroon Insurgency: Anthropological Reflections on the Civil War in Suriname	
Edward Dew	189
Suriname: Transcending Ethnic Politics the Hard Way	
Gary Brana-Shute	213
Old Shoes and Elephants: Electoral Resistance in Suriname	

Gert Oostindle	231
Preludes to the Exodus: Surinamers in the Netherlands	
Peter Meel	259
A Reluctant Embrace: Suriname's Idle Quest for Independence	
Wilhelmina van Wetering	291
Dissonance in Discourse: The Politics of Afro-Surinamese Culture in Netherlands	
Notes on Contributors	309

LIST OF MAPS

	Page
Map 1	8
Map of Suriname	
Map 2	67
Distribution of Maroon Groups in Suriname	
Map 3	79
Plantations Mentioned in the Text	
Map 4	83
Maroon Settlements in the Text	
Map 5	165
East Suriname, 1986	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	193
Population by Cultural Origin and Religion	
Table 2	197
Suriname Population, Age Six and Above	
Table 3	199
Creole and Hindustani Attitudes	

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

GARY BRANA-SHUTE

Our goals in this volume are plainly simple yet not so easy to achieve. We wish to present to the English-speaking Caribbean and Caribbeanist audience a text which will expose the reader to selected events that both shape and themselves were shaped by the conditions of Suriname's history. Extensive, although spotty and fragmentary, literature on the country exists; the lion's share of it in the Dutch language—clearly reflecting the colonial and post-colonial background of the land's historiography. This collection may hopefully serve as a supplement to the English language material. Certain temporal and cultural horizons, some decades if not centuries long, stand out as major guideposts marking the young Caribbean country's journey: European conquest, African (and American Indian) slavery, marronage, emancipation, Asian indentured servitude, labor difficulties of the inter-war years, constitutional advance from colony to autonomous state, international relations with the metropole, migration to the Netherlands, a contemporary civil insurgency, and a coup d'état followed by an uncertain transition to democracy. Omissions clearly exceed inclusions, as a practical model for selecting contributions depended on what scholar, had selected what topics on which to base their contemporary research and if they would be willing to join with our efforts.

The notion of this project had a speedy genesis. During 1987-8 I was visiting professor of anthropology at the University of Utrecht. With Professor Dr. Bonno Thoden van Velzen and Dr. Wim Hoogbergen we devised a plan to present a panel of papers on Suriname at the 1988 American Anthropological Association meetings in Phoenix. We invited Dr. Wilhelmina van Wetering and Dr. Edward Dew to join us and we made presentations that in broadened fashion

are included here. We were satisfied that we had done a responsible job in providing fresh information on Suriname to the predominantly American audience. However, a book with the pretense of serving as a brief introduction to a land and its people required considerably more breadth. When I returned to the Netherlands in 1989 we inventoried contemporary research on Suriname and the publishing status of such work. Dr. Gert Oostindie, Dr. Rosmarijn Hoefte, Dr. Rosemary Brana-Shute, Dr. Humphrey Lamur and Drs. Peter Meel all had materials available for ready publication. This does not mean to imply that other important research projects are not under way; indeed they are, but we must await their conclusion while at the same time avoid duplication from other scholars who are already prepared to publish on the topics included here.

Resistance and Rebellion

Our selection of a title, **Resistance and Rebellion**, was deliberate; some might argue trendy, others approving of its timeliness. We would assert, along with Okihiro (1986) and Heuman (1986), that Suriname, with its sister states in the Caribbean, shares a long and complicated past rooted profoundly in colonialism and imperialism with all the manifestations of exploitation and oppression that followed in the wake of that historical process. As the papers illuminate, indigenous reactions to historical denial and negation are themselves ambiguous and more than occasionally contradictory. Hoogbergen and Thoden van Velzen deal with the ultimate solution--war, in the form of guerrilla insurgency by Maroons (or, as they are often referenced, Bush Negroes). Fugitive slaves took up arms and waged pitched battles against European soldiers and their local allies to secure their freedom, livelihood and cultural autonomy. The battles were ruthless, but the peace treaties negotiated resulted in the survival of Maroon populations to this day in the central and eastern parts of the Suriname interior. Neither the struggle nor the war is over yet. Thoden van Velzen examines the contemporary Maroon insurgency and the violent contest played out by armed followers of Ronnie Brunswijk (the Jungle Commando) and the national army, now the locus of oppression operating from their urban fortress in Paramaribo. Ignored, ridiculed, treated with contempt and, beginning in 1986, murdered by elements of the national army, Maroon groups have once again rallied to the defense of their history and culture; this time against their countrymen. Thoden van Velzen's analysis is particularly striking as it deals with young, urban-oriented Maroons who are returning to their traditional gods and oracles for guidance in the hostilities.

Resistance can wear many cloaks. Subversion, feigning, malingering, treason, and betrayal, tactics which often result in severe retribution and bloodshed, demonstrate the complexities and inversions inherent in the dialectic of the powerful and the dispossessed. As tactics, or what we can call the 'weapons of the weak,' such reactions not only demonstrate what weapons the weak have at their disposal, but also serve as a measure of prevailing power relations. Such diagnostics can inform us of how the weak themselves define power, justice, and, indeed, the cultural system in which they live. Abu-Luhgod (1987) warns us not to dismiss the 'homelier' forms of resistance manifested in song, body movement and carriage, costume, poems, proverbs, and jokes. For example, the exact tie-style of Creole (coastal Afro-Surinamer) female headgear and the color of the cloth can demonstrate the wearer's hearty disdain of another person or group. For Creoles, use of their mother tongue, Sranan Tongo, is replete with pungent ridicule of the pretentious, pompous and powerful.

There are, in all societies, profound cultural cores that regulate the internal spiritual harmony of believers. For slaves, as Lamur points out in a 19th century example from the plantation Vossenburg, religion served to define a person's relationship with others, the rhythms of the earth, and cycles of connection with the spirit world and ancestors. Missionary activity by the Moravian church was intense and slave religion was at once acknowledged and feared by the European planters who despite their overwhelming force of arms and cultural superiority, had no choice but to allow the slaves to practice their ancient rituals and ceremonials. The belief system of the slaves, generally called Winti by contemporary Creole practitioners, continues to shape the world view of its practitioners, co-existing with European religions and their proselytizers.

Rosemary Brana-Shute takes a different tact and explores the role of gender in resistance. Focusing on slave and manumitted black and colored women she teases out, in a case study, the way in which perception of gender roles in the cultural definition of the time allowed females access to certain opportunities while simultaneously shutting them off from many others. As she makes clear, people in bondage were not just "slaves," but men and women, boys and girls, young and old, and endowed with personalities that placed them in differential positions within the colonial slave system.

Hoefte details the situation of indentured Asians in Suriname and shows that their oppression was based on not only the features of the capitalist economic system but also the interplay of race, gender and the sexual division of labor. But, their subordinate position at the bottom of the plantation system was not accepted through accommodation. Passive and active means of resistance and conflict were used to protest and, periodically, mediate a system based on abuse

and degradation. Dealing with late 19th and early 20th century data, Hoeffte describes spontaneous 'personalized' protest as well as more activist, organized resistance through such mediums as migrant clubs and labor unions. The planters and the state jointly formed the parameters of power and control and more than frequently used the instrument of ethnic divide-and-conquer to weaken the solidarity of their workforce. For example, in the ethnic thicket of contemporary Suriname society, with each group perceiving its own cultural superiority and treating the rest accordingly, racial epithets such as 'dumb coolie woman' [Sranan-Dutch: *dun coolie vrouw*] serve up exactly what the outside group thinks, in this case, of women of East Indian descent. Such ethnic rivalries of course enter the field of politics and competition for national power. Dew elucidates the fragile balance of multi-ethnic power sharing in a highly plural society before, during and after the 1980 coup d'état and following experiments with revolutionary policies. The principal political parties in Suriname were and are based on ethnic groups: the Creole National Party of Suriname, the East Indian Progressive Reform Party and the Javanese Indonesian Peasants' Party. Dew calls the power-sharing relations under the pre-coup parliamentary system 'consociationalism' or, in Caribbean argot, *Apanjaht*, the 'we-versus-them' system. Yet, by 1979 consociationalism had degenerated into a shabby and ethnically vicious shouting match between competitors. The democratic system was severely damaged and the door was opened for the military coup which followed a year later. Suriname's path back to democracy is still not clear and the future literally hangs on whether the three ethnic parties can ally again under the philosophy of unity in order to resist the military institution with strength or if the ethnic rivalries in competition for scarce resources will fragment the country and strengthen the hand of the military masters.

Gary Brana-Shute describes the 1987 elections; the first after seven years of tumultuous and, sometimes, draconian military rule. The electorate made known, through three months of electioneering, mass meetings, exhilarating political carnival, and hard-nose politics that they wished to return to civilian rule. Using homely metaphors—old shoes, elephants, sarongs and saris—and ribald jokes, singing songs censorious of military dictatorship, and roaring out 'that thing' (the return to democracy) with jubilant excess, the voters propelled themselves to victory in free and open elections. Will the resistance continue on to finally dislodge any further designs the military may have? That remains to be seen.

Oostindie records the three hundred year presence of Surinamers in the Netherlands, in the land of the 'suppressor'. From very early times Surinamers, first involuntarily, then voluntarily, journeyed to the Netherlands for education, work and economic relief. Their reception there has been uneven and informed

by white racism, cultural snobbery, job discrimination and European misunderstanding of tropical peoples from the imperial preserve. Yet, Surinamers flourished with their own dance halls and clubs, distinctive language, culture and dress, and, by mid-twentieth century, nationalist sentiments found expression in poetry, prose and political discussion groups. Defining accommodation and integration in their own terms, Surinamers maintained their cultural integrity while contributing to the growing cultural richness of the Netherlands. The connections between the two lands and people, to the discontent of some Surinamers and Netherlanders, are deep and indelible.

Meel, in a sensitively written paper drawing on historical and literary sources, chronicles the twisted and contradictory emergence of a 'Surinamese' nationalist spirit. Spearheaded first by prominent, light skinned Creoles, a definition of national spirit and culture soon became relative with each ethnic group offering its own definitions, emotional rallying points and preferred modes of expression. The chapter is neatly divided into several historical watersheds which elucidate how historical-political circumstances shaped the expression of Suriname's 'inner cultural self'.

Van Wetering ends our collection with a solid ethnographic account of contemporary Surinamese social organization in the Netherlands. She argues that rather than simply resisting the penetration of Dutch life and culture into their society, Surinamers, particularly Creoles--and Creole women at that--are actively promoting and broadening the sphere of their cultural enterprise. Life cycle rituals, economic activity --legal and not-- and social clubs knit the community together, promote an esprit de corps and perpetuate Surinamese values from one generation to the next.

Finally, Gail Widner of Spartanburg, South Carolina read the entire manuscript and skillfully corrected the editor's infelicities.

Are we then justified to title our efforts **Resistance and Rebellion**? We answer with a qualified yes. Caribbean history and the case of Suriname demonstrate a continuity of form from the on-set of conquest to the present. The manifestations of dissatisfaction include, usually simultaneously, often consecutively, that men, women, ethnic groups, social classes, those in the diaspora, and the nation state itself organize manifold strategies to counter their negation. This meagre effort of ours should cause no one acute theoretical discomfort. Although we offer no profound advance, the case studies may serve to refine and document a people's efforts to define themselves when someone else wanted to do it for them.

A Partial bibliography: English and Accessibility

The very abbreviated bibliography which follows is by no means complete. It aims to offer only a bird's eye view of a complex land to the interested reader who, we assume, has heard a great deal about Suriname but has read very little about it. The specialist will have read all of this and much more, certainly the vast amount of material in the Dutch language. Although this volume may trigger in some the desire to pursue the study of Suriname more completely and in depth and to learn one of the more obscure European languages as a research tool (not to mention the many tongues spoken in Suriname), we wish only to provide the English (and, most usually, Spanish) speaking Caribbeanist-Latin Americanist with a brief body of materials that can be used to flesh out their knowledge of the country for comparative purposes. Caribbean courses in the United States spend a great deal of time with the English- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, glance quickly at the French territories and usually reach closure after noting Suriname's mainland location. However, no amount of pragmatic justifying can ever adequately apologize to the numerous Dutch and Surinamese scholars who receive no recognition here because they write in their language and not in 'dominant' English. Nor does such a listing of sources adequately measure the production of those Dutch and Surinamese scholars included here who have published vast amounts in Dutch, but only the odd or several pieces in English. Such neglect demands an apology which is hereby offered.

Choice of literature was designed not only on linguistic but also physical accessibility. Not everyone reading this has the luxury of living in New York, Baltimore, Gainesville or Los Angeles and thus the proximity to a library holding the many books and journals in which materials in English on Suriname are located. We therefore include materials that are published in prominent journals accessible in the United States and books available with some ease. We have arbitrarily set a temporal cap as well. Except for the rare profound work in English published during the colonial period, the following literature will encompass only those works published after the Second World War. This period covers modern Suriname, both its emergence as a state and the development of a more sophisticated scholarship. Although the papers here may be of use to the specialist, the bibliography will not. Hopefully, the enumeration of materials will consolidate widely available works into a systematic and coherent bundle for the interested reader.

Suriname: A Sketch

Suriname is a tropical Caribbean country located on the north east coast of South America and bordered by Guyana, French Guiana, Brazil and the Atlantic Ocean. With a land area of 164,000 square kilometers the country is roughly the size of the state of Georgia. Best estimates place the population at about 380,000 although this is uncertain due to a huge out migration over the past ten years and a recent relocation of some 10,000 refugees to neighboring French Guiana. The average yearly temperature is about 27 degrees centigrade and seasonal variations revolve around two rainy seasons and two dry seasons. The 350 kilometer long coast is marsh, mud bank and tangled mangrove swamp and gives over to a savanna area ranging in depth from 10 to 70 kilometers from the coast. The remainder of the country, some 80 percent, is thick jungle rain forest cross-cut by major river systems draining the Amazon basin. Called the 'wild coast' by early Europeans, various settlements were attempted by French, British and Dutch settlers until a British colony was established in 1650. The Dutch acquired Suriname in 1667 and established a full blown plantation system based on African and, in rare instances, American Indian slavery. By the mid-18th century the population of the country was about 49,000 with some 9,600 persons residing in Paramaribo. Ninety percent of the population was enslaved. R. Price reports (1976:9): "The most striking feature of Suriname's demographic history is ... Between 1668 and 1823, some 300,000 to 325,000 African slaves were imported into the colony; yet at the end of this period the total black population of Suriname was only about 50,000." During this time period the population was composed of Europeans, free persons of color and free blacks, urban and plantation slaves, Maroon communities and American Indian groups.

Slavery was abolished in 1863. Ten years later the Dutch turned to importing East Indian contract labor from (British) India, an importation that continued until 1916 resulting in the relocation of 34,304 East Indians to Suriname (of that number 11,700 returned with the expiration of their 'contracts'). The quest for cheap labor also siphoned Javanese from the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) to Suriname. Indonesian contract labor was imported from 1893 to 1939 and relocated 32,956 persons (of whom 7,684 repatriated). In the mid-19th century several hundred small scale Dutch farmers migrated to Suriname and almost 4,500 Chinese were indentured as contract laborers. In the 1920s, and continuing sporadically, Christian Lebanese entered Suriname voluntarily. By the mid-1980s the population composition of Suriname was: East Indians 38 percent (142,000), Creoles (Afro-Surinamers) 30 percent (118,000), Javanese 15 percent (59,000), Maroons 10 percent (39,500 with some 10,000 refugees in French Guiana), American Indians 3 percent (10,200), Chinese 2 percent (6,400), Europeans 1 percent (4,000), and Lebanese and Others 1 percent (4,000).

MAPONE: SURINAME



Suriname's inhabitants are thinly distributed in the interior and densely packed around and in the urban agglomerate of Paramaribo; a truly primate city with an official population of some 110,000 and a peri-urban population of nearly 260,000 – roughly two-thirds of the country's inhabitants. Albina, a once thriving border town with French Guiana, was burned down in 1986 following hostilities between government troops and insurgents. Nieuw Nickerie, on the border with Guyana, is the only other town with a sizeable population. Smaller settlements are strung out along the highway traversing the coastal area and a spur penetrating south to the artificial lake built to provide hydro-electric power.

In the early period Suriname was owned by the 'Society of Suriname', a tripartite body consisting of several share holding conglomerates including a wealthy family, the city of Amsterdam and the Dutch West India company. For the bulk of the 19th century and until 1954 the country was a colony of the Netherlands and following the 'Statuut' of 1954, became an internally self-governing member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands along with the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands. At independence in 1975 the country was a parliamentary republic, later to have the system overthrown by a military coup d'état in 1980. A Maroon insurgency erupted in 1986 and continues, while free elections resulting in the installation of a civilian government were held in late 1987. The current relationship between the civilians who reign and the military who rule is tense and uncertain.

The economy has great potential with rich, although increasingly inaccessible, deposits of bauxite and an aluminium smelting capability generating some 75 percent of the country's foreign exchange. Mechanized rice plantations sell to the European Common Market and a state-owned agricultural facility produces banana, some citrus, and palm oil. A state-owned enterprise markets shrimp while the interior is richly endowed with hardwoods and gold deposits. Small scale farmers produce vegetables, ground crops, rice, coconuts, chickens, cows and pigs. The government is the largest employer accounting for about 40 percent of the work force. Unemployment varies by ethnic group but generally is considered to be about 30 percent. An underground or informal economy sector flourishes. A Dutch foreign aid endowment at independence totalled \$1.5 billion to be distributed over a fifteen year period and was later withdrawn following tragic political murders in 1982. Negotiations were underway in 1989 to establish conditions for the reinitiation of funding. At the moment, due to mismanagement, corruption, declining world market prices, and aid withdrawal the country is, for all intents and purposes, bankrupt. A once satisfactory school system (albeit colonial in design), an excellent hospital system and urban infrastructure are near chaos. Food and material goods for the masses are difficult to come by and most families rely on remittances in cash and kind from relatives in the Netherlands.

The history and culture of Suriname is especially rich and diverse and deserves attention on its own merits as well as in conjunction with the broader history of plantation America. Many parallels with sister states in the Caribbean will be discovered by even the most casual reader. Unique events, personalities, and distinct twists of history during the passage of time will flesh out the country in full form within the New World mosaic. We follow here with a text that omits more than it includes but hope that in some small measure it can add to an awareness of Suriname.¹

Sources

General bibliographies of Suriname materials are published regularly by the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, Department of Caribbean Studies located in Leiden, the Netherlands. Monographs, readers, occasional publications, and working papers have seen the light of day. Materials are produced annually and cover the extensive English language holdings of the Institute. The Royal Institute's **Central Catalogue Caraibiana** (CCC) is an annual, cumulative microcard accompanied by a printed manual. Also available is **Caribbean Studies**, an annual register of publications concerning the Dutch Caribbean and Suriname. Nagelkerke's (1971, 1972, 1977, and 1980) occasional bibliographies published through the Institute provide a relatively complete entrée to both general and arcane sources on Suriname. The Royal Institute, in collaboration with the Centro de Estudios y Documentacion Latinoamericanos (CEDLA) in Amsterdam, publishes the journal **Boletin de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe**, now approaching its fiftieth edition. In December 1989 **Boletin** changed its name to **European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies**. Articles, in English and Spanish, regularly appear on Suriname. Of principal interest is the annual review of **Caribbean Studies** undertaken by Oostindie (1987a, 1986 and 1985) and Hoefte (1988) whereby the authors survey and interpret the most important social scientific publications on Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean as well as the publications of Dutch, Surinamese and Antillian authors on other areas of the Caribbean. A special issue of **Boletin** (1988) is entitled 'American Studies in the Netherlands 1970-1987' and contains review essays on Dutch archeological, historical, anthropological, linguistic and geographical studies of the Americas, with regular reference to Suriname. Stroom (1988) has edited a bibliography to accompany the special issue. Oltheten's (1979) inventory of Caribbean studies by Dutch, Antillian and Surinamese authors is more dated and less accessible. Cohen Stuart (1979 and 1985) has produced two general bibliographies on women in the Caribbean through the Royal

Institute. Her work assiduously minds the inclusion of Suriname material, a shortcoming occasionally found in other bibliographies proclaiming a regional focus.² The now defunct STICUSA (the Foundation for the Cultural Cooperation of Suriname and the Antilles - Stichting voor het Culturele Samenwerking Suriname en Antillen) in Amsterdam, contributed an abbreviated, although useful, bibliography in 1972.

The **New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids**, sponsored by the University of Utrecht, is the longest extant Caribbean journal in the world. The English and Spanish languages predominate since the late 1970s and articles on Surinamese history and culture are a source that cannot be ignored. Smoothly crafted bibliographies and review articles of Dutch sources add substantially to our knowledge. Numerous other journals and periodicals, concerning themselves with Suriname, appear in the Netherlands but publish their materials in the Dutch language. Several Dutch sociology journals contain the odd article in English on Suriname but are not easily accessible in the English-speaking world. **Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde**, despite its intimidating name, is the Netherlands' world class anthropology journal and occasionally contains pieces and book reviews on Suriname. The **Mededelingen van het Surinaams Museum (Journal of the Suriname Museum)** in Paramaribo publishes periodically on Suriname history, arts and culture; sometimes in English and always with an English summary.

Itinerario is the journal of the Centre for the History of European Expansion in Leiden and emphasizes European and Dutch colonial history. The publication includes articles, inventories, interviews, news, bibliographies and book reviews in English. **OSO: Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse Taalkunde, Letterkunde en Geschiedenis** is an important journal of Suriname history and letters published in the Netherlands but presents articles in English only rarely. One such occasion (1984) was to celebrate the great student of Suriname society and letters, Jan Voorhoeve. **OSO**, too, regularly presents a listing of recent publications. **Suralco Magazine**, edited by the public relations department of the Suriname Aluminium Company in Paramaribo (a wholly owned subsidiary of Alcoa Aluminium of Pittsburgh), contains very readable articles on nature, history and exotica. Excellent reportage on Suriname can be found in **Caribbean Insight**, **Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report Suriname**, and **Latin American Regional Reports Caribbean Report**, all published in the United Kingdom. The state-controlled Suriname News Agency in Paramaribo produces a monthly **Newsletter** in English. **Caribbean Contact** from Barbados contains highly editorialized coverage of contemporary affairs. **Caribbean Review** and **Hemisphere: A Magazine of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs**, both

published in Miami, contain regular journalistic and scholarly coverage of Suriname--primarily politics.

For this short article Gert Oostindie proved invaluable with his crisp summary of the historiography of the Dutch Caribbean (1987b). Pointing out that no comprehensive historiography of the Dutch Caribbean yet exists, he provides an essential document which places Dutch and Surinamese scholarship in its colonial and post-colonial context. Meilink-Roelofs's (1982) historiographical analysis of Dutch work through the mid-20th century in the Caribbean includes eleven Dutch authors and is frank in its assessment that Dutch scholars paid little attention to their colonial preserve in 'the west' (and is reviewed by R. Price 1984). Buve (1981), Coolhaas and Schutte (1980) and Emmer (1972) have contributed bibliographies useful, especially, to the historian. These should be consulted in conjunction with Roessingh's (1968) guide to sources for the study of Latin American history in the Netherlands, as can Telkamp's (1977) bibliography of European and Dutch expansion. Van Laar (1975) has surveyed the archives of the Netherlands pertaining to the Caribbean as has van Opstall (1977). Koeman (1961 and 1973) has compiled an inventory of map and atlas collections of Suriname available in the Netherlands. An older critical survey of Dutch colonial history is that of Coolhaas (1960). Additional bibliographical and archival sources exist in abundance and remain ready for use by those interested in investing more time and effort in the examination of Suriname. Richard Price's (1976) masterful historical and bibliographical introduction to the Guiana Maroons remains the most insightful and complete reference for the study of Maroon societies. Although clearly oriented for the specialist, the text is basic for students of Maroon life and culture with citations ranging over four centuries of reportage and scholarship. De Groot (1969) has examined official documents as they portray Maroon life while Richard Price has again (1983a) advanced our knowledge of Maroon life by carefully comparing Saramacca Maroon oral traditions with Dutch archival sources.

Rosemary Brana-Shute's (1983) bibliography, in collaboration with Rosmarijn Hoefte, on Caribbean migration contains more than the usual references to Suriname, while Comitas' *Caribbeana* (1977) is thorough, although increasingly dated and rather incomplete for Suriname. Bovenkerk (1974) has produced a useful bibliography on Caribbean return migration which also includes more than the usual number of references to Suriname.

General History

The most readable general study of Suriname history remains van Lier's 1949 (translated and updated 1971) classic, *Frontier Society*. Departing from strict chronology and examining socio-historical 'themes', the book emphasizes the social pathology that arose from slavery and the nature of Suriname's plural, segmented society. Goslinga's (1979) narrative history of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles can be consulted, as can his two (1971 and 1985) massively detailed works on Dutch expansion in the Caribbean. Boxer (1977) places Suriname in the context of Dutch colonial expansion. Richard and Sally Price's (1988) compelling up-dated, edited and annotated version of the famous John Stedman *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition...* (published in 1796) is a contemporary view of an old documentary. De Groot (1980) has provided an English summary to Benoit's 1839 *Voyage a Suriname*, which should be examined if only for the quality of its many colorplates and Bubberman (1983) includes a lengthy English summary of Kappler's *Zes Jaren in Suriname 1836-1842*. Although not a comprehensive history, Hoetink (1972) has broadened the methodological field with his comparison of slave systems and the role of free coloreds in Suriname and Curacao and has had an international impact on Caribbean studies, including of course Suriname, with his major works on race relations (1973 and 1971).

One departure from the rules set down here must be taken. Anton de Kom, a Surinamer, wrote a dramatic book in 1934 entitled *Wij Slaven van Suriname* (We Slaves of Suriname). Not only was it the first contemporary history of Suriname written by a countryman; it also had an indignant and explicitly anti-colonial tone. It has been translated into Spanish (1981), and hence is considerably more accessible. Although lacking in scholarly standards, it is a passionate interpretation of Suriname history and has rallied many young Suriname scholars to take up the study of their own past. De Kom himself has become something of an icon for nationalists and marxists in Suriname.

Histories

The historiography of Suriname, in both the Dutch and English languages and written by a host of Surinamese, American and Dutch scholars has flourished since the early 1970s. Oostindie (1987b) summarizes why Dutch scholars in particular turned their attention to areas other than Suriname and are now 'catching up'. Specific areas drawing attention are the Atlantic slave trade,

plantation-specific studies, slavery, abolition, manumission, marronage and Asian indenture. Much work remains to be done, such as the very early period of Suriname's settlement and the history of the 20th century.

In addition to Emmer's bibliography on the slave trade (1972), van den Boogaart and Emmer (1979) have examined the Dutch role in the Atlantic slave trade, Emmer (1981), the illegal Dutch slave trafficking following abolition of the slave trade, and Emmer (1975) on Dutch slave traffic to Suriname. Postma (1972, 1973, 1975a, 1975b and 1979) has contributed generously to studies of the Atlantic slave trade with works on Dutch participation, as has Unger (1982).

Specific plantation studies are actively underway in the Netherlands with published materials including van den Booghart and Emmer's (1977) analysis of slave life in the last decade before emancipation and Lamur's (1977) examination of slave demography on the plantation of Catharina Sophia. Lamur has contributed further plantation-specific slave demographic studies (1987a, 1987b and 1981a). Boomgaard (1982) relates Dutch archival holdings to plantation studies.

Hoetink (1972) discusses differences in slave systems between Suriname and Curacao and discusses particularly the role of free coloreds. R. Brana-Shute (1985 and 1989) analyses the process of manumission in Suriname during the period 1760 to 1830 and focuses specifically on the role of gender in the process of obtaining individual freedom. Koulen (1973) has surveyed manumission law in a shorter article and Siwpersad (1985) has written on British Guianese abolition and its impact on neighboring Suriname.³ Emmer (1985a) examines the abolitionist movement in the Netherlands, Europe and Suriname.

Richard Price's (1976) bibliography of Suriname Maroons is an assiduously gathered and carefully interpreted view of Maroon history and culture. His comparison of Maroon oral history and official Dutch documents (1983a) is groundbreaking and his collection of Dutch colonial views of the interior wars (1983b) is interesting reading, as is a case study (1979a) of colonial espionage and intrigue. De Groot (1969 and 1977) has documented social change among the Ndjuka Maroons and has compared Maroon communities in Jamaica and Suriname (1986a). De Groot has also described the Boni Maroon wars (1975), provided a case study of Boni Maroon oral history (1981) and, in a later work (1985), described Maroons as "agents of their own emancipation." Lamur (nd) has discussed the Maroon wars from a demographic perspective. An excellent series on Maroon history and culture is published by the University of Utrecht but remains in the Dutch language with Hoogbergen's recently translated book on the 18th century Boni Maroon wars scheduled for publication. Cohen (1982) has edited a selection of historical essays on 18th century Jews in Suriname, including

one by R.A.J. van Lier, and contains, interestingly, insights into 18th century Jewish planters' views of Maroons (reviewed by R. Price 1984).

A great deal of excellent work is being done on the late 19th and early 20th century Asian experience in Suriname. Emmer (1984) summarizes the importation of East Indians to Suriname and (1985) specifically the female East Indian indentured servants. He has also (1987a) compared the East Indian and the Indonesian indentured experience, examined Hindu stereotypes (1986a) and treated indentured labor migration in the context of larger colonial issues (1986b). Hoefte's work on Asians is valuable with a doctoral dissertation (1987a) documenting the transition from slave to free labor on a selected plantation followed by one study of indentured labor resistance (1987b) and female indentured labor (1987c). She (1987d) and Emmer (1987b) have had a lively debate over interpreting the Asian experience. Hoefte (nd) is preparing a book on indentured labor.

Ankum-Houwink (1974) deals with Chinese contract laborers between 1853 and 1870. In a short, but important, piece Buve (1975) examines the mid-17th century Indian wars.

Cultural Sectors and the Pains of Pluralism

Suriname is a highly segmented, plural society and despite the best efforts of nationalist, revisionist and marxist scholars the country remains academically carved up into scholarly chunks and bits. Thunderous criticism of 'divide and conquer' academic imperialism has not resulted in a significant model to grapple with the realities of a country fraught with ethnic and racial cleavage. The brief literature sketch which follows employs the operative categories that are implicit, and most often explicit, in the minds of virtually all Surinamers and the scholars who study them. Mitrasing (1981) discusses the country as a plural society and provides a chapter for each of the 'seven peoples' of Suriname.

Academic coverage of American Indians remains spare and incomplete. Nagelkerke's (1977) bibliography deals specifically with American Indians. Kloos (1971) provides a carefully documented monograph on coastal Carib life and in a later publication (1977a) a brief report on the hunting and gathering Akuriyo Indians. Additional citations of his appear below in Religion. Magana (1986) has discussed Indian cosmology, as have Jara and Magana (1983), and Magana and Jara (1983). Riviere's (1969) work on Trio social organization remains basic and is supplemented by two (1981 and 1966) short reports. Koelwijn and Riviere

(1987) have written on Trio oral literature. Derveld (1976) described Arawak-Carib social interaction and de Boer (1970) reports on 'stone age' Indians. Counter and Evans (1981) touch upon Maroon-American Indian interaction. Versteeg (1983) has summarized archeological investigations of American Indians.

Maroon, or Bush Negro, societies in Suriname have been the object of scholarly, journalistic and sensationalist attention for hundreds of years. For an introduction to the literature, through the mid-1970s, see R. Price (1976). Melville and Francis Herskovits (1934) sparked interest for many with their readable, although superficial, documentary. Recent academic treatment has been generally first rate in description and theory with the way led by, among others, H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen, Wilhemina van Wetering, Richard and Sally Price, Andre Kobben and Silvia de Groot. R. Price (1975) has written a spare and concise description of Saramaka social organization and placed Suriname Maroons in the context of New World Marronage (1979b). His *First Time* (1983a) is a carefully constructed comparison of Maroon oral history and Dutch archival sources which can be read in conjunction with his work on Dutch colonial military perspectives (1983b) of the guerrilla wars of the 18th century. Sally Price (1984) has contributed a smashing gender study relating the status of females to marriage patterns and Maroon definitions of art, two shorter pieces on marriage and sexism (1983a and 1983b) and, with Richard Price (1980a), an illustrated analysis of Maroon art. Hurault's (1970) work on Maroon social organization, material culture and art, in French, is nicely illustrated with line drawings and photographs. Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (1988) have, in a masterpiece, examined the relation between cults, myths and everyday Maroon life by employing a symbolic model mixing perspectives of Marx, Freud and Weber. Additional citations by the Prices, Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering appear below. Kobben's substantial pre-mid 1970s work (contained in R. Price 1976) has been added to (1976) with a discussion of Maroon participation in national political life. Numerous doctoral dissertations explore Maroon life and, recent ones, include de Beet and Sterman (1981) on the Matawai Maroons and Givens (1984) and Bilby (1989a) on the Aluku (or Boni). Green (1977) has added an article on Matawai kinship to his earlier dissertation. De Groot's (1969 and 1977) two monographs are primarily historical coverages of Ndjuka society while articles compare Suriname and Jamaica Maroons (1986a), Maroon resistance (1985), the 18th century Boni wars (1975), and 18th century oral history (1981). Franszoon has described relocation villages in Saramaka (1976) and the current Maroon insurgency against the coastal government (1988 and 1989).

Academic treatments of coastal and urban Creoles have not been as complete. Perhaps Melville and Francis Herskovits (1936) initiated English-speakers' interest in Paramaribo with their narrative on Suriname folklore and

Creole urban life. Buschkens (1974) placed the Suriname version of the 'matrifocal family' in an historical context and examined transformations and continuities through four time periods. Pierce's (1971) doctoral dissertation is a formal analysis of Creole kinship and subsequent articles have dealt with notions of reputation and respectability (1973), the Creole family in historical context (1977) and Creole concepts of ethnicity (1976). Wooding's (1981) work on rural Creole social organization and religion remains unrivaled. Rosemary Brana-Shute (1982 and 1976) has discussed Creole women's voluntary association and national politics. Gary Brana-Shute has provided urban ethnography on male leisure time organization (1989c, 1979 and 1976a), woman police officers and juvenile delinquency (1982), and youth in Suriname (1978). Additional citations appear below.

Studies of contemporary East Indians (called in Suriname 'Hindustani' whether they are Hindus or Moslims) are sparse in the extreme with Speckmann (1967, 1965 and 1963) providing the only readily available material. Hira's (1987a and 1987b) work is more historical but complements Speckmann. Van der Burg and van der Veer (1986) discuss power relations within the Hindu East Indian group. Several specific articles deal with the arts and religion and are included below.

The Javanese population of Suriname has been dealt with by de Waal Malefijt in a monograph (1963), an article on religion (1971), a discussion of kinship patterns and respect (1978a) and traditional folklore (1978b). Superlan (1976) and van Wengen (1975) promote a more cultural 'survival' perspective. Other ethnic groups have received negligible attention. De Bruijne (1979) has discussed the economic position of Lebanese Christians in Suriname, Ankum-Houwink (1974) the situation of Chinese contract laborers in the late 19th century, and de Jong (1974) the ambiguous social position of 'Boers', the descendants of 19th century Dutch farmers (not 'planters'). Cohen (1982) contains chapters on the nearly defunct Jewish population of Suriname.

Religion

A multiplicity of religious belief systems thrive in Suriname. Some were brought by European missionaries and, through their efforts, enjoyed varying degrees of success in grafting onto the fabric of Suriname life. Other religions were brought by the migrants themselves and maintained with a great degree of fidelity to the present. Yet others belong to the autochthonous populations and

still others emerged, grew and flourished in Suriname itself following the importation of their believers.

Traditional American Indian religion, for all the groups residing in Suriname, revolves around animism; a cosmology of spirits and ancestral ghosts articulated with the living through a part-time specialist shaman (**Piai**). Spirits function regularly in the causation and curing of spiritual and physical illness and the shaman resolves such afflictions through ritual intervention. American Indians possess a rich and complex, highly abstract, philosophy defining reality and the shape of the world in which they live. Coastal Indians have been influenced highly by Roman Catholic missionaries while Indians in the interior were approached by Protestant groups. Kloos (1971) provides an overview of Carib beliefs, and specific information on Arkoerio funerary rituals (1977b), female initiation rites (1969), Carib shamanism (1968) and Carib health beliefs (1970). Riviere (1969) examines Trio marriage ceremonies and social organization. Magana and Jara (1983) explore Carib mythology.

The Creole religion, **Winti**, has been commented on, denounced, ridiculed, and, more lately, studied by scores of observers. It is noteworthy that many Creoles simultaneously practice a Christian religion while maintaining a pure, undiluted belief in **Winti**, a religion that revolves around a pantheon of spirits and ghosts who intervene into the matters of daily life and must be propitiated, often while ritual participants are in trance. Specialists, known generally as 'obiaman', include diagnosticians (**loekoeman**), therapists (**bonoeman**) and sorcerers (**wisiman**).⁴ Wooding (1981) has written the most complete overview of the components of the religion and lists in detail spirit entities and ceremonial procedures and provides a summary in a shorter work (1972). R. Brana-Shute and G. Brana-Shute (1979) describe funeral procedures in detail and G. Brana-Shute has described spiritual conflict resolution (1976b and 1979). Wooding (1983) has commented on 'voodoo death', Voorhoeve (1983) on the general influence wielded by **obiaman**, and Voorhoeve and van Renselaar (1962), in a very important paper, point out the link between millenarian cults and nationalism and the development of Suriname's changing political economy. Herskovits and Herskovits (1936) wrote the ground-breaking classic on Paramaribo Creole life and spend a good deal of time describing portions of **Winti** belief in the context of Suriname folklore. Simpson's (1978) formal analysis places Creole and Maroon religions in a regional context, as does the work of Bastide (1972). Van Wetering (1988) has analyzed **Winti** as it functions in the Netherlands.

Maroon religion shares, in the main, the major features of Creole **Winti** beliefs although many observers constantly refer to the 'deeper' (i.e., more

African') components of Maroon spirituality. Ritual life for Maroons functions as a centerpiece of community and knits together dispersed clan members through life crisis rites, oracular divination, and shrines. R. Price's bibliography (1976, 63) serves as the starting point for exploration and includes also a summary of missionary activity in Maroon societies. Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (1988) have produced a superbly documented tome, ambitious in scope and detailed in description, of Maroon religious cults and beliefs and how such beliefs are translated into social action. Van Wetering (1973) has written on witchcraft among the up-river Ndjuka, R. Price (1973) has analyzed avenging spirits and lineage structure, Vernon (1980) deals with spirit possession and witchcraft and Lenoir (1973) has examined religious acculturation. Thoden van Velzen (1977) has systematically uncovered the development of Maroon cults by analyzing the emergence of regional cults, the origins of rival cult movements (1978), and with van Wetering (1975), the politics of prophetic movements, female religious responses to increased male prosperity (1982) and deprivation theory and religious change (1983). De Beet and Thoden van Velzen (1977) offer a study of Maroon participation in the gold industry and its relevance for the emergence of new religious cults. De Groot (1986b) has examined the role of women as priests and mediums.

Christian denominations have been active in Suriname both as an exclusively white preserve and, later, in active missionary efforts. A small Labadist community was established in the late 17th century (Knappert 1982). The Moravian Church began missionary work in 1735 and numbers most of its followers among lower- and middle-class Creoles although initially having worked with American Indians. There is active missionary work among American Indians, Maroons, East Indians, Javanese and Chinese. Some 56,000 Surinamers are Moravians. De Ziel (1973) has written of the Prophet Johannes King among the Matawai Maroons and R. Price (1987) has reviewed Moravian activity in the Caribbean, with some reference to Suriname. Lichtveld (1968) has chronicled the missionizing and business interests of the Moravian church in Suriname in a difficult to locate but essential study.

The Lutheran Church is still active and for bits on Suriname see Beatty (1970). The (Dutch) Reformed Church (established in 1667 as the 'colonists' church'), Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Baptist Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Jehovah's Witness Church, and Pentecostal Church, among a variety of smaller evangelical sects thrive primarily, although not exclusively, among Creoles. Membership in these Protestant churches numbers about 22,000. The Roman Catholic Church was given permission in 1785 to establish a congregation and, in addition to its numerous sodalities, schools and public assistance programs, numbers some 80,000 believers (primarily

Creoles). The Protestant and Catholic Churches all, to some degree, participate in the Christian Church Committee (**Comite Christelijke Kerken**).

The historical Jewish community had a huge and enduring impact on Suriname history and culture and in size and impact was virtually unique in the Americas. Van Lier (1971) devotes an entire chapter of his classic to the Jews in Suriname and Cohen (1982) examines various elements of Jewish community. David de Ishak Cohen Nassy and 'the Jewish Gentlemen's' carefully written description of 18th century Jewish life and culture has been recently edited and put into English translation (1974). A 'Hebrew Nation' existed in Suriname before the Dutch conquest in 1667. Both Sephardic and Ashkenazian groups were present and had separate temples. Their numbers have dwindled radically and today there is barely a Jewish community to speak of. In the late 18th and 19th centuries many 'free people of color' and, later, Creoles were Jews.

Islam is practiced by all of the Javanese in Suriname and a portion of the East Indian ethnic group (the majority of East Indians follow Hinduism). All believers in Islam in Suriname are Sunni Moslems, with the Javanese Moslems following the Shafi'ite school of orthodoxy and the East Indians the Hanifite school. Finer degrees of interpretation of doctrine have resulted in several reformed groups cross-cutting the two larger schools. Javanese Islam centers primarily around the 'slametan' (ritual feasts) and propitiation of spirits, more than the full execution of formal Islamic doctrine. This is similar to Geertz's (1960) findings in Java and is discussed by de Waal Malefijt (1971). About 70,000 Surinamers follow Islam of one sort or another.

Perhaps in excess of 80 percent of the East Indians follow Hinduism. Form of beliefs vary with unlettered East Indians practicing a 'primitive' Hinduism centering on spirits and lower gods, a 'popular' Hinduism, followed by many true believers, and a 'philosophical' variant. Cross-cutting these informal varieties of expression are the orthodox Sanatan Dharm and the newer, reformist Arya Samaj, with the latter numbering some 17 percent of the Hindu believers. Nearly 100,000 Surinamers practice Hinduism. For some discussion of Hinduism see Speckmann (1965 and 1967) and for a description of a Hindu wedding, van Wengen and Woerlee (1981).

Language

The ethnic segmentation of Suriname's population has a linguistic component as well and the many different languages spoken in Suriname enjoy varying degrees of scholarly and technical attention. Grimes (1972) presents a linguistic overview. Sranan Tongo,⁵ the mother tongue for many coastal Creoles and the 'lingua franca' of Suriname has perhaps received the most attention. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld (1975) place Sranan Tongo in its cultural expressive context, discuss the language's origin(s), and transcribe Sranan Tongo texts (poems and stories) with sensitive English translations. Taylor (1977) places Sranan Tongo in a regional context of Creole languages, though his essay spends more time on Maroon languages, particularly Saramaccan. Several Creole language wordlists are included. Price's bibliography includes an essay on linguistic studies (1976, 60-2) and, referring in the main to Saramaccan, also discusses Sranan Tongo. An older narrative work by Rens (1953) can be read quickly. A special edition of *OSO* in Dutch (1987) on the 'politics of language' is reviewed by Hoefte (1988: 93-4). Alleyne (1985 and 1980) employs examples of Sranan Tongo material in his comparative study of Afro-American languages. N.S.H. Smith's (1987) dissertation provides a general discussion of origins for all the Creole languages spoken in Suriname, and Sebba (1987) addresses Sranan Tongo verb serialization. Nickel and Wilner (1984) edited a collection of papers especially on Sranan Tongo for *Languages of the Guianas* while a volume of *Amsterdam Creole Studies* (Muysken and Smith, 1984) specifically analyzes both Caribbean Creole and Maroon languages. Other issues of *Amsterdam Creole Studies*, beginning with Volume 1 (1977) to the present Volume 9 (1986) regularly contain materials in English appropriate to the study of Sranan Tongo. A special English language edition of *OSO* (1984:3.1) includes five essays on Sranan Tongo, one on Saramaccan, several on other Creoles, and two interesting articles on Maroon culture and society. Sranan Tongo, long scorned as a 'childish babble' and an inferior language by Suriname's Euro-oriented elite was, beginning in the 1940s, passionately defended by Surinamese writers and nationalists (see Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975). Voorhoeve (1971a) has examined varieties of Church-oriented and 'pagan' Creoles in Suriname and the delicacies of reading Creole poetry (1971b). Voorhoeve's scholarship is extensive, technical as well as artistic, and is commented on by Elias (1984) in the English language *OSO* with a bibliography summarizing his immense contributions. Kramp (1983) discusses early Sranan Tongo lexicography and examines an 18th century dictionary text. A recent paper by Harris (1985) uncovers the unusual defense of the language by a European in the 1830s, while Richard and Sally Price's (1988) superb new edition of John Stedman's *Narrative* elucidates an 18th century soldier's reaction to and use of Sranan Tongo. The handiest contemporary Sranan Tongo-Dutch-English dictionary/wordlist has been produced by the Stichting Volkslectuur

(1980) in Paramaribo and can be examined along with Voorhoeve and Donicie's (1963) now dated but important bibliography in French of 'negro-anglais.'

Of the Maroon creole languages, Saramaccan has received the most attention. Price's bibliographic essay summarizes studies to the mid-1970s as do several of the other sources mentioned above. Alleyne (1987) has edited a volume containing seven articles on Saramaccan structure, pronunciation, and verb formation. Huttar (1985) consistently produces excellent work, as in his discussion of Ndjuka. Bilby (1983) thoroughly compares 'deep' Jamaican Creole with Creoles from Suriname and Sierra Leone. Saramaccan, Matawai and Kwinti (which form one general Saramaccan language group) are spoken by the three Maroon groups of western Suriname, while Ndjuka, Paramaccan and Aluku (which form a general Ndjuka group) are spoken in the east. A Ndjuka-based trade language or patois is used between the Ndjuka and Trio and Wayana Indians.

Sarnami Hindustani is a Hindi dialect and is spoken overall by East Indians in Suriname. Sarnami Hindustani is a derivative of two larger Hindi dialects: Avadhi (itself a dialect of Purvi-Hindi) and Bhojpuri (a dialect of Bihari). In Suriname, the language has incorporated elements of both Sranan Tongo and Suriname Dutch, as well as a bit of English. There is very little on Sarnami Hindustani in English save for Damsteegt (1988). Hoefte (1988, 94) reviews the current Dutch language literature on Sarnami Hindustani as does Oostindie (1987a, 128 and 1986a, 108).

The language of the Javanese of Suriname is properly called Surinaams-Javaans in distinction from the varieties of the Javanese language spoken in Indonesia. Numerous loan words are used from Sranan Tongo, Dutch, and Bahasa Indonesia.⁶ There is little accessible on Surinaams-Javaans in English, although Superlan (1976) makes some reference to sociolinguistic behavior.

Dutch is the official language of Suriname and is the mother tongue of some Creoles, generally those from higher social circles. It is properly called Surinaams-Nederlands and is itself not a homogeneous dialect but rather a continuum from standard Dutch including local Surinaams-Nederlands vocabulary, to a 'deep' Surinaams-Nederlands which includes significant lexical and grammatical distinctions. Sranan Tongo words and sentence fragments are regularly incorporated into Surinaams-Nederlands and vice versa. Eersel (1971) has discussed the relative social prestige of standard Dutch, Surinaams-Nederlands and Sranan Tongo.

Five American Indian languages are spoken in Suriname. Arawak and Carib are spoken along the coast while Wajana, Trio and Akoerio are spoken in

a relatively small area in the interior. Taylor (1977) places Arawak and Carib in the larger context of West Indian languages and compares Suriname Arawak with island Carib (1962). American Indian languages of Suriname and the adjacent 'Guianas' are explored in Grimes (1972) and Hoff (1968 and 1955). A Kalihna- (Karina or 'true' Carib) Dutch dictionary is being prepared in Suriname by Aloema et. al. (nd).

Chinese dialects are spoken in Suriname and include (varieties of) Hakka, Pundhi, and Mandarin.⁷ Some idea of Chinese linguistic behavior can be gleaned from Mitrasing (1981). Older persons of Syrian descent speak Arabic while younger persons, born in Suriname, speak Dutch and, of course, Sranan Tongo. Guyanese English and a version of Sranan Tongo highly penetrated by English is spoken in the coastal border area adjacent to Guyana. Languages spoken by the once large Sephardic and Ashkenazian Jewish communities (Portuguese, Hebrew and German) have disappeared (see Cohen, 1982 and van Lier, 1971).

Literature and the Arts

What follows are but a few scraps of husk in an attempt to introduce the rich and abundant flowering of Suriname arts and literature. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld's (1975) **Creole Drum** leads the way as an introduction to Suriname Creole and colonial letters and, in addition to descriptive essays, includes prose, poetry, and musical verse in the original Sranan Tongo or Dutch accompanied by sensitive translations. Sally and Richard Price's (1980a) marvelous **Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rainforest** describes Maroon material and spiritual art forms and is illustrated with prints and color photographs that are crisp and beautiful. In addition, Sally and Richard Price (1980b) have written a sobering essay on art as commodity. Richard Price's bibliographic essay (1976, 63-69) explores Maroon art forms in depth, compiling literature (such as that of Hurault) through the 1970s. Richard and Sally Price (1979) also summarize John Stedman's 18th century collection of Maroon artifacts, while Whitehead (1986) has done the same for Stedman's American Indian collection. Sally Price (1982) sorts out confusion in calabash nomenclature and their relation to domestic arts. Richard and Sally Price (1977) have also produced a record of Saramaka music and Richard Price (1970) has described woodcarving. Melville and Francis Herskovits (1936) recount the folklore, music and costumes of Paramaribo Creoles. Van Putten and Zantinge (1988) trace the historical development of female **kotomisi** Creole clothing and their distinctive headgear, the **anisa**, with photographs and an English summary. Mintz and Price (1976) examine the process of 'creoliza-

tion' and contribute a sensitive understanding that goes beyond the mechanical categories of 'syncretization', 'survivals', and 'reinterpretations' and which allows us to conceptualize emergent art and ritual forms more clearly. Examples from Suriname are included.

Koelewijn and Riviere (1987) have compiled excerpts of oral literature of the Trio Indians, while Boomert (1975) has added some photo-journalism on 'Indian' art in *Suralco Magazine*, which regularly contains short photo essays on material culture. Dubelaar (1986), in an archeological treatise, inventories petroglyphs of the Guianas, Brazil and Venezuela. Arya (1968) describes folksongs among the Hindustani East Indians.

Voorhoeve and Lichtveld's examination of Suriname arts and letters can be coupled with the extensive *Caribbean Writers*, an encyclopedia edited by Herdeck and associates (1979). Containing the biographies and bibliographies of 29 Suriname writers, Richard Price reports in a review article (1982, 84) that: "...I can think of no better single entree into the world of Caribbean literature or literary personalities."

Dobru (Robin Ravales) (1971 and 1972), the Creole nationalist poet has written widely in English and until his recent death was a spokesman for the 'new Suriname man'. A slice of Albert Helman's (Lou Lichtveld) work has been evaluated by van Neck Yoder (1988). In the special English issue of *OSO* is an essay by February (1984) on the Surinamese writer Edgar Cairo.⁸

Suriname theater and music are alive and well in both Suriname and the Netherlands but are described primarily in the Dutch language: two prominent personalities being Thea Doelwijt and Henk Tjon. Bilby (1985, 192-4) has several observations on Creole and Maroon music in the larger context of Afro-Caribbean musical expression.

Politics

Edward Dew has chronicled the modern political history of Suriname in highly readable prose employing the cross-ethnic, power-sharing 'consociationalist' model first developed by Arend Lijphart (1969) in the 1960s. His major work (1978) details domestic politics and alliance formation to the mid-1970s, while journal articles capture the essence of pivotal political events, such as elections, the impact of politics on emigration, and general theoretical considerations (see

his 1978 bibliography). Rosemary Brana-Shute (1982 and 1976) examines female Creole political participation in the context of grass roots social organization. Gastman's (1968) older work is useful and compares Suriname with the Netherlands Antilles. Breman (1976) describes the continuity of political form during the transition from member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to independence. Peter Meel (1990) has written on the politics of development aid.

The Revolution

Suriname attracted widespread North American attention following the country's unexpected coup d'état in 1980, infamous political murders in 1982, Maroon insurgency in 1986 and proclaimed return to democracy in 1987. Chin and Buddingh' (1987) have written the only comprehensive summary of events of the turbulent 1980s. Edward Dew has provided the most consistent coverage of political events following the coup with his annual chapter contributions to *Latin American and Caribbean Contemporary Record* (1988-3a) and lively contributions to *Caribbean Review* (1983b, 1983c and 1980). Gary Brana-Shute (1990, 1989a, 1989b, 1987a, 1986, and 1981) has offered periodic coverage of social and political events as well as an examination of the role of magic in politics (1987b and 1990). Macdonald (1988) relates internal events to global politics. Sedoc-Dahlberg (1986) has begun to publish her abundant material on interest group formation and has edited (1989) an important contribution. Hira (1983) provides us with a class analysis of the political struggle in Suriname. Publications by Amnesty International (1987) and the Organization of American States (1987) concern the status of human rights, while the U.S. Committee for Refugees (1987) examines the conditions of Maroon refugees residing in French Guiana. Bilby (1989b) adds impressively with a discussion of music, politics and warfare, while Gary Brana-Shute (1987b) has suggested supernatural underpinnings of the recent insurgency. Franzoon (1988 and 1989) advances the Maroon view of the fighting and Gary Brana-Shute (1990) applies cross cultural insurgency models to the war.

International Affairs

Thompson (1985) has examined the historical background of the Suriname-Guyana border dispute, while the Institute of Economic and Social Research report (1983) of the Anton de Kom University of Suriname deals with, in part, the economic and migration connections between the two countries. Gary Brana-Shute (1989b) documents U.S.-Suriname relations following the coup and MacDonald (1988) places Suriname politics in a global context. Meel (1990) concentrates on relations with the 'mother country' and follows the tortured negotiations surrounding the foreign aid package provided at independence and withdrawn in 1982. Ashby (1987), formerly with the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC, pronounces on geo-politics and Cuban, Soviet, and (revolutionary) Grenadian footholds during Suriname's 'swing to the left' in the early 1980s. The reader should be warned that his material on Suriname is riddled with errors. More recently, Heine and Manigot (1988) place Suriname in a regional geo-political context, as does Sunshine (1988).

Economics

Chin and Buddingh' (1987) summarize the modern Suriname economy following the coup 'd'etat. Chin (1986) argues that the country's bauxite dependent economy requires massive restructuring. Mhango (1984) analyzes the modern economy with a dependency model and offers policy suggestions. Carlo Lamur (1985) details the American take-over of the bauxite sector by Alcoa Aluminium Company in Suriname and Guyana in the early twentieth century. In a short article, Franke (1971) explores the economic organization of a Creole village in the Para district. The U.S. Department of Commerce (1986), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy-Paramaribo, distributes a periodic economic summary and evaluation of the country's performance. Matthews (1966) and Wilgus (1958) contain dated chapters on political economy. It is noteworthy that even in the Dutch language neither Suriname nor Dutch scholars, except for a number of technical or highly specific reports, have produced nearly the volume of material that one finds for the larger English-speaking territories of the Caribbean.

Agriculture

Two modern case studies, Luning and Sital (1979) and van Huis (1979), discuss small-holder rice farming and modern marketing techniques. Two outdated but comprehensive overviews are Panday (1959) and Adhin (1961), with the latter placing agriculture in the context of development planning. Much of the 18th and 19th century literature on Suriname concerns, not surprisingly, plantation agriculture (R. Brana-Shute 1985). Agricultural science material on parasites, rice borers and the like is totally omitted here.

Demography

Humphrey Lamur (1973) compiled the historical and contemporary demography of Suriname in broad strokes before turning to more precise micro-studies. His subsequent work has examined fertility differentials of selected slave populations (1987a and 1981a), the plantations of Vossenburg (1987b) and Catharina Sophia (1977) and Maroon wars and population policy during slavery (nd). Also, he has contributed the demography of unemployment (1981b), a note on fertility differentials by social class (1986) and, with Speckmann (1978), of migration to Europe. Boldewijn, H. Lamur and R. Lamur (1977) tabulate life expectancies in the 1960s and 1970s. Postma (1979) has written on Dutch slave trade mortality, while de Beet and Sterman (1978) have done a detailed study of migration and nutrition factors affecting Matawai Maroon fertility. Anke Dew (1975) contributed a Master's thesis on Hindustani fertility.

Geography and Cartography

An atlas by OAS (1988) is unrivaled for its ethnographic and geographic accuracy. Koeman's (1973) wonderful collection of historical and contemporary map replicas, accompanied by explanatory essays is a treasure to behold. In the early 1980s internal political district boundaries were redrawn and a new Map of Suriname produced (1986). The map contains several inaccuracies: placing a lake complex where one does not yet exist and not denoting border disputes with Guyana and French Guiana. Numerous important (Maroon and Amerindian) settlements in the interior are ignored while relatively obscure coastal features, such a small bridge, dominate the presentation. De Bruijne (1971) places Suriname in the regional geography of South America. His very useful urban

geography (1976) remains untranslated. No significant geographical material exists for the English-speaking audience.

Migration and Surinamers Abroad

The increased migration of Surinamers to the metropole beginning in the late 1960s and their involvement in or rejection by Dutch society has spawned a large body of scholarship which examines both the push factors operating in Suriname and the living conditions of Surinamers in the Netherlands. Cross and Entzinger's (1988) brand new **Lost Illusions** contains important chapters on the Suriname presence in the Netherlands and the subsequent struggle for accommodation between tropical and northern European inhabitants. Marks and Vessuri's (1983) recent volume discusses white collar migrant labor from the Caribbean and Suriname, while Lamur and Speckmann's (1978) volume contains an important chapter by Biervliet on the 'hustler' sub-culture of young, unemployed Surinamers. Biervliet has also contributed a broader summation (1981) on the general situation of Surinamers in the Netherlands and Amersfoort (1987) has commented on the Dutch as 'reluctant hosts'. Bovenkerk has produced, in addition to his bibliography, a steady stream of work which includes the changing class composition of migrants (1982a) and the fallacy of return migrants as agents of change (1982b). Van Wetering's anthropological investigations of Creole community in the Netherlands have yielded papers on religion and social organization (1987) and ceremonial rites of intensification (1988). Oostindie's chapter contained here is but a summary of his very informative larger work in Dutch.⁹ The Anton de Kom University of Suriname, through its Institute of Economic and Social Research, has published the results of a project examining the impact of out-migration on various sectors of Suriname society and economy (1983). Among its useful contributions is a chapter on Guyanese migration to Suriname. For added information, R. Brana-Shute and Hoefte (1983) can be consulted.

Crime

Binda's (1980) interesting examination of homicides committed by women and Leerschool's (1980) summary of traditional Maroon law and modern crime are all that really exist.

Miscellaneous

Suriname's urban and rural architecture can be examined in a book of wonderful photographs (with Dutch text but English capsule summaries) in Temminck Groll et. al. (1973) and Volders (1966). Wood (1973) has described efforts to save wildlife before the artificial lake (to produce electrical power) was flooded in the mid 1960s. Plotkin (1988) has also addressed ethnobotany and conservation issues.

Adventure stories, rather in the 'white men in the jungle' and 'heart of darkness' genre, are available. Nicol Smith's (1941) **Bush Master** and Davis's (1952) **The Jungle and the Damned** are real potboilers.¹⁰ Hiss' (1943) travelogue is worth a look if only for the photographs, as is van de Poll (1951). Degrouchy and McGee's (1985) account of turn-of-the-century American goldmining along the Marowijne River is worth reading.

NOTES

1. Suriname is regularly spelled in English as Surinam. However, as Suriname is what the country calls itself, we should too.
2. See Richard Price's 1982 review of Nagelkerke's and Cohen-Stuart's bibliographies.
3. Two as yet untranslated books by Suriname writers deserve mention as they deal with an overall assesment of slavery and resistance. A.M. Essed's **De Binnenlandse Oorlog in Suriname, 1613-1973** (The Interior War in Suriname, 1613-1793) (Paramaribo: University of Suriname, 1984) and Sandew Hira's **Van Priary tot en met De Kom** (From Priary [an Indian resistance leader] to de Kom [a nationalist of the 1930s]) (Rotterdam: Futile, 1982) demonstrate a growing body of literature by Surinamers. Ben Scholtens, who works in Suriname, has written **Suriname Tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog** (Suriname During the Second World War) (Paramaribo: Anton de Kom Universiteit van Suriname, 1985).

4. R.A.J. van Lier's short book **Bonuman: Een Studie van Zeven Religieuze Specialisten in Suriname** (Leiden: Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, 1983) is reviewed by G. Brana-Shute (1985).
5. One still occasionally hears Sranan Tongo referred to as 'taki-taki' or 'Negro English' (**Neger-Engels**). These terms are demeaning and inaccurate.
6. Hein D. Vrugink, "Het Surinaams Javaans: Een Introductie." **OSO**, 4.1(1985):53-62.
7. Helen Chang, Hein Eersel and William Man A Hing, "De Hakka's van Suriname. Aspecten van het Verbale Systeem van hun Taal." **OSO** 7.1(1988):77-96.
8. To mention only a few of Suriname's talented writers working in their own language one would have to include Rudi Kross, A. Pakosie, Thea Doelwijt, Cynthia McLeod, Jit Narain, Frank Martinus (from the Netherlands Antilles), Astrid Roemer, Shrinivasi (Martinus Lutchman), Albert Helman, Bea Vianen, Jozef Slagveer, Michael Slory (Asjantenoe Sangodare), Eddy Bruma, Rappa (R.J. Parabirsing), Corly Verloogen and Trefossa (Henry de Ziel). Nola Hatterman inspired painting in Suriname and trained many young artists such as Jules Chin A Foeng. Cabarets and stage plays are regularly presented in Paramaribo and records of popular music are available for local purchase.
9. Gert Oostindie and Emy Maduro, **In het Land van de Overheerser. Antillianen en Surinamers in Nederland, 1634/1667-1954** (Dordrecht: Foris Publications) is reviewed by Blakely (1987).
10. See R. Price, 1976, p. 43 for a larger listing. A variety of material on the flora and fauna of Suriname exists but is not covered here.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF THE SURINAME MAROONS

WIM HOOGBERGEN

The control of the slave contingent has always been the main problem of American plantation societies.¹ The miserable living conditions of the slaves caused frequent rebellion, strikes, suicide, sabotage and slow-down actions. Marronage, however, was the most successful form of protest. Throughout plantation America slaves tried to put an end to their bondage by escaping. Price (1973) illustrates how wide-spread a phenomenon marronage was in the New World. From the first shipload of Negroes that arrived in America in 1501, slaves managed to escape and flee to their freedom. Maroon communities were formed in Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Brazil (the famous Palmares), Jamaica and the Guianas. Most of these Maroon communities have disappeared through the years: they were killed, died out or assimilated into a larger national community. The Maroon societies in Jamaica and Suriname have survived until today. The present article gives a brief outline of the history of the Suriname Maroons from the very first Maroon communities which were formed around 1700 until the abolition of slavery in 1863.

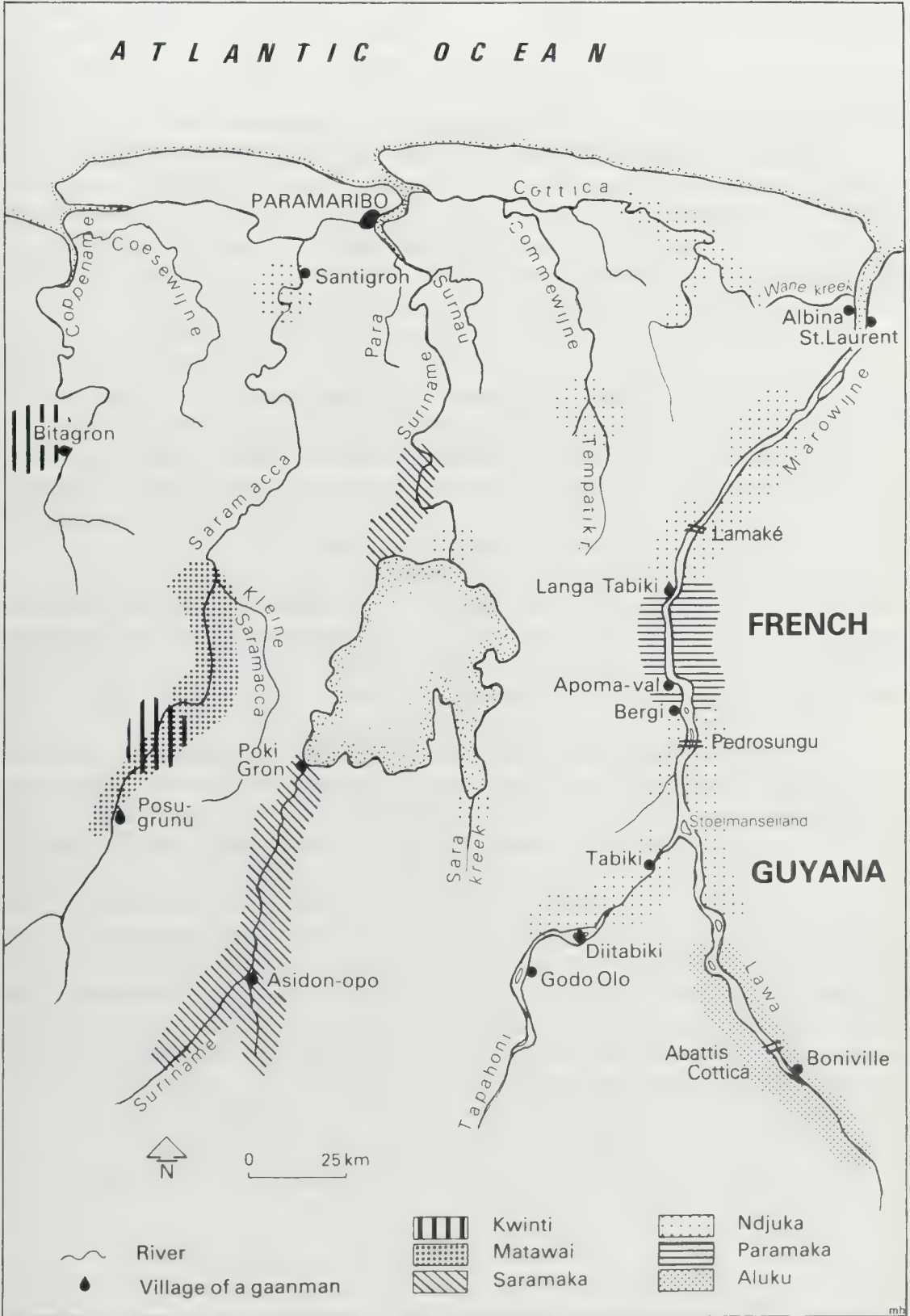
Suriname is inhabited by approximately 50,000 Maroons. For a long time they remained, relatively isolated, in the interior where they had their villages above the impassable waterfalls. Over the past 25 years, however, they have increasingly emigrated to the coastal area with the consequence that the region of metropolitan Paramaribo presently accommodates about 15,000 Maroons. Some 5,000 have even moved farther and settled in the former mother-country of the colony, The Netherlands. About 3,000 to 5,000 Maroons currently reside permanently in French Guiana.²

This total of about 60,000 Maroons is spread over six tribes which, in spite of the fact that they were formed under the same historical and ecological conditions, show considerable differences in the areas of language, religion, marriage patterns, art forms and the degree of dependence on the economy of the coastal area. All tribes have a similar political structure and agricultural system. The Saramaka and the Ndjuka are the largest tribes, consisting of 25,000 people each. The Matawai, the Paramaka and the Aluku comprise about 2,500 members, while the Kwinti, the smallest tribe, is composed of no more than 500 members. The present settlements of the Surinamese Maroons are represented on map 2.

The main political and ideological unity of the Surinamese Maroons is the matrilineage, which they call *lo*.³ All members of a clan can trace their origins back to one common ancestor. Each clan is entitled to certain plots of land. An important factor of solidarity within the clan is the collective possession of a *kunu* (avenging spirit). A *kunu* appears whenever a person is blamed for the death or malignment of someone from another clan. This does not necessarily mean murder. The Maroons have a wide variety of culpable homicides. The *kunu* of the victim may take revenge on all matrilineal relatives for generations to come. This concern about an avenging *kunu* functions to draw the members of the clan closer to each other.

The clans are divided into matrilineages (*bee*). Each lineage can be subdivided into several matrilineages. The kinship relations in matrilineal societies are usually determined by other factors as well. Bilateral consanguinal groups (*famii*) play an important role in the Maroon culture (Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering 1988:XII). Most of the villages are inhabited by members of one and the same clan. The most important political functionaries of a village are the *kabiten* (headmen) and most villages have two or three *kabiten*. The clan-chief is also called *kabite*? although the word is then often combined with the adjective *pau* (baton), the beautiful silver-clasped stick which all the clan-chiefs received from the Dutch during colonial time. The Ndjuka have fourteen *lo*, the Saramaka twelve, the Matawai four, the Paramaka four, the Aluku seven and the Kwinti two. The leader of each tribe is called the *gaanman* (paramount chief). His political office is hereditary via the matrilineal line: in principle, the paramount chief is succeeded by the eldest son of his eldest sister. But, as both qualifications and power play an important role as well, succession is not a foregone conclusion. The chiefs are assisted by a council of elders who are thoroughly consulted whenever important decisions must be taken.

MAP TWO: General Distribution of the Maroons in Suriname



Maroons possess a fully-developed Afro-Surinamese religion. The central figure is **Nana**, the God of Creation, who rules a complex cosmology consisting of four pantheons: **Yooka** (the ancestors), **Voodoo** (the Serpent Spirits), **Kumanti** (the Sky Spirits) and **Ampuku** (the Bush Spirits). All villages have ancestor shrines and most of them have separate shrines for the spirits of the other pantheons as well. Numerous deities appear in the pantheons. They are believed to be powerful and immortal but very few of them are considered omniscient or omnipresent. Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering (1988:31-49) make a distinction between higher and lower gods. The higher gods adopt a positive and protective attitude towards human beings as long as the latter do not violate or disregard divine laws. The majority of the lower gods are less reliable and most of them can willfully take possession of human beings.

Afro-Surinamese religion manifests itself particularly in times of crisis, such as illness and distress. An obeahman is then called in for medical or spiritual help. He detects, evokes and, insofar as he is able to, exorcises the malignant spirits. The spirits inform the obeahman which errors were committed by the patient in question and whether there was any **wisi** (black magic) involved. The religion of the Maroons also attaches great importance to rituals honoring the deceased. In addition, only few members of the Ndjuka, the Alukn and most matriclans of the Saramaka have been converted to Christianity, although several missionaries - initially only Moravian Brethren but later also Roman Catholics - have preached the gospel among them for over 200 years. Some smaller tribes, however, such as the Matawai and the Paramaka peoples have devoted themselves to Christianity.

The agricultural system of the Maroons is known as 'shifting cultivation' or 'slash-and-burn'. The system was already used by the slaves who laid out provision grounds behind the plantations and has not changed very much since the early days of marronage. Amerindians, who also reside in the interior of Suriname, support themselves in a similar way. Every other year part of the forest is cut down and the refuse burnt. The clearing, or provision ground, is planted with food crops. After several years, the ground is abandoned and the clearing is allowed to grow thick. The main advantage of this system is that it requires little maintenance as the crops grow faster than undergrowth. One of the most important food crops cultivated by the Maroons is manioc or cassava. Other crops include rice, corn, yams, tayers, plantains, beans, peas, sweet potatoes, okra, peppers, cotton and sugar-cane.

Marronage in Suriname

During the Second Anglo-Dutch war in 1667 a flotilla of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands conquered the British colony Suriname. The Dutch quickly established plantations in the marshy areas along the rivers Suriname, Commewijne, Cottica and Perica. Canals were excavated, levees raised and locks constructed to regulate water levels in the resulting polders. The plantations cultivated crops for which there was an almost insatiable demand in Europe. Sugar was by far the most important product, followed by coffee, cocoa, and (to a lesser extent) cotton. But it was not Dutchmen who performed the heavy physical labor in Suriname's hot and humid tropical climate. For that they bought slaves at auction in Paramaribo, where shiploads of these unfortunates were brought by other Dutchmen from Dutch trading forts in West Africa.

In 1684 the colony had 4200 slaves. Twenty years later, in 1705, there were 10,000 unfree Africans, and 60 years after that some 50,000, dispersed over Paramaribo and 591 plantations. The sixth decade of the 18th century marks the pinnacle of the colony's (European) golden age; thereafter economic decline followed.

Between 1667 and 1826 an estimated 300,000 to 325,000 Africans were sold to Surinamese planters at auction in Paramaribo. The great majority of the imported slaves were adult males, a demographic factor with a heavy impact on reproduction and mortality. Because the death rate was always higher than the birth rate, the percentage of Africa-born slaves in the total population remained high. In 1740 90 Percent of the slaves had been born in Africa; in 1770 the figure remained at 70 Percent (Price 1976: 12). Since the number of Europeans in the colony always remained small (seldom rising above 3000), the continuous importation of Africans meant that 18th century society in Suriname developed a strong African character.

Hence, the history of the Surinamese Maroons begins somewhere in Africa. Postma analyzed the role of the Dutch in the Atlantic slave trade. He argued that there was a major shift in the regions from where the Dutch imported their slaves in the course of the 18th century. Before 1725 50 percent of the slaves came from the Slave Coast (Nigeria and Cameroon); after this date the supply zone moved to the north. During the period 1736 to 1795 nearly 50 percent of the slaves came from the area of Sierra Leone and Senegambia. These slaves were called 'Gangu' in Suriname. One quarter of the slaves came from the Gold Coast (Ghana) - the so-called Kormantines - while another quarter came from Loango-Angola. The latter were designated 'Loango people' in Suriname.

Is it possible to trace back an African slave's origins by means of the Dutch archives? That is the key question for everyone interested in the roots of Suriname slaves. Unfortunately, the answer is negative. When the slaves embarked in West Africa, only their numbers were registered, not their names. The same applies to their disembarkment in Suriname. It is true that the archives contain the results of the slave auctions in Paramaribo, but the auction-lists only mention the number of slaves sold and the prices.

Most of the Surinamese slaves performed agricultural labor with only a small number involved in domestic work. Some plantations employed as many as 500 slaves but most of the plantations were smaller and owned about 100 to 150 slaves. The majority of the Surinamese planters came from The Netherlands, although a considerable number of them originated from elsewhere, from Brazil (Portuguese Jews), from England or from France (Huguenots). The rich planters did not generally live on their plantations but usually had a sumptuous residence in Paramaribo. The day-to-day running of their business was left to managers and white overseers who were often the only non-enslaved people in the whole plantation area. About 750 mercenary soldiers from Europe, at any time in the 18th century, were recruited to keep the slave population under control.

History informs us that the Caribbean region was frequently struck by massive slave rebellion (Berbice 1763, Haiti 1792, Curacao 1795 and Demerara 1823). However, this was not the case in Suriname. One might argue that it was not even necessary for there was a much easier and much more successful way to escape slavery in the colony; the process of marronage.

As in other plantation areas, the Afro-Americans in Suriname tried to escape the unwanted and very cruel existence as a slave by running away. The geographical circumstances of the country were very advantageous as they provided the runaway slaves with a hiding-place where they could live in peace or, if necessary, from where they could wage guerrilla war on the planters. All plantations were situated on rivers and backed onto swamps and forests. These savage areas were barely accessible during the rainy season and neither the planters nor the European mercenary soldiers felt at ease in them. This was not true of the slaves. Most of them had started cultivating gardens in the forest areas behind the plantations, on which they grew crops for their own consumption. Often the men would go hunting in the forests with muskets. The quagmires were used by both men and women for fishing. In addition, the slaves had small boats (made from tree trunks which had been hollowed) at their disposal. With these canoes they could paddle across creeks and swamps. The white people rarely accompanied them on these trips with the consequence that the slaves outstripped their masters by far in knowledge of the geographical circumstances

of the region. As a result, it was not difficult for a slave to leave the plantation unnoticed.

Owing to the ease with which the slaves could run away, large-scale marronage rarely occurred in Suriname. The slaves preferred desertion in small groups. Early in the colony's history it often happened that the fugitives remained near the plantations. This gave them the opportunity to harvest food from their own provision grounds or to steal it from other people's fields. Runaways often returned to the slave barracks at night to eat, catch up on news or sleep with their loved ones. This was, however, a risky business as marronage was a capital offence and betrayal by another was always a possibility. Nevertheless, a captured slave was not always sentenced to death, as he was part of the planter's invested capital. For the owner, every capital punishment meant capital lost. A new slave would well cost about 700 Dutch guilders.⁴ As the planters had the right to inflict physical punishment on their slaves but were not allowed to kill them, they usually preferred to torture the slaves by a whipping with tamarind rods rather than send them off to Paramaribo where death sentences were executed. It was only those fugitives who were, in the opinion of the planters, 'incurable' or those who had to serve as an example for the others, who were sent to *foto*, the Fort Zeelandia in Paramaribo. Based on information received from the plantations, the authorities in the districts - the so-called *burgher kapiteins*⁵ - held a record of all 'runaway' or 'returned' slaves. These records reveal that the number of fugitive slaves per year was not very high. It is estimated that, from a total population of 50,000 slaves, the number of runaways amounted to some 250, only half-a-percent of the population. The majority of the runaway slaves consisted of men, in proportions often reaching 90 percent (see Hoogbergen and De Theye 1986, 148). Two-thirds of them returned voluntarily after a while. Nevertheless, only some 100 slaves remained behind in the forest each year.

As marronage continued uninterrupted, there were always groups of Maroons roaming around the colony - either close to the plantations or at some distance. These Maroons were a significant threat to the colony as their communities offered the slaves an alternative existence. Like real desperados they stole food and other goods from the plantations and from the slaves' provision grounds. On the other hand, the runaways maintained regular contacts with these slaves. Almost every slave revolt was instigated by the wandering Maroons, who became increasingly audacious as they started to maraud plantations and take away slaves, weapons and other goods. Owing to these raids their number sometimes increased significantly within a short period of time. At times the Europeans themselves inadvertently encouraged marronage. Whenever a war broke out in Europe, the colonial powers were eager to plunder or conquer each other's colonies. For example, during the War of Spanish Succession, the Dutch

and the French fought for control of the Spanish Netherlands (presently Belgium). This caused a French invasion of Suriname from Cayenne in 1712. The frightened planters sent many of their slaves to the jungle to evade paying a per capita tribute. After the French had withdrawn, some 700 slaves did not return to the plantations.

Generally speaking, it is possible to indicate from which plantations the Maroons came. The search for their roots may therefore start in Suriname itself. In the early days of marronage, the plantation's name often served as a family name for groups of Maroons. Runaway slaves from the plantation La Paix, for example, called themselves La Paix-row which was later changed into Lape-lo in the Maroon language. The word lo, being the designation of a corporate group, became the name of a matriclan.

Apart from the fact that they escaped the cruel existence as a slave, it is a remarkable feature of marronage that the Maroons revolted against their colonial oppressors by force of arms. Raids on plantations, abducting slaves, murdering overseers and owners by surprise: all of this meant that the owners of the plantations in the outlying districts had to be permanently on the alert. Military patrols were regularly sent to the jungle to hunt the Maroons, capture them and destroy their villages and fields. A second reason for sending out bush patrols was to avoid the formation of inland settlements which would attract potential runaway slaves. That is why the patrols burnt down all the villages they found and destroyed all the crops on the provision grounds. The destruction of the villages was not insurmountable for the Maroons as they could build new villages within a few weeks. But, the devastation of the provision grounds could have disastrous effects. In order to protect themselves against starvation after the discovery of a settlement, the Maroons took the precautionary measure of laying out their gardens at some distance from the village, growing more crops than was strictly necessary to support themselves and storing their food stock as much as possible in Kibrikondres (hidden villages). Most Maroon groups avoided a confrontation with the planters' armies as much as possible for they knew that they needed a considerable amount of weapons and ammunition to be able to put up a good fight.

Brief Outline of the Maroon Wars until 1760

Even while Suriname was still an English colony, slaves were already deserting. When the Dutch took hold of the colony and started waging war on the Indians, new groups of slaves escaped. In 1690, the plantation of Immanuel Machado on the Cassewinicakreek, a tributary of the upper Commewijne River, was shaken by rebellion. Although a number of runaways was caught by a bush patrol, most slaves managed to evade their pursuers for good. They fled to the southwest and settled down on a tributary of the Saramacca River: the Ponamakreek (now called the Kleine [small] Saramacca River). In 1693 the slaves of the plantation Providence on the Suriname River rose in revolt. They also fled to the region of the upper Saramacca River.

Hartsinck, the historian who wrote one of the classics on Dutch settlements in Guyana in 1770, estimated that in 1702 the number of runaways totalled some five to six thousand (Hartsinck 1770, 757). This estimation, however, seems to reflect the fear of the Maroons more than it does a real figure. A number of about 1,000 to 1,500 is more likely. Nevertheless, the Maroons were rapidly increasing in number in the eighteenth century. In spite of regular patrols, the Maroons soon formed settlements in the Surinamese jungle. Some of these settlements were known to the planters, as appears from the decree of 20 February 1717. This decree makes mention of the villages of Claes and Pedro on the rivers of Surinaemen, the village of **negroe Will** on the Commewijne and other settlements in the Marowijne area (Schiltkamp and De Smidt 1973, 312).

Around 1730, groups of runaways started to form tribes in at least four different places in Suriname. In the region southwest of the plantations, on the tributaries of the Saramacca River, the Saramaka tribe was formed. The villages of **Claes and Pedro**, which had already been mentioned in 1717, were located here. The area southeast of the Commewijne River was inhabited by groups of Maroons who can be considered the antecedents of the Ndjuka tribe. In the swampy area east of the Cottica River, where the village of **Asikan-Silvester** was located, the first chief of a tribe which would later adopt the name of **Aluku** emerged. Finally, there was a group of Maroons living in the swampy area between the Saramacca River and the Atlantic Ocean. During the reign of Governor De Cheusses (1728-1734), the Saramaka started to conduct raids on plantations more systematically than before. On 28 June 1730 they attacked Bergendaal, a plantation on the upper Suriname River which belonged to De Cheusses himself. The taunted Governor thereupon decided to undertake a merciless persecution of the Maroons, in which he was encouraged by the planters in the **Hof van Politie** (Court of Policy). Between 23 July 1730 and November 1731 seven expeditions were sent in pursuit of the Maroons, six to the

southwest, to the living-area of the Saramaka, and one to the Cottica area, where the (proto) Ndjuka and Aluku were living. These patrols marched through areas largely unknown to the colonists. There was also a feared group of Maroons who appeared to be living on the Ponamakreek. A map which was drawn up shortly after these expeditions by a land surveyor called De Lavaux shows three conglomerations of villages on this creek: the village of **Claes**, the village of **Papa** and the Creole villages of rebel slaves (De Groot 1982: 27). The villages of Claes were conquered in 1730 by a patrol headed by Lieutenant Swallenberg. The largest village consisted of about 300 houses, whereas the second one contained about 100 and the third one consisted of some 40 dwellings. The village of Claes was named after their chief Claes, who is known today as **Kaasipumbu** in the oral tradition of the Saramaka tribe (De Beet and Price 1982, 3; Price 1983). The village of **Pedro**, which had also been mentioned in 1717, was discovered in the same year. In this village sixteen Maroons were killed and four men, twelve women and four children were taken prisoners. Eleven of these prisoners were put to death in Paramaribo. As a way of intimidating the other slaves, one of the condemned - a poor prisoner called Joosje - was hanged from her ribs by a meat hook. This martyr's death, which was not uncommon in Suriname as three rebel slaves had also been hanged by a meat hook in 1750, made a profound impression on the slaves indeed. The historian Hartsinck (1770, 764-765) referred to it and the Scottish soldier John Gabriel Stedman, who published a remarkable book on Suriname and the battle against the Maroons in 1796, made this form of justice known worldwide. William Blake represented the event in an etching and included it as an illustration in the book of Stedman (Price and Price 1988, 105).

On the same Ponamakreek the villages of **Papa** and the so-called Creole village⁶, which consisted of 120 houses, were discovered by new expeditions in 1731. On his map De Lavaux had also drawn a Maroon village east of the plantation area, between the Commewijne and the Marowijne Rivers. According to other data this must have been **Pinnenburg**, a village which was conquered in 1730 and was named after the great number of pitfalls lined with sharp spikes on the access routes.

De Cheusses made an attempt to offer general amnesty to the Maroons in the Saramacca region in 1731 but to no avail. The governor had ordered a new bush patrol to bring back two prisoners to the villages on the Ponamakreek and set them free. The prisoners had been instructed to contact the Maroons and tell them that all refugees would receive a pardon if they either went back to the plantation from where they had fled within four months or reported themselves to the soldiers who occupied the village of Papa. One of the 'intermediaries' returned empty-handed after some days, whereas the other one had chosen to be

free. Thus he followed the Maroons' example for none of them accepted the offer of amnesty (De Groot 1982, 35).

Little is known about the battles against the Maroons from 1731 until 1749. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that the battles continued unabated. David C. Nassy claimed to have led more than 30 small and large expeditions against the Maroons (Nassy 1791, 1-111). After the attack on the plantation of Manuel Pereyra in 1738, the Jewish community⁷ organized a military expedition to the Maroon villages, in which Pereyra himself was killed (Nassy 1791, 99). As the Maroons were constantly joined by small groups of runaway slaves, their number had increased to about 6000 by 1749: 2000 in the area between the Suriname and the Saramacca Rivers (the proto-Saramaka), 2000 southeast of the Tempatikreek and along the tributaries of the Marowijne (the proto-Ndjuka), next to some smaller groups to the west of the Parakreek, on the lower reaches of the Saramacca River, in the swamps between the Suriname and the Commewijne Rivers in the Patamacca area and in the swampy areas between the Cottica River and the coast. Although Europeans could continue attacking Maroons by conquering their villages, destroying their gardens and taking the odd prisoner, it was obvious that it was not possible to ever 'eliminate' these people: 'these expeditions have been fruitless for some time and as they are fruitless, one might say that they do more harm than good and have no effect other than animating the Fugitives' pride and courage' (Mauricius 1752, IV: 87). As a result, the Governor wrote a letter to Holland in which he asked permission to open peace negotiations with the Maroons. He received permission to do so but the majority of the local planters was fiercely against it. Governor Mauricius, however, defended himself by referring to the English who had settled peace with the Maroons in Jamaica in 1739. He decided to send a large expedition to the region of the Claes and Pedro villages to cross swords with the Maroons and planned to offer them a peace agreement after inflicting an anticipated military defeat on them (Hartsinck 1770, 767-768).

In spite of the fierce opposition of the planters in the Court of Policy, Mauricius carried out his plans. In October 1749 he sent 100 soldiers, accompanied by a number of bearers and under the leadership of Captain-Lieutenant Creutz, to the Saramacca River. Once again, there appeared to be some Maroon villages in this area. Creutz discovered nine of them and destroyed about 415 houses. The inhabitants belonged to a group which is presently called the Saramaka Maroons. In this period the Saramaka were still in the process of forming a tribe but they had already taken shape to such a degree that a certain Dabi was recognized as the *gaanman* (paramount chief) of a number of groups. Creutz managed to get in touch with chief Adu, who claimed to be speaking in the name of the old *gaanman* Dabi. The negotiations proceeded very successfully

and the stipulations of the Jamaican peace treaty of 1739 were taken as a starting-point for a peace settlement. When Creutz left after about eight weeks, he promised to return to the Ponamakreek in September 1750 with a delegation and gifts to add the necessary luster to the peace settlement. The planters of the Court of Policy, who continued to protest against the peace settlement, opposed Mauricius' intention of sending a large delegation to the Ponamakreek. They were only prepared to provide the financial means for a journey of some colonists and about 20 bearers. This small company left five months earlier than agreed and never came back. It is not clear what exactly happened inland. Various stories have been told (De Beet/Price 1982 and Price 1983). One thing, however, is sure: peace was not concluded.

By the end of 1749, while the peace negotiations with the Saramaka were still going on, a bloody revolt took place on the plantation of Bethlehem on the central part of the Commewijne River. The owner, Amand Thoma, and his bookkeeper were murdered by a group of slaves. It seemed that the slaves had risen in rebellion as a way of protesting against the sexual behaviour of Thoma towards the female slaves. The entire slave contingent fled to the jungle under the leadership of the murderers. Most refugees, however, were caught and brought to Paramaribo to stand trial. Once again, gruesome sentences were executed: three slaves were hanged by a meat hook, three were broken on the wheel, two were burnt, two were hanged, another two were beheaded and eighteen slaves were deprived of their limbs. A mass execution indeed (VanLier 1949, 39-40). In 1750 the Ndjuka Maroons conducted a raid on the plantation of Auka on the upper parts of the Suriname River. The undefended plantation was set on fire and all 50 slaves joined the Maroons (Nassy 1791, I:120).

Slave resistance in Suriname during the period 1750-1759 was analyzed by Muller (1973). He stated that fifteen revolts took place in this period, excluding the raids on the plantations conducted by the Maroons. In total, about 900 to 1000 slaves from 21 different plantations were involved in those revolts. Rebellion was often the result of collaboration between the slaves who had run away before and the ones who had stayed behind. After the revolt on the plantation of Palmeneribo on the Suriname River in 1758, it appeared that the slaves had been in contact with small groups of Maroons who had been staying near the plantation for over seven months without the white people ever aware of it. After every revolt, patrols were sent after the runaway slaves. But whenever a revolt was the result of active interference by the Maroons, the pursuit was useless. It was impossible to trace the fugitives and the patrols often fell into the hands of the Maroons. In fact, government slaves accompanying patrols often took the opportunity to escape. In the autumn of 1755 about 30 slaves, of a patrol containing nearly 300 slaves, ran away. During another expedition to the Saramaka Maroons in the spring of the following year, no less than 200 slaves

from a total of 345 deserted (Muller 1973, 31 and 43). Whereas Herlein (1718, 115) still spoke of varying success in the battle against the Maroons, the planters undoubtedly lost much ground after 1740. Müller (1973, 42) shows that only two out of all 28 expeditions carried out during the 1750s had been successful. The necessity to reach an agreement with the Maroons became increasingly acute.

The Tempati Revolt in 1757

The lumber plantations on the Tempati Creek were not very profitable. Maintaining these plantations was primarily a matter of tradition and a consequence of the relative incapacity of the planters to involve the slaves in other types of profit-making work. Each and every attempt to transfer the slaves to plantations where more useful products were cultivated encountered slave resistance. They threatened to massively run away to the Maroons if such a transfer were to take place and that was not just an idle threat. In early 1757 the owner of the plantation of La Paix, a powerful planter called Jean Martin, decided to transfer a number of slaves from the plantation of La Paix to one of his sugar estates in the Commewijne area. The slaves were fierce opponents of the plan. They argued that they were not the first slaves to be transferred from La Paix and that the men and women before them had not been accepted by the other slaves and had been killed through poisoning or sorcery. But the slaves pleaded in vain. The overseer Bruyere asked for a number of ropes which he distributed among the soldiers encamped on La Paix. He boasted that he could easily catch six slaves on his own, tie them up and throw them on a boat. He advised the soldiers to be just as bold.

It was 22 February 1757. At first sight, nothing was out of the ordinary. At half past six in the evening two **basias** (black overseers) came to report. They were somewhat later than usual which made Bruyere ask the reason for their delay. He contented himself with the answer that they had gathered such a large amount of wood during the day that it was sufficient for being processed the following day. Bruyere thereupon sat down and started to play cards with the commanding officer of the military post, Van Hertzbergen. Shortly afterwards they found themselves surrounded by about 50 slaves, some of whom began attacking them with machetes. Van Hertzbergen was slashed on the head and Bruyere lost one of his hands. At the same time the slaves attacked the soldiers. Rebels opened fire on the military post from all sides. At 12 o'clock the following day the soldiers had exhausted almost all of their ammunition. They decided not to wait until the moment of truth but entered into immediate negotiations. The rebel slaves did not bear any grudge against these people who, as badly paid

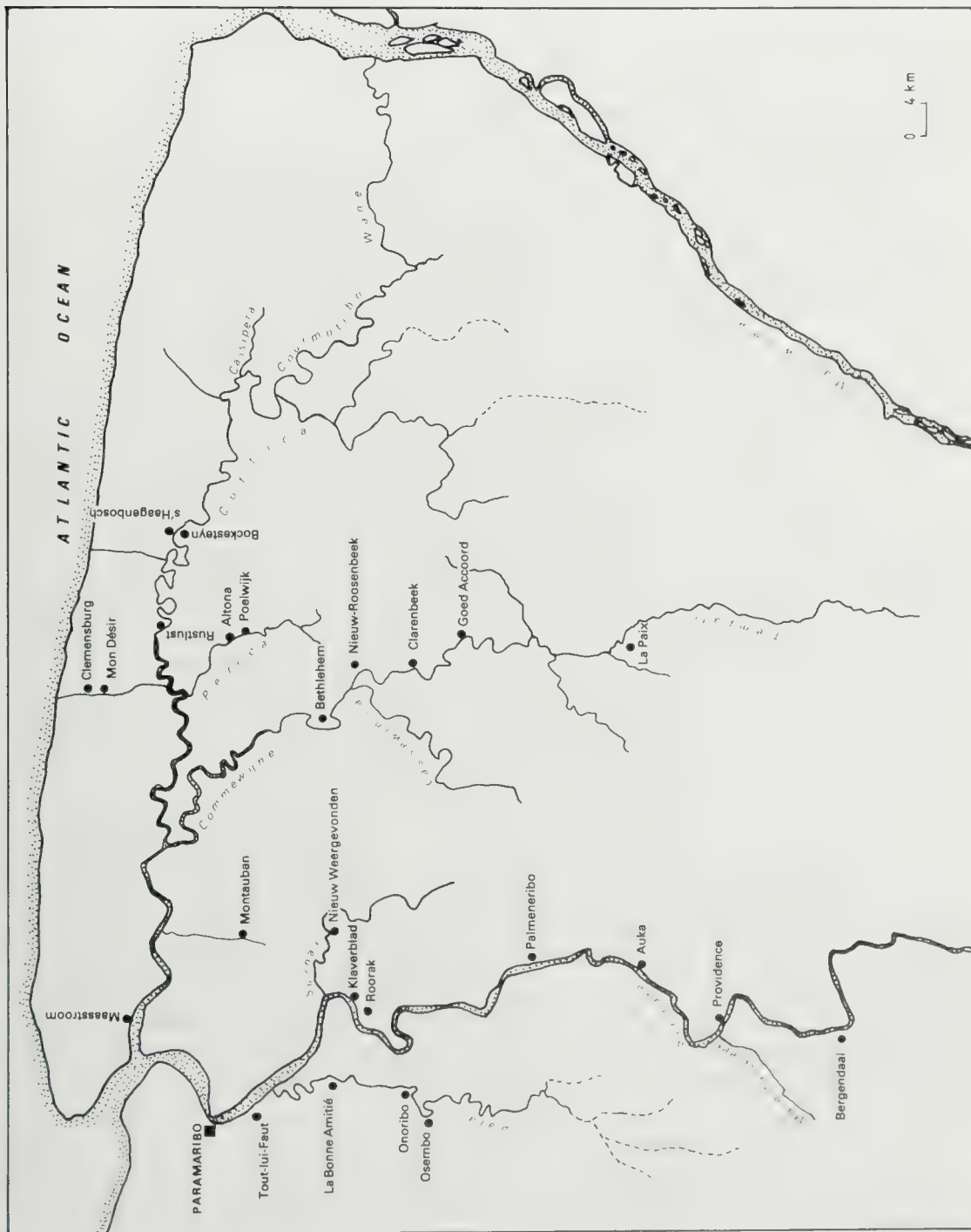
mercenary soldiers, were hardly better off than the slaves. The soldiers were allowed to withdraw in peace and keep their arms. They were put in a boat with the wounded manager Bruyere and the reserve officer candidate Van Hertzbergen and sailed down the Tempati. The rebels even offered the travellers a glass of wine and some chickens as provisions for the journey.⁸

The Surinamese planters soon learned that the revolt which had started at La Paix had meanwhile spread to all seven plantations in the Tempati area. These plantations totalled some 250 slaves. The government called in military patrols to quell the rebels but all attempts were in vain. Until July the rebels continued to rule over the Tempati area. They then left the region and went southwards to join the Ndjuka Maroons.

The Pacification of the Ndjuka and Saramaka-Maroons in 1760-62

The suppression of the Tempati revolt had proven to be a failure. The plantations had been destroyed and the slaves would never return. They had obtained permanent asylum among the Ndjuka. In March 1758 both the Ndjuka and the Tempati rebels conducted a raid on the plantation of Palmeneribo. Most slaves - about 80 in total - were willing to join them. After the attack a note from the raiders was found. It was signed 'Boston of Tampatij', himself one of the Tempati rebels. The only conclusion drawn from the note was that the raiders wanted to open talks with the government. The note was sent to Paramaribo. Governor Wigbold Crommelin received permission from the Court of Policy to enter into negotiations with the rebels via the rebel Boston. But, the negotiations were temporarily postponed as the Maroons were nowhere to be found.⁹

In February 1759 the Ndjuka launched another attack on the plantation "Goed Accoord" close to the Tempati area. At six o'clock in the morning the Maroons charged the plantation buildings while shooting. They had ritually painted their faces and hands white to prevent themselves from being recognized and to scare the inhabitants. The attack soon proved to be a failure as the number of raiders was too small to prevent the manager from escaping. Also, the slaves were not willing to make common cause with the Maroons. The slaves themselves took up their arms and forced the raiders to withdraw.¹⁰ In May of the same year they proved to be more successful in the attack on the small plantation of Onoribo on the Cassewinicakreek. Upon their departure the raiders abducted four female slaves and seven children and left another sign: three letters from Boston pinned on a stick with the message that the rebels were still interested in settling peace.¹¹



MAP THREE: Plantations Mentioned in the Text

As a result of the attack on the plantation of Onoribo, the Court of Policy decided to pay attention to Boston's letters and sent two slaves - Kofi and Charlestown - with a letter on secret mission to the Ndjuka to approach them about the chance of settling peace. The slave Kofi was known to be a friend of the rebel Boston. On 31 July, the two slaves left from the plantation of Auka on the Upper Suriname River. In the middle of August the men arrived at a clearing in the jungle where they found an old village surrounded by gardens. There were no people in the village. The following day the two envoys noticed that they had been discovered by a number of Maroons. In answer to their questions Kofi and Charlestown told them about their mission. Consequently, the men brought them to a village of about 100 houses where they announced the reason of their journey again. They also told the Maroons that they had a letter for Boston. The Maroon spokesman said that he would send for Boston and that the slaves had to stay in the village in the meantime.

After a week the **gaanman** of the Ndjuka - Arabi (or Labi) of the **Dikanlo** -and the sought-after man called Boston arrived with more than 1000 men at the village where the two envoys stayed. Kofi and Charlestown gave Boston the letter from Governor Wigbold Crommelin. After having read the letter, Boston assured **gaanman** Arabi that the colonists' intentions were sincere and that this was the ideal moment for concluding peace, whereupon they immediately opened elaborate talks. A peace agreement would mean the end of raids on the plantations with the consequence that the Maroons would lose their supply of foodstuffs, guns and utensils. Boston was one of the main supporters of a peace settlement. He referred to the peace settled between the English and the Maroons in Jamaica.¹² In this case the raids on the plantations had been, so to speak, bought off with tribute. If the plantations would send tribute periodically to the Maroons, they were prepared to settle peace.

The two envoys promised to hand over a list of the goods desired from the Court of Policy. They agreed to a cease-fire on condition that the Maroons stop marauding the plantations. As soon as the tribute arrived, peace could be settled. The Ndjuka were prepared to accept a stipulation in the peace agreement that they should hand over any slave who had run away and had come to seek refuge. After having agreed on the principles, they drew up a list of the goods desired: machetes, guns, lead, gunpowder, axes, needles, scissors, etc. The list was signed by **gaanman** Arabi and his six chiefs Mafunge, Titus, Kwauw, Kwaku, Kofi Sempredre and Boston.¹³

On 28 August 1759 Kofi and Charlestown returned to Paramaribo from their secret mission. During its meeting on 10 September the Court of Policy decided to continue the peace negotiations with the Ndjuka. Shortly afterwards

a delegation of two planters - Rudolph Zobre and James Abercrombie - left for the Maroons. In early October the delegates talked with Boston and Djaki, the latter the brother of the important chief Pambu of the **Otoo-lo**. It is important to note that Djaki refused all food because, as he said, he was wearing his **obia tuig** (obeah protection). After the talks, the Maroons left and later returned with several people to fetch their gifts, while they were 'dressed up in a most horrible way'. The Maroons then brought the two white men to **graaman Arabi**, 'under dreadful yells, as usual'. The company was first entertained by **kabiten** (captain) Cormantin Cojo, who was 'painted red all over and looked a fright, if only because of his appearance for he was wearing that idolatrous garment' and performed a welcome dance with a group of about 60 armed men. On 13 October 1759 the peace negotiations started. It appeared that not everyone of the Ndjuka delegation took a strong interest in a peace settlement but all of them promised to accept it, provided that an agreement could be reached on details. Boston was furious about the fact that not all of the tribute demanded had been sent; the lead and the gunpowder, for example, had been omitted. The white envoys promised that these goods would be sent afterwards. A new list of tribute was drawn up and they agreed to extend the cease-fire by one year. The peace would be concluded during the major dry season of 1760.

Two days later, when the peace delegation prepared itself for the journey back to Paramaribo, James Abercrombie and Rudolph Zobre asked **gaanman Arabi** whether he would really keep to his word concerning the cease-fire and the handing over of new runaway slaves. The paramount chief thereupon took some soil from the ground, and holding the soil in his hands swore that he would do so. If he ever broke his promise, God would have the right to kill him on the spot or haunt him for the rest of his life with terrible diseases and bad luck. Finally, the sergeant gave a white banner to the Ndjuka, who gave a white banner in return. Arabi and all the chiefs accompanied the patrol a long way into the forest before bidding farewell.¹⁴

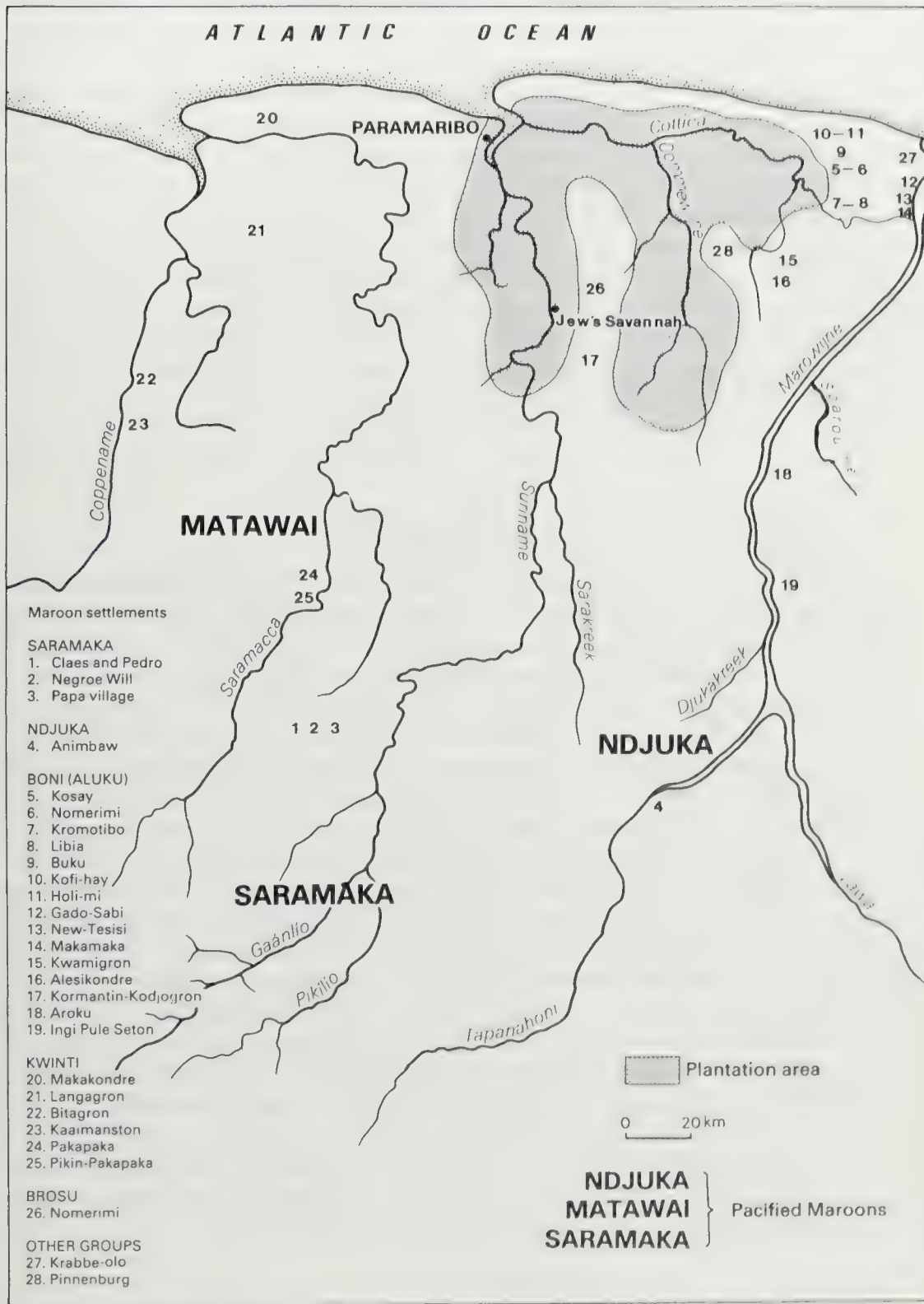
The governor and the councillors were very serious indeed about the efforts to settle peace. They consulted with the authorities in Amsterdam and asked for permission to continue peace negotiations. They received the necessary permission and the following year, on 24 September 1760, the 'peace patrol' under the leadership of Lieutenants Vieira and Collerus set off into the jungle. On October 8th they arrived at the village of **gaanman Arabi**. The peace negotiations started the following day. The draft-treaty consisted of fourteen articles.¹⁵ After the articles had been read aloud and explained one by one, the chiefs swore that they would observe them. The most important clause was undoubtedly the government's recognition that these people and their descendants were no longer considered runaway slaves but free men. In order to define this category of free

men exactly, the Ndjuka had to allow for the inspection of their villages. Most articles of the treaty proposed did not cause any problems. The obligation to hand over new runaways to the colonists, however, gave rise to a heated discussion. The article obliged the Ndjuka to start an active policy of pursuit against other unpacified Maroon groups. A compromise was found and the clause was reformulated in the sense that all the fugitives who had been living in the forest for a considerable time and all the slaves who had fled because of serious ill-treatment were exempt from this regulation. The peace treaty also stipulated that the Ndjuka should stop attacking the plantations. The government agreed to send them tribute as a means of compensation for the goods they usually took from the plantations.

After the whole treaty had been reviewed to the satisfaction of the planters, the Ndjuka demanded that the peace treaty be confirmed in their way as well and asked for a clean piece of white linen. When the linen arrived, kabiten Kofi took a razor and cut the left arm of both the white negotiators and the Maroon chiefs to draw blood. "When this was done, someone else came up with the linen cloth. After examining the arm to see whether the blood was dripping down sufficiently, we had to wipe off our arms ourselves. Then a third one came with a bowl of clean water in which the linen cloth was washed and rinsed and he did the same and swore that, as peace had been settled, he would never bear a grudge against the colonists nor cause the white people any harm. If they ever broke their promise or did not comply with their commitments under the peace treaty, this mixture of blood would bring death and damnation upon them. Everyone who had signed the treaty, including Arabi and ourselves, followed this man's example. After this ceremony, a man who was believed to be their priest cried out: 'the earth will not bear those who have sworn falsely and do not keep their promise', whereupon everyone started to sing and shout hooray".¹⁶

For the government, this peace settlement with the Ndjuka implied that they would consider the Maroons their allies from then on. Until the abolition of slavery - 103 years later in 1863 - the Ndjuka were called *de vrije Boschneegers van Agter Anka* (the free Bush Negroes behind Auka). Thanks to the mediation of the Ndjuka, peace was concluded with the inhabitants of the 'villages of Pedro and Claes' (those of the Saramaka Maroons living between the Suriname and the Saramacca Rivers) two years later (De Beet and Price 1982, Price 1983b). Another smaller group of Maroons (the Matawai), headed by the chiefs Beku and Musinga, who had separated from the Saramaka, continued to offer some resistance before being pacified in 1767. From then on, the Ndjuka, the Saramaka and the Matawai tribes were called the 'pacified Bush Negroes'.

MAP FOUR: Maroon Settlements in the Text



The government expected the treaties with the major Maroon tribes to bring peace and quiet to the colony. All slaves who still had the courage to run away from the plantations would be pursued vigorously. The government thought that the colony was protected in the south by means of the free Maroon tribes. Fugitive slaves would have nowhere to go as the pacified Maroons would hand them over, while regular patrols would prevent new runaway slaves from settling in this no man's land between the plantations and the living-area of the free 'Bush Negroes'. Their expectations, however, did not come true. Even after the peace settlement slaves continued to flee from the Surinamese plantations, while the Maroons themselves avoided the extradition of new fugitives as much as possible. New groups of Maroons continued settling in this no man's land, especially west and east of the plantations. As with the Ndjuka, the Saramaka and the Matawai, they finally developed into tribes themselves. The most important of these new groups were the Aluku, the Kwinti, the Paramaka and the Brooskamper tribes (see Hoogbergen 1983 and 1985b).

The Boni-Maroon Wars

Little is known about the earliest history of the Boni (or Aluku) until about 1760. The Aluku stemmed from small groups of Maroons who were not directly engaged in combat. Consequently, few confrontations with planters occurred, which are rarely mentioned in the archives. Hoogbergen (1985b) stated that there was no such thing as a unitary Aluku tribe in the early years. After the pacification of the Ndjuka, the Saramaka and the Matawai in 1760, 1762 and 1767 respectively, a large number of non-pacified Maroons continued living in the marshy area east of the plantations. In the seventh decade of the 18th century these Maroons joined forces and started a guerrilla war against the planters and their mercenaries, which lasted for almost seven years. The most important groups which finally coalesced into the Aluku tribe were the Cottica-Maroons under the leadership of Aluku and Boni, the Tesis-Maroons headed by Suku and Sambokwasi and the Maroons of Kormantin Kodjo, most of these being 'Kormantins' who had fled from the plantations along the Suriname River. During the sixth decade of the same century the planters directed almost all their attention against the Tesis-Maroons. In these years, however, a number of incidents incited the Cottica-Maroons to wage war on the planters as well, which resulted in the most sanguine war ever fought on Surinamese territory.

The first important event was probably the transfer of the **gaanmanship** from Asikan-Silvester to Boni. From the events described in Hoogbergen (1985b) it can be concluded that Boni and his son Agosu did not fear war. Boni was an

excellent strategist, being more proficient in guerrilla techniques than his adversaries. On the one hand he had to launch attacks on the enemy, while on the other hand he had to take care of protecting women and children. Secondly, the Boni War may have been caused by the pacification of the Maroon tribes in the south. It had become very dangerous for the new runaways to flee to the interior because the peace treaty forced the Ndjuka, the Saramaka and the Matawai peoples to hand over all newcomers to the colonial authorities. The escape route to the south was blocked. The slaves who went over to the Aluku formed a miscellaneous group. Most of them were salt-water Negroes but the fugitives also included a large number of Creoles. Baron and Jolicoeur (Stedman 1796) were the most famous Creoles, although it is questionable whether they were also the most important Creole Maroons.¹⁷ The third event which left its mark upon the subsequent years was the discovery of the principal villages of the Aluku Maroons in the Cottica area, the devastation of large provision grounds and the capture of Asikan-Silvester in the years 1768 and 1769. Owing to the destruction of their food stocks the Maroons were forced to plunder the plantations. In addition, they wanted to take revenge.

During the period 1769 to 1772, the Aluku were not successful in their war against the planters. About 25 times they put up a fight against military men but most fights ended in a draw. Raids were launched on various plantations: Capoerica (twice), Haagenbosch (twice), Rustlust (twice), Mon Désir (twice), Bockensteyn, Montauban, Nieuw-Roosenbeek, Poelwijk, La Paix, Clemensburg, as well as on the small holdings of the free man Quassi near Nieuw-Timotibo and on the lands of the planters Balantier, Germano, Hulshoff and others. Forest patrols, however, discovered a great number of villages such as Kosay, Nomerimi, Kromotibo, Kwamigron, Kormantin-Kodjogron, Libia and Buku. It was in this period that the Maroons of Boni and the Tesisi-Maroons headed by Suku united. The seizure of the Maroon village of Buku marked a turning-point in the conflict, albeit temporarily. The Maroons had expected to be able to keep this strategically well-positioned village but many Maroons were killed in the fight for the stronghold. Subsequently, 110 persons were captured, while the others had to flee and try to survive as wanderers. Many of them joined Kormantin Kodjo who was a fugitive himself. He had moved to the Patamacca area when the planters discovered his villages between the Commewijne and Suriname Rivers. But Kormantin Kodjo had managed to obtain new garden plots, with the consequence that he had enough food at his disposal to relieve the Boni's famine. Boni and Kormantin Kodjo built the settlement of Alesikondre together but they left this village after a while and settled in the marshy region between the Cottica River and the Atlantic coast.

In order to withstand the Aluku's attacks, Governor Nepveu had meanwhile reorganized the colonial troops. The number of soldiers was increased from 900 to 1200, a Black Soldiers Corps was formed and the assistance of extra troops was requested from Amsterdam. These special troops under the leadership of Commander Fourgeoud arrived after the fall of Buku. For nearly four years Fourgeoud scoured the Cottica region with his troops, although he rarely gained victory over the Maroons. He frequently discovered their dwelling-places which regularly proved to be abandoned. Even if that was not the case, Fourgeoud would hesitate so long before the attack that the Maroons had ample time to search for cover. Fourgeoud followed a 'scorched earth policy' by dislodging the Maroons and ruining their villages and land. Nepveu was not pleased with this policy as he preferred to see the Maroons killed (or rather caught). The Aluku, from their side, surprised the planters with their well-organized attacks on the plantations. In the end, however, Boni and his men were not able to continue the fight. The destruction of their provision grounds caused food-shortages and the continuing battles could only be maintained by means of muskets and ammunition which had to be stolen from the plantations. In July 1774 a number of colonial Black Soldiers commanded by Lieutenant Stoelman conquered three villages in the Locusboom region, namely Gado-Sabi, New-Tesisi and Makamaka. In the same month the prominent leader Baron was killed in a retaliatory attack. One year later Fourgeoud ravaged the villages Kofi-hay and Holi-Mi in the surroundings of the Cassiperakreek. Boni then decided to leave Suriname and settle in French Guiana with his people. In late August 1776 the Boni crossed the Marowijne River and built new villages along the Sparouine River.¹⁸

In the beginning the French did not know how to deal with these newcomers. After several years they sent a delegation to the Maroons which allowed Boni and Kormantin Kodjo to settle freely in French Guiana, provided that they would refrain from any attacks on French settlements. Shortly after concluding peace with the French, the Boni left the Sparouine area and settled near the Lamake Falls along the Marowijne River in Aroku. While the Aluku were still living along the Sparouine River, they came into contact with the Ndjuka. Both Maroon tribes made peace between themselves and lived together in harmony for twelve years. The Ndjuka and the Aluku visited each other's villages frequently, contracted marriages and exchanged goods (Hoogbergen 1985b, 232-267).

After a relatively calm period which lasted about twelve years, the Aluku resumed war against the Dutch in 1789 by attacking the plantation of Clarenbeek and four lumber plantations along the upper Suriname River. A clear reason for this cannot be given, although one might assume that the arrival of many newcomers surely influenced the decision to resume the war against the planters. The 'new' Maroons included slaves who bore a grudge against their former

masters and it became evident that these newcomers were more eager to resume the guerrilla war against the planters than the people who had settled in the jungle long before. The principal leaders of the attacks in 1789 were Jaw van Meerzorg, Sambokwasi, Koki and Agosu. In the attack on the plantation of Clarenbeek, 33 slaves and their master were captured and carried off, yet hardly any goods were taken (Hoogbergen 1985b, 268-274).

These new attacks struck the Europeans in Suriname with dismay. Governor Jan Gerhard Wichers decided to send Lieutenant Stoelman to the Marowijne River with the order to build a military post from where the Aluku could be fought. In the beginning of November Stoelman arrived at the Marowijne River and in the following months several engagements against the Aluku were undertaken. It was only in May 1790 - after Askaan of Ephrata, a defector, had betrayed the exact position of the Aluku villages to the Dutch - that the troops finally managed to expel the Aluku from Aroku. The Dutch built post Nassau on the island of Langatabbetje.¹⁹

After the seizure of the villages in Aroku, the Maroons were in a very bad position. They queried the government about conditions for complete surrender through Askaan and Commander Beutler. The terms of the new Governor Frederici were extremely hard: they had to hand over all the slaves who had sought refuge with them since their stay in French Guiana. As a result, Boni transferred a large number of slaves to the government, but he was not able to, nor did he want to, deliver all the persons demanded. The authorities thereupon decided to string the Aluku along to await the right moment for a new attack. Frederici did not dare start the attack against the Aluku immediately because the latter had drawn very near to the Ndjuka's dwelling-place in the meantime and the attacking troops might interfere with the pacified Ndjuka Maroons. In Paramaribo people were afraid that the Ndjuka and Aluku would join forces to fight the colonial troops collectively. In that case they would run the risk of being defeated as the armed forces in the Marowijne area contained only 200 soldiers. Nevertheless, the coincidental death of some Ndjuka chiefs turned out to be favorable for the Dutch. The younger generation of Ndjuka were not very keen on intervening in the war between the Aluku and the Dutch in favour of the former. As soon as the Dutch had ascertained the Ndjuka's neutrality, they resumed battle with the Aluku. In August 1791 the Aluku were expelled from their dwellings in Ingi Pule Seton near the Pedrosungu Falls and were driven to the Lawa River. In the autumn of 1791 and in early 1792 troops discovered a great number of Aluku villages which they razed. In July 1792 Agosu, Boni's son, started negotiating with the Dutch again. Commander Stoelman made it clear to him that the authorities demanded an unconditional surrender of the Aluku. They would then be allowed to settle in the surroundings of Paramaribo. But the Aluku did not agree to that. In early August, Agosu decided to invade the Ndjuka

village of Animbaw. This tactic caused a war between the Ndjuka and the Aluku Maroons. In the end this battle turned out fatal for the Aluku. The Ndjuka discovered Aluku villages along the Marouini River and killed 21 inhabitants, while taking away 38 prisoners. Among those killed were Boni and Kormantin Kodjo.

The Aluku who survived were headed by Agosu and sought refuge in the interior after their debacle with the Dutch and pacified Ndjuka Maroons. About 1810 they settled along the Lawa River again, near the Abattis Cottica Falls. Disagreement with the Ndjuka *gaanman* Beeman made the Aluku decide to move to the Oyapock area in French Guiana near the border with Brazil. No sooner had they prepared to depart, than they were confronted with a Prohibition issued by the French government which insisted that the Aluku stay along the Lawa River. In 1860 a Franco-Dutch treaty put an end to all restrictions to which the Aluku had been subject. From that day, the government regarded them as 'free people'.

The Kwinti

Even before 1760 there were some Maroon settlements northwest of Paramaribo in the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp', the practically inaccessible region between the estuary of the Saramacca River and the Atlantic Ocean. There is hardly any written information about these people. Their names remain unknown, no dates are mentioned and any data on the war they waged against the Dutch are hard to find. The Maroons of the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp' are the ancestors of the present Kwinti, who currently live in two villages on the Coppename River, Bitagron and Kaaimanston, and in two settlements on the upper Saramacca River in the living-area of the Matawai-Maroons, Pakapaka and Pikin-Pakapaka.

Most of the Kwinti-Maroons were fugitives from Paramaribo and the plantations in the Para region. In the period 1760 to 1775 their villages were spread over two living-areas. A large number of villages were located in the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp'. The sand ridges in this swamp rose like islands above the water and it was on these sand ridges that the Kwinti built their villages and laid out their provision grounds. The route to Paramaribo also led across these ridges. Whenever the Kwinti went on a marauding expedition against the city, they travelled across the ridges and the swamps for three or four days before they arrived west of Paramaribo. The second living-area of the Kwinti lay more to the south near the Botterbalikreek between the Para and Saramacca Rivers. The Maroons from these villages primarily plundered the plantations in the Para

region, such as Altona, Osembo and Onoribo. In the period 1770 to 1827 they were headed by **gaanman** Kofimaka.

In 1761 the Government decided to put an end to the constant plundering expeditions of the Kwinti. Three bush patrols were sent to the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp' and two of these patrols managed to find several villages which were bordered by large provision grounds. The most important village, Makakondre, consisted of 25 houses and two small temples. Some weeks afterwards new patrols headed toward the other villages of the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp'. In addition, six provision grounds were found, covering a total surface area three times the area of Paramaribo. The same patrol discovered yet a third cluster of villages with similar provision grounds. A second village close to Makakondre was located which consisted of 23 houses. One could discern that each house was inhabited by about seven to eight persons. Thus the village must have had over 150 inhabitants.²⁰

In 1765 the Kwinti-group from the Para region attacked slaves from the plantation of Altona. They abducted five slaves. One year later, they attacked the plantation of Onoribo from where they abducted another five slaves. A patrol of armed 'burghers' and slaves gave chase. Pursuit was not easy for they frequently ran into pitfalls in which the Maroons had put sharp spikes of about 20 centimeters long. After one day and a half the pursuers arrived at a provision ground with a village of sixteen houses which appeared to have been abandoned long since. Three hours later they discovered a path which led to another village. When they besieged the village, two Maroons were shot but the others managed to escape.²¹

In September 1769 chief Musinga of the pacified Matawai secretly informed the Governor that several Kwinti Maroons were staying with him. Consequently, he asked for gunpowder and rifles to attack their home village. But, the expedition of the Matawai against the Kwinti was a total disaster for the Matawai suddenly discovered that they were completely surrounded and could not escape. When the Kwinti asked **gaanman** Musinga what the purpose of his journey was, the **gaanman** answered that his intentions were sincere for he had only come to negotiate a pact between the two tribes. A peace settlement was thereupon concluded and the Matawai retreated. One year later Musinga asked Governor Nepveu whether he could not pacify the Maroons from the village he had discovered but Nepveu refused. He did not want to extend the number of pacified Maroons because - as he said - the very reason for concluding peace with these groups was to bring marronage to an end. Musinga then decided to attack the village in spite of the pact which had been solemnly concluded the year before. By the end of December the action was finished and Musinga delivered

22 Kwinti Maroons to Paramaribo. The captive Maroons were seriously punished. Eleven men were put to death and the remaining eleven Maroons were sentenced to lifelong forced labor at Fort Nieuw Amsterdam.²² During 1775 and 1776 three additional Kwinti villages were located by military patrols.²³

As their villages in the 'Duivelsbroekzwamp' and the Para region had been discovered and destroyed, the Kwinti decided to cross the Saramacca River and settle between this river and the Coesewijne River. It was only in December 1782 that a number of soldiers discovered two new villages consisting of 43 and 56 houses respectively. The villages were heavily defended as the Maroons had constructed a ring of palisades to hold off the soldiers. When the Maroons saw the patrol wading through the water, they fled after setting fire to their village.²⁴

One year later the Kwinti took revenge. On 26 November 1783 they attacked the plantation La Bonne Amitie in the Para region. The Maroons set fire to all the buildings of the plantation with the exception of the slave barracks. The white overseer and a slave were killed. After the raid, the Kwinti abducted four men and nine young women. In early December a military patrol crossed the Saramacca River in search of the raiders. On 10 December the soldiers found an abandoned village of 20 houses. The following day they discovered another village consisting of 47 houses. As soon as the inhabitants caught sight of the soldiers, they opened fire at them. They started a fight to give the women and children the opportunity to escape. Two days later the soldiers found a third village which consisted of 36 houses and about 20 acres of provision grounds.²⁵

In March 1785 commander-in-chief Friderici decided to send another patrol after the Kwinti. After several days, Commander Vinsaque found the new village of Kofimaka - called Langagron - southwest of the Tijgerkreek. It lay on a ridge and was surrounded by deep swamps on both the northern and southern sides. On the eastern and western sides, however, the village was fortified by heavy palisades. Commander Vinsaque could not approach the village unnoticed and the Maroons caught sight of the oncoming patrol and fled. During the pursuit the soldiers caught up with three female slaves who had been abducted from the plantation of La Bonne Amitie a year and a half before. They revealed that the village consisted of 34 men and 15 women.²⁶ Langagron fell under periodic attack.²⁷

One can only guess what happened to the Kwinti after this as the colony hardly received any further information about these Maroons. Kofimaka probably crossed the Coesewijne River and settled in the vicinity of the Coppename River. But it is also likely that the Maroons moved all the way to the Coronie district which was still unpopulated in those days. A tributary of the Nickerie River is still called Kofimakakreek and suggests this move.

In the middle of the 19th century the Kwinti moved eastward again and encountered the Matawai. For about 25 years they lived together with these Maroons but after a conflict with **gaanman** Noah Andrai, part of the Kwinti separated from the Matawai. After various wanderings they settled on the Coppename River (Hoogbergen 1978-1983; van der Elst 1975; De Beet and Sterman 1980 and Wekker 1985).

The Maroons in the 19th century

As late as the 19th century new Maroon tribes were formed. Slaves from the upper Commewijne and Perica areas fled southwards and formed the Paramaka tribe, which has survived until today. In the same century a new group of Maroons settled close to the so-called Krabbe-olo, in the region east of the Boni's former living-area. Their chief Pirika was killed in 1831 during the defense of his village. The Maroons found a third hiding-place north of the plantation of Maastroom (lower part of the Commewijne River). One of the leaders of these Maroons was Kopro Kanu, who was killed by the planters in 1828. The slaves had two areas of refuge west of the Suriname River. The first area of refuge lay west of Paramaribo in the district where the Kwinti had fought some decades before. A second area was situated south of the Marechalskreek. Most of these groups no longer form part of present Surinamese society. They have either been annihilated or integrated into the Creole population. Only the Paramaka have survived as an independent tribe.

There is one Maroon tribe whose descendants - in spite of having survived as a separate tribe until the end of the 19th century - are integrated into present Creole Surinamese society. They are the so-called 'Brooskamper' who have been named after their **gaanman** Brosu of 1863, the year in which slavery was abolished. Early in the 19th century a small Maroon settlement was found in the extensive swamps where the Surnaukreek rises. According to oral tradition, Kukudabi was the founder of this village (Van Coll 1903, 530).

Kukudabi died around 1820 and was succeeded by Sambo, who brought the village to prosperity. Another settlement of fugitive slaves led by Amur lay at some distance from Sambo's Maroons. The two groups were at war with each other. Sambo sought to conquer the village of Amur and warned his own villages to be prepared for a possible counterattack. The attack on Amur was successful and only Amur himself, who managed to free himself from his chains in a most mysterious way, escaped.²⁸

Later, groups of Sambo's Maroons attacked the small plantation of Nieuw-Weergevonden on the Surnau Creek to obtain new goods. Apart from the booty, which mainly consisted of arms, they captured one female slave. The government decided to send various bush patrols from all directions to the Surnau. Even during the dry season of 1830 soldiers constantly patrolled the swamps along this creek. One of the patrols discovered a number of new villages and killed several men, among whom was paramount chief Sambo.²⁹ In 1857 remnants of these Maroons were struck seriously by famine. The camp on the Surnaukreek was temporarily abandoned and they settled in small groups close to the plantations. In the meantime Brosu had become the new paramount chief of these Maroons. Hardly had slavery been abolished when Brosu asked permission for his people to settle in the "civilized" part of the colony. The Governor allowed the Brooskamper to settle on the abandoned plantations Roorak and Klaverblad, where this group of about 170 people lived until the beginning of the present century. When Brosu died, his son Jansi was appointed the new paramount chief. In 1917 the grounds of Roorak and Klaverblad were expropriated for bauxite mining. Brosu's descendants (the Babel family) moved to the plantation Tout-lui-Faut, where part of the Brooskamper have lived ever since (Hoogbergen 1978, 13-16 and 1983, 103-106).

Conclusion

Throughout the history of slavery, slaves continued to escape from plantations in Suriname. The last expedition in search of runaway slaves was held in 1862, which makes clear that the Maroon Wars lasted for about 200 years. There was not always fierce fighting. There were both periods of peace and periods of heavy combat. The vigorous pursuits took place in the periods 1729 to 1732 and 1746 to 1759 against the Ndjuka and the Saramaka peoples, as well as during the two Boni Wars. The most important conclusion which can be drawn from the present article is that marronage of slaves continued uninterruptedly until the abolition of slavery in 1863. Even after the pacification of the Saramaka, the Ndjuka and the Matawai tribes in the sixth decade of the 18th century, various other groups of Maroons remained a serious threat to the colony.

Neither money nor efforts were spared in organizing the numerous military expeditions aimed at eradicating these communities. It may be concluded from the foregoing that the Aluku and Kwinti are older than what is generally assumed. The core of these tribes already existed before 1760, well before the peace treaties. As these tribes were considerably smaller than the Saramaka and the Ndjuka peoples, the Dutch authorities thought that they could easily keep them under control with the help of the pacified Maroons. For the Aluku, this

turned out to be a misconception. In fact, the Aluku Maroons were the terror of the colony for several years.

Both the Kwinti and the Aluku were driven away from the plantation areas around 1775. The Kwinti moved westward across the Saramacca River, whereas the Aluku headed eastward across the Marowijne River. Both groups, however, resumed guerrilla war from their new environments but were beaten by the European colonists. In the 19th century fugitive slaves started building new settlements throughout the Surinamese interior. One of these groups later formed the Paramaka tribe, which has survived until today. The other groups, however, have disappeared. Generally speaking, one can state that the contacts between various groups of Maroons differed widely and were subject to frequent internal strife and, occasionally, combat. New runaways would lay out provision grounds, although they remained largely dependent on the food products from the plantations. In the long term these groups of fugitives, insofar as they survived the attempts of the planters' armies to eradicate them, congregated in Maroon communities.

The pacified Maroons adopted an ambivalent attitude towards the new groups. In spite of the fact that they had committed themselves to handing over new runaways to the authorities under the peace treaties, they regularly waived this agreement. It often happened that the fugitives were only delivered after several years of pressure from the colonial authorities. On the other hand, the pacified Negroes sometimes sided with the Dutch in battles against the new Maroons. The Ndjuka finally broke with the Aluku and killed Boni and Kormantin Kodjo in 1793, whereas the Matawai violated the pact with the Kwinti in 1770 and handed over 22 Maroons to the Dutch. Even in the 19th century the pacified Maroons organized several bush patrols in pursuit of the new runaways.

In spite of the numerous military expeditions mounted by the colonists and the permanent threat of new attacks, various groups of fugitive slaves continued to settle in the jungle and the swamps of Suriname with the consequence that new societies of Maroons continuously appeared. These small and independent groups congregated in the large Ndjuka and Saramaka tribes in the first half of the 18th century. The groups formed after 1760 remained much smaller, most probably because the runaways were - in spite of the prohibition - adopted by the pacified Negroes and integrated within their group. The Maroon struggle for life was hard but they escaped slavery and regained their freedom.

NOTES

1. This article was translated from Dutch into English by Marilyn Suy. The maps were drawn by Paul Wartena. The author owes many thanks to Bonno Thoden van Velzen, Marjo de Theije, Gert Oostindie and Adriana de Zwart for their textual criticism and corrections and particularly to Gary Brana-Shute who made numerous useful suggestions and reviewed the whole text with a most critical eye.
2. The figures date from late 1986, the year in which a war broke out between the Surinamese military commander Desi Bouterse and the Maroons in the Cottica area. As a result of this war, most of the Cottica Maroons fled to French Guiana where they have been living in refugee camps ever since.
3. The word 'lo' is a corruption of the English word 'row', a straight line of people. In the early days of the Maroon society it was the designation of a group of runaways who mostly came from one and the same plantation or region. Through the years, it obtained the meaning of matriclan.
4. The American dollar generally equals two and a half Dutch guilders. In the 18th century a teacher or sacristan rarely earned more than 100 guilders a year.
5. Suriname was divided into a number of districts. All the white people who lived in such a district were members of the **burgher militia** which had military ranks. The highest rank of the district was the **burgher kapitein** (civil captain).
6. Papa was the designation of the slaves coming from Dahomey (Slave Coast). After 1735, no more slaves were brought from this region, which made this ethnic label disappear in the second half of the 18th century. Afro-Surinamese culture, however, contains various Papa-influences (see Wooding 1972, 312-323). The designation 'Creole village' seems to indicate a village of slaves born in Suriname. As mentioned in other works by author (e.g., see Hoogbergen 1985b, 42-46), the runaway groups could often trace their descent via ethnic lines.

7. Most Jews in Suriname were Sephardic Jews. They came to Suriname via Portugal, Brazil and Cayenne during the English reign (1651-1667). Until the beginning of the 19th century their official language was Portuguese. Most of the Jewish plantations were situated on the sandy grounds along the Jew Savannah - which had acquired world-wide fame because the first Jewish synagogue of the western hemisphere was built there. In 1683 the number of Jews totalled 232 and in 1760 the Jews possessed 115 out of 591 plantations. The Jewish plantations were generally small. The Jews of Suriname formed a separate group with fixed political rights and privileges. They had the right to freely profess their religion, a right which did not apply to the Catholics. The Jews and Christians were on reasonable terms with each other, although both groups held a wide variety of prejudices towards one another.
8. The Tempati Revolt is mentioned in a great number of documents in the Archives of the "Societeit van Suriname." These archives are part of the General State Archives in The Hague. A booklet on the Tempati Revolt, including a transcription of the archival documents, has been published as volume 12 of the series **Sources for the Study of Afro Surinamese Societies**. Utrecht University: Center for Caribbean Studies (Bouwhuijsen et al., 1988).
9. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 303: Letters to Amsterdam: 8, 10, 13 March 1758; inventory number 304: Report by reserve officer candidate Praquen, 16 July 1758.
10. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 151: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 21 February 1759.
11. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 151: Minutes of the Court of Policy, 27 May 1759.
12. The Maroon Boston, who was called Adjaka when he stayed with the Ndjuka, knew that the English had settled peace with the Maroons in Jamaica in 1739. It is possible that Boston first worked in Jamaica and was later transferred to Suriname as a slave. The fact that Boston could write proves that he must have maintained regular contacts with the Europeans. He may well have received the information about the events in Jamaica from them.

13. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 151: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 6 September 1759. Story of "Coffy and Charlestown", taken down by councillor Dandiran.
14. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 151: Minutes of the Court of Policy, 1 November 1759. Story of the events concerning the Negroes from "Agter-Auka."
15. Hartsinck includes some articles of the peace agreement (1770, 780-785 and 802-809). The articles mentioned on page 780-785 were formulated in October 1759 on Rudolph Zobre's first trip, while the articles represented on the pages 808-809 refer to the Saramaka pacified in 1762. The exact text can be found in General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 152 as an attachment to the Minutes of 12 August 1760.
16. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 152: Journal of Vieira and Collerus, appendix to the Minutes of the Court of Policy: 23 October 1760.
17. John Gabriel Stedman was considered the most important writer on the Boni Wars for a long time. Stedman (1744-1797) arrived in Suriname in 1773. He was an officer in the army of about 1500 soldiers under the command of Fourgeoud who had been sent from Holland to fight the Aluku. Stedman stayed in Suriname for four years, a period during which he kept a diary. In 1796 he published a book based on these notes concerning his stay in Suriname and the fight against 'the revolted negroes'. A new transcription of Stedman's original manuscript has recently been edited by Richard and Sally Price (1988). It turned out that there was a remarkable difference between the original manuscript and Stedman's publication in 1796. For more details about Baron and Jolicoeur see Hoogbergen 1985b, 80-85.
18. For more information about the first Boni-Maroon War see De Groot 1976, De Beet 1984 and Hoogbergen 1985b, 72-231.
19. See Hoogbergen 1984, 18-21 and 49-92 and Hoogbergen 1985b: 275-293.
20. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 153: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 24 December 1761; inventory number 154: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 2 February 1762.

21. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 157: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 4 February 1765; inventory number 158: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 13 and 15 December 1766.
22. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 161: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 7-11 September 1769 and General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Oud-Archief Suriname," Court of Criminal Justice 817, folio 234- et seq (1770).
23. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 167: Minutes of the Court of Policy: 6-28 June 1775.
24. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 377: Letters to Amsterdam: 24 December 1782.
25. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 379: Letters to Amsterdam: 27, 30 November, 2 and 22 December 1783.
26. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 382: Letters to Amsterdam 3 April 1785 and General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Oudarchief Suriname," inventory number 846: Court of Criminal Justice: 10 and 12 April 1785.
27. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Societeit van Suriname," inventory number 382: Letters to Amsterdam 10 May 1785; inventory number 177: Minutes Court of Policy: 24-30 May 1785; and General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Oud-archief Suriname", Court of Criminal Justice, inventory number 846: 15-21-27 May 1785.
28. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Nederlandsch West-Indische bezittingen," inventory number 803: folio 350 et seq.
29. General State Archives, The Hague, archives "Nederlandsch West-Indische bezittingen," inventory number 807: folio 569 et seq.

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CHAPTER THREE

SLAVE RELIGION ON THE PLANTATION VOSSENBURG (SURINAME) AND MISSIONARIES' REACTION

HUMPHREY E. LAMUR

In the course of years much has been published on both the religion of slave populations and the proselytizing of the descendants of slaves in the Caribbean and in the United States. Among the recent publications are Simpson (1982) on Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad; Bilby (1981) on Jamaica; Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering (1982, 1983) and Wooding (1972) on Suriname. There also exist numerous publications dealing with Afro-Caribbean religions in the Danish and Spanish Caribbean and in Brazil.

However, very little is known about the religion of slaves in the Western Hemisphere and their proselytizing. In particular, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the planters were opposed to the conversion of slaves to Christianity for fear that religious instruction would automatically lead to manumission. Only after the mid-eighteenth century had the proselytizing of slaves started, but not even in all slave societies. In most Caribbean slave societies missionary activities began around 1850 (Genovese 1976, 185; Jackson 1931, 168-239; Lamur 1984; Oldendorp 1770; Olwig 1985; Rooke 1979). Most of the available information on this subject concerns primarily the slave population in the American state Virginia. Thus, most of the comparison which follows will be with this slave society. In the remainder of this paper I shall present a brief overview of the achievements of missionary activities among the slave population in Virginia. In doing so I shall rely on Genovese (1976, 183-209) and Jackson (1931, 168-239). Subsequently, some remarks will be made on the religious beliefs of the slave population on the sugar estate Vossenbure. This is followed by a

discussion of the Protestant missionaries' efforts to convert the slaves of this plantation to Christianity.

Black Conversion in Virginia

The history of Christianity of the slave population in Virginia can be divided into three periods, namely 1750-1790, 1790-1830, and 1830-1860 (Genovese 1976; Jackson 1931). One of the criteria used by the authors to distinguish these periods is the missionaries' attitude toward slavery. In the period 1750-1790, the Baptists and Methodists 'expressed hostility towards slavery and a hope that it would vanish.' They argued that the slaves were brothers in Christ. During the period 1790-1830, antislavery attitudes in the churches began to decline under pressure by the slaveowners. The Nat Turner uprising in 1822 meant a turning point in the history of black Christianity in Virginia and ushered in the third phase. 'Whereas previously many slaveholders had feared slaves with religion - and the example of Turner confirmed their fears - now they feared slaves without religion even more.' Hence they began to accept Christianity as a means of social control. In response, (Genovese 1976, 186-187) 'several churches embraced the pro-slavery argument. They won the trust of the masters and freed themselves to preach the gospel to the slaves.' However, the slaveowners remained reluctant to the missionaries' wish to teach the slaves to read and write. How did the slave population in Virginia respond to the new efforts of the preachers after 1822 to convert them? It seems that the missionaries failed in eliminating the remnants of African religion of the slaves. Genovese (1976, 184) claims that 'the conditions of their new social life forced them to combine their African inheritance with the dominant power they confronted and to shape a religion of their own.' He examines a number of sources which support this statement. One is Jones, a Presbyterian missionary who preached the gospel to the slaves in Georgia around 1840. Genovese quotes him as saying that the slaves still believed in 'second-sight, apparitions, charms, witchcraft, and in a kind of irresistible Satanic influence' (see also Jones 1847, 127-128). A second source, Hundley (1860, 328-329, cited in Genovese), was a slaveowner. Around 1860 he claimed that the slaves still believed in 'witchcraft, sorcery, conjuring and other forms of 'paganism'. About the same time, another slaveowner, Eliza Andrews described the attitudes of the slaves to Christianity as indifferent but not hostile. Several times she attended religious services for the slaves and noticed that they fell asleep through the sermons. Similar remarks on the retention of African religious elements by the slaves were also made by medical doctors who worked in the Southern States around the mid- nineteenth century. Among them were Carpenter (1844, 165), Cartwright (1857, 11), and Wilson (1860, 319). Thus, it may be concluded that the missionaries failed to fully eliminate the African beliefs of the slave population

in Virginia. This finding of Genovese is consistent with the conclusion reached by Jernegan in the early twentieth century that the efforts to convert the slaves to Christianity were not successful.

Slave Religion on Vossenburg

Does the conclusion concerning black Christianity in Virginia in the period prior to 1860 hold also for the slave population at Vossenburg, a sugar estate in Suriname? I have chosen this plantation for the following reason. To date, it is the only plantation in Suriname for which the material on missionaries' activities has been analyzed in relation to other aspects of plantation life.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Vossenburg was owned by Adriaan de Graaff. It covered 3,000 acres and was situated on the Commewijne river in the coastal area of Suriname. In 1705, the number of slaves amounted to 92, and increased to 196 in 1747. A few years before the abolition of slavery in 1863 the slave force had increased to 240.

As said before, I shall first present some information on the religious beliefs of the slave population at Vossenburg, and then discuss both the missionaries efforts to convert the slaves to Christianity and the slaves' response to these endeavors. Both the missionaries' account and the oral histories of informants that I collected in the period 1980-1982 and thereafter were used to gain an insight into the religion of the slave population at Vossenburg. The information, though fragmentary, shows that the system of belief of the slaves at Vossenburg consisted of the following elements:

- A Supreme Being and lower Gods
- Priests and mediums of lower Gods
- Religious objects
- Rituals

Adangra was the name by which the slaves denoted their God. The available information does not reveal in what respect the Gods affected the life of the slaves. The main religious objects were a wooden image of a God used for group worship and some small icons kept in each house for private use. Among the functionaries who played an important role in religious ceremonies were the priest and the obeahman (*lukuman*). In addition there was also the witchdoctor (*wissiman*) who affected the life of the slaves, although he cannot be considered as a religious functionary. The priests were in charge of leading the services

intended to worship the God. The primary task of the obeahmen was to divine the cause of sickness or death of fellow slaves. In particular they tried to deduce whether sickness/death was of a supernatural origin for which a human being was to blame, or whether a natural cause was involved. Obeahmen also prescribed medicines for illness. These tasks were performed at the request of the interested party. The obeahman rarely acted on his own initiative. While the obeahman was seen by the slaves as a benefactor, the witchdoctor was perceived as antisocial. The latter was thought to cause illness and death, and acted both at the request of others and on his own initiative. This is a summary of the system of belief of the slave population at Vossenburg which the Moravian Mission confronted when it started its activities on 28 December 1847.

The aim of the Moravian Brotherhood Mission was to convert the slaves to Christianity, and at the same time to eliminate the religion of the slave population since it was considered inconsistent with Christianity. Did the Moravian preachers succeed in this? To answer this question I shall discuss a number of cases of conflicts between the slaves and the missionaries which took place in the period 1847-1877, i.e. the last year for which archival material is available on missionary accounts at Vossenburg.

Conversion of Slaves on Vossenburg

The missionaries visited Vossenberg every six weeks. They arrived on Saturdays and stayed with the director of Vossenburg. The next day, on Sunday, they held two religious services, one in the morning, the other in the evening. The sermons took place in the engineer's or the carpenter's shed. In addition, the missionaries gave religious instruction (catechism) and they baptized both children and adults. In addition, they visited the sick, the needy and the older people.

One of the problems in analyzing the missionary accounts on the conversion of the slaves at Vossenburg was the question what different missionaries meant by conversion and what religious tactics they applied. Further, it was of importance to know whether the notions held by the missionaries on conversion had changed in the course of years between 1847 and 1877. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find a satisfactory answer to these questions. Yet, to give an impression of the notions of conversion held by the missionaries, I will report two events. In 1861 an epidemic broke out which claimed many victims among the slave population. The missionary saw it as a punishment by God and assumed that the slaves shared his view: 'For the first timethe Negroes were quiet and attentive,..... The Lord had addressed them seriously,....' The next

event: A slave who had been excommunicated by the missionary, was later, on his death, 'buried as a pagan'. The missionary claimed that this made a strong impression on another slave, a sick one who had also been excommunicated. The slave showed repentance and asked the missionary to be readmitted to the church. This led the missionary to report that 'God's Spirit has touched his heart'. This case is also interesting because it reveals what religious tactics the missionary used to convert this penitent. He told him that the slave who had been buried earlier as a 'pagan' was 'now standing before God's judgement seat' to be punished for his 'idolatry'. Having told the penitent all this, he was proposed to be readmitted as a member of the church, but only on the condition that he would 'publicly in the church in front of the whole idolatrous slave force express his repentance for his wrongdoing.' The slave did so, as the missionary informed us in his monthly report. Let me repeat that this case only shows how that particular missionary went about converting the slaves. Thus, I am not suggesting that this event was representative of the religious tactics applied by other missionaries who worked at Vossenburg between 1847 and 1877, because of the lack of more information on this subject.

J.G.F. Jansa, the first Moravian missionary to preach the gospel to the slaves at Vossenburg, started his work on 28 December 1847. Before doing so he asked the slaves who were gathered if they were in favor of his work. A driver backed by a small group of slaves answered, 'No, we do not want it.' However, the majority reacted favorably. Thus Jansa soon realized that he would face a difficult task among a group which he described as the most superstitious of all slave populations in Suriname. 'Their God which is the biggest of its kind in this country was called Andranga or the 'most secret'. This remark is correct. The cult of the slaves at Vossenburg was apparently so important that the place of worship in the bush where the icon of the Supreme God was located was also attended by slaves from the nearby plantations, namely Breukelerwaard, Fairfield, Fortuin, and Schoonoord. These were plantations where the Moravian Mission had started their activities some years earlier. In 1847 a new wooden image of the God, five feet in height, was built to replace an older one which had rotted. The new one was placed standing in a hut with a roof of leaves, while the old one was placed to the side near the new image. This altar where the God was worshipped was located at a distance of one hour walking from the center of the plantation.

It was at the place of worship, on 16 July 1849, that the first serious confrontation between the missionary Jansa and the slaves took place on. That morning, following the religious service in the converted prayer house, Jansa was invited by a Mulatto slave to destroy their God in the bush. The missionary accepted the invitation and in the afternoon went to the slaves' place of worship accompanied by a few slaves, among whom was one of the drivers. Jansa

proceeded to destroy the hut and seized the religious images. Subsequently, they returned to the center of the plantation, where the missionary asked the slaves if they had any more religious objects in their huts. The head driver, a slave priest, responded in slave Creole that the icons would be delivered to the missionary the next day: 'They will be available tomorrow' ('**Tamara sa de**'). But the missionary insisted and the slaves handed over the objects to the missionary on the spot. Then the missionary went into the huts to see for himself if the slaves had hidden more of the icons.

The news that the missionary had dared to destroy the altar astonished director Uhlenkamp of Vossenburg. He noticed that of old the slaves of this sugar estate were known as 'idolatrous'. Why had the slaves invited the missionary to the center of their religious activities? Is this event a sign that the slaves had deserted their own African beliefs? I do not think so because the slaves still defended their own religion against criticism by the missionary as the following event shows. During a service in the prayer house on 26 October 1849 the missionary depicted the slaves as stupid because they worshipped their own God. This remark annoyed the slaves. A driver, who probably acted as spokesman of the group, responded that the missionary should control himself. He did so by using the following rhetorical question, in creole: 'If you are living among the negroes, you have to speak their language'. A more reasonable explanation for the slaves' willingness to destroy their own religious objects is to perceive this behavior as an act of iconoclasm. The replacement of old relics by new one had probably occurred in the past. Thus, the incident in 1849 was not intended by the slaves as a rejection of their religion as such, but rather as a destruction of the religious objects they had in use at that time. In my view the missionary's demand was only a cause for the slaves to do what they had done periodically in the past.

Similar events have recently occurred in West Africa. This is clear from an analysis of the anti-witchcraft movement among the Bashilele (le Mupele); here too relics were destroyed (Ngokwey 1978).

There is another possible explanation for the slaves' willingness to hand over their religious objects to the missionary. Their behavior can also be judged as a gesture of goodwill in return for the missionaries' readiness to accept them as equals. Whatever explanation is correct, the destruction of the religious objects did not mean that the slaves had lapsed from their own African beliefs. This is clear from the following case. On Sunday morning 22 May 1850 a conflict broke out between the director of the plantation, Uhlenkamp, and the slaves. They declined an order by the director to work on that day because Sundays were usually a day-off. Some time later, during the sermon in the prayer house, the

missionary tried to persuade the slaves to obey the director and to carry out his orders after the service. The slaves rejected the missionary's plea and made clear that they had already made numerous sacrifices for the church. They reminded him that his predecessor, the missionary Jansa, had taken away their beloved religious objects, a year ago. They also threatened to reclaim all this if they did not get the whole Sunday off to attend the church meeting. From this incident it is also clear that the slaves began to see the missionary as an appendage of the director and they resented it.

The following event also shows that the introduction of Christianity in 1847 had not resulted in a full surrender to Christian ideas. On 20 November 1853, the slave woman Dina went to the missionary to inform him that she no longer wanted to live together with the slave October. The latter did not let it pass and a few hours later, after the sermon, he also made his way to the missionary to give his version of their matrimonial problems. Dina was ill which led her sister Paulina to consult an obeahman. The latter consulted the Gods and then concluded that Dina's sickness was of a supernatural origin, for which October was to be blamed. This, October claimed, was the real motive for Dina to leave him, despite his humble appeal not to do so.

Another indication that the slaves still defended their own belief, concerns the so called '**kwa kwa banji**', small benches, which the missionary considered one of the slaves' religious objects. When the issue was first raised on 11 August 1857, the slaves responded with reserve. They were reluctant to discuss the subject and they only admitted that a certain man named Staars was 'the father of the seats'. Staars, at that time living as a free black at the nearby plantation of Fairfield, was a slave at Vossenburg before his manumission. One month later, on 25 September 1857, the 'religious' seats were a cause of a dispute again, when the missionary discovered three of them in the prayer house during the service. Moreover he learned that many converted slaves owned these seats and used them as drums at their religious dances. At that sermon, another driver was one of the slaves who had brought his seat to the prayer house. In a discussion with the missionary that followed he denied that the seats were used as objects of worship and thus he refused to put away his bench. Following the dispute the missionary explained that it was sinful to possess the seats. However, the slaves did not share that view and were determined not to give in. The missionary went to the director and the white overseer to discuss the conflict. On his return to the prayer house he told the slaves that he had decided to postpone the ceremony of baptism to his next visit on 9 November 1857. Probably, he expected that the slaves would change their minds after some time. At his next visit he made a third effort to persuade them to dispose of the seats. However, he failed again.

Two years later another incident occurred which reveals that even baptized slaves had not fully accepted Christian ideas. In 1859 the slave Hiob Hermanses complained that his sickness was of a supernatural origin, for which he blamed Abraham Hermanus. The missionary was astonished to learn that Hermanses, who had only recently been baptized a Christian, still believed in what he described as witchcraft. As he saw it Hermanses had slid back into 'paganism'.

A major blow to the work of the Moravian Mission was the discovery by the missionary on 25 July 1860 that 22 converted male slaves had continued to hold religious meetings at their altar in the place of worship in the bush. He also learned that these slaves had built a new wooden image of their God. In addition he was informed that the slaves were performing *Pakasaka*, a religious ritual in their huts. Apparently, on the same day that the missionary received the information on the new wooden image, it was agreed that the slaves would take the idol from the bush to the slave quarters to show it to the missionary at his next visit to Vossenburg. However, six weeks later, on 14 September 1860 on his arrival at the plantation, the missionary found that the icon was removed but not destroyed and probably installed in another place. He demanded that the image be delivered to him immediately, as missionary Jansa had done some 13 years ago. But this time the slaves refused to grant his request, despite his threat that a curse would rest on them as long as their God was among them. The missionary also decided not to baptize new candidates at that time. It seems that this incident had depressed the missionary. He considered it as a sign of the influence of Satan but continued to believe that Jesus Christ would finally gain the victory.

Not long after this incident the missionary had to admit that he had not yet succeeded in converting the slaves to Christianity. On 22 October 1860 it came to his attention that a few slaves had taken part in a dance ritual near the sluice gate. When questioned, the slaves – all the 15 participants and 6 spectators – gave their names. Three of the fifteen participants, all of them converted males, promised to refrain from further participation. The remaining 12, none of them converted, refused to make such a promise. All of these, except one, were female slaves.

The small number of slaves who attended the services in the prayer house was also a disappointing experience for the Moravian Mission. In 1861 this led the missionary to conclude that the devil had got the upperhand:

... When I arrived at the prayer house for the afternoon service only 50 people were present. The others did not consider it worth attending the sermon, but preferred to pursue their pleasures instead... (Lamur 1984, 94).

Whether the small number of slaves that attended the services points to indifference rather than hostility toward Christianity is not clear.

On 1 July 1863, slavery was abolished in Suriname. The ex-slaves remained on Vossenburg as (semi-) free laborers and the Moravian Mission continued to preach the gospel to them. Did this change in the legal status of the slaves affect their relationship to the missionaries? To answer this question let us consider a few more cases. On Christmas Eve of the year 1863 a child died. According to former slave Leptonis, it was caused by a witchdoctor who had used supernatural means. Hence, Leptonis decided to find out which of his fellows was to blame for it. To do so, he took the corpse and, while carrying it on his head, walked along the huts in the old slave quarters in order to divine the cause of death. This case is interesting since it shows that witchdoctors were considered as antisocial individuals who should be punished. But more important is to note that the slaves' African-based religion still affected their behavior.

The slaves often spoke out openly in defending their religion against criticism from the missionaries. On 8 February 1869 a conflict arose between a few freedmen and the missionary. He had learned from Heering, who had succeeded Uhlenkamp as director, on 21 June 1864, that the ex-slaves were still holding the bench dance-rituals. When they were gathered the missionary demanded them to stop these activities. Samson Winston, a 29-year old field hand who had been baptized on 1 September 1866, stepped forward in the direction of the missionary. Furiously he looked at the missionary and gave him to understand that he did not intend to grant this request and that the 'bench' had cost him a lot of money. 'I shall not stop playing, preacher. You can take against me whatever measure you like, the bench has cost me money,' he said in the Creole language. Consider also the following incident. On 22 April 1869, the missionary told the blacks during a service that he believed most of them were still worshipping their 'idols'. One of those present confirmed this on behalf of the audience by saying: 'Yes Sir, that is correct'.

A few months later on 19 August 1870, the missionary suffered another set-back in his work. On that day he learned that the blacks were again 'worshipping the **Mamasneki**' (a serpent deity). A member of the church council, an ex-slave who was questioned by the missionary, said that he was unaware of it. 'If the snake finds himself in one of the houses, he certainly has got there on

his own efforts', the member of the council added soberly. Then all began to search for the snake and it was found in the garret of the prayer house. At the request of the missionary the reptile was killed and the Christian services could be started.

Even the blacks who were converted to Christianity did not accept all regulations imposed on them by the missionaries. On 14 July 1872 Markus Vreede Cornelius told the missionary that he was not prepared to pay more than 32 cents ('drisren') as financial contribution for the church. When the missionary told him that it was not enough, he became angry and threatened to pay nothing. The missionary in turn took a strong position and threatened to expel Cornelius as a member of the church if he did not reverse his decision.

The cases presented above reveal that the Moravian Mission made little progress in converting the slaves to Christianity at the sugar estate Vossenburg. Nor did the missionaries succeed in eliminating the African-based religion of the slave-population. Quite the opposite. The slaves retained their own system of beliefs and practiced their religion along with attending the religious services of the Mission.

While it is difficult to give a sufficient explanation of the retention of slave religion at Vossenburg, it may be concluded that the role played by the slave priests was an important factor. When the missionary Jansa introduced Christianity at Vossenburg in 1847, it was a black slave driver who opposed this effort. Two years later the missionary visited the place where the slaves worshipped their God. That time the head driver, who also was a slave priest, played a crucial role in the discussion with the missionary. Three months later the missionary criticized the slaves for what he described as their idolatrous way of life, and again it was a driver who admonished the missionary to control himself. On 2 July 1850, the missionary expelled a slave from the prayer house during a service, just because he did not like the remarks he made. It concerned the slaves' admiration for a driver. In one of the clashes in the prayer house over the benches (*kwa kwa banji*) on 25 December 1857 the slave who declined the demand of the preacher to put away his bench was the second-driver. In 1864 Leptonis tried to uncover the witchdoctor who he thought to be responsible for the death of a child. While it was not possible to know the social position of Leptonis in the slave community, apparently he was one of the obeahmen, since it was they who were responsible for finding out the causes of sickness or death of fellow members in the community. Finally, the case of Samson Winst can be mentioned. He said that he did not care a bit about the missionary's demand to stop holding ritual dancings. Samson was a 29-year old driver. In sum, in most of the recorded clashes or cases of deliberation with the missionary concerning

the religion of the slaves, it was the drivers (acting at the same time as religious functionaries, priests or obeahmen) who were involved. They did so as spokesmen of the slave community or of a group of slaves.

The missionaries were aware of the fact that the drivers/priests had a great influence on the success or failure of the Moravian Mission. Consider the following case. On 24 February 1851 a driver expressed his wish to become a member of the Moravian church. When the missionary responded in astonishment to the slave's intentions, the latter assured him that he was serious. This incident led the missionary to write the following in his monthly report to the headquarters: 'If he becomes so faithful to the Saviour as he now is to the Devil, then he can be of great help to the Saviour's affair'.

Why was it in particular the drivers/priests who opposed the Moravian Mission and tried to retain their own religion? To answer this question it should be kept in mind that the religion of the slaves at Vossenburg emerged as a response to oppressive slavery conditions and, psychologically, it offered some protection against exploitation by the planters. However, the Moravian Mission considered the religion of the slaves as pagan and attempted to destroy it. In doing so the Mission threatened the emotional support, the feelings of security, and group solidarity rendered to the slaves by their beliefs. No wonder the missionaries clashed with the drivers/priests who were looked upon by the fellow slaves as functionaries responsible for maintaining the slaves' religious system. There is another factor which helps to explain why the missionaries clashed with the slaves. Some missionaries interfered in the conflict between the slaves and the director of Vossenburg. Often they called on the slaves to obey the members of the dominant white group, the director, the overseers, the bookkeeper, the artisans, and to carry out their orders. In some cases the missionaries made their appeal because they were fearful that the conflicts between the blacks and the whites would get out of control. But whatever the motives of the missionaries to interfere, by trying to inculcate in the slaves such virtues as patience, submission and obedience, they hoped to contribute to maintaining the social order. The mere fact that they acted this way provoked resentment among the slaves and thus led them to depict the Moravian preachers as an appendage of the dominant white planter class. Thus, the slaves also saw the missionaries as preservers of the interests of the planterclass.

How to explain the missionaries' attitudes in this respect? To answer this question we have to go back to the year 1734 when the Moravian Mission negotiated an agreement with the Society of Suriname. This governing board of Suriname represented the interests of the planter class. In this agreement the conditions were spelled out under which the Society allowed the Moravian Mission to preach the gospel to the slaves in Suriname. To indicate what

conditions were involved, let me quote a paragraph from the letter of agreement dated 7 December 1734:

On 4 December I met again with the directors in the West Indian House, to have talks. They only asked me how I felt about the slaves. I replied that one should try to convert them, but at the same time to admonish them to be loyal and industrious and therefore not to long for freedom. However, to accept it with thanks when it is granted to them. They were satisfied with my answer (H.E. Lamur 1984, 112).

To fully understand this paragraph it should be kept in mind that cooperation between Christian churches and private Western organizations in the colonies was quite normal, in particular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Suriname, for example, the Dutch Reformed Church held a similar view. One of its preachers, J.W. Kals, who lived in Suriname between 1731 and 1756, linked the need to preach the gospel and the importance of the mission to the planter class (Van der Linde 1987, 141-156).

The missionaries admitted that slavery conditions were harsh, but they considered slavery as a system that was imposed by God and that it should only be abolished by Him (on the slant of the Moravian Mission, see Van Raalte 1973, 113-125; Zeefuik 1973, 31-42; 138-152). This point of view held by the Moravian Mission led to inconsistency, contradiction, and a lack of clarity in the behavior of the missionaries who preached the gospel at Vossenburg and elsewhere in Suriname. One of the few missionaries who openly criticized his colleagues for interfering in conflicts in favor of the dominant white group is N.O. Tank, who lived in Suriname between 1846 and 1848. His view was that the missionaries were used 'to keep the negroes in subordination and under control, as if one had a presentiment that the whip would once prove insufficient' (Tank 1848, 24,25).

Whether the missionaries who preached the gospel at Vossenburg thought that way is not clear to me. Ironically, they despised the morals of the dominant white group and saw them as godless and lapsed Christians.

Conclusion

In both slave societies, namely Virginia and Vossenburg, the missionaries failed to fully eliminate the African-based religion of the slave populations. In the case of Vossenburg the slave population apparently retained more elements of their religion than did the slaves in Virginia. At Vossenburg the missionaries

started their activities much later compared with Virginia as at Vossenburg the history of Christianity began in 1847, when major changes in the occupational structure of the slave population had already taken place. These changes include the emergence of a group of relatively privileged slaves. It was they who contributed most to the retention of the African-based religion of the slave group. As spokesmen of the slave community, these drivers/priests spoke out openly and defended the slaves' religion. Thus, I found no indication that Christianity rendered the slaves docile. However, neither did it lead them to rebel.

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CHAPTER FOUR

LEGAL RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SURINAME

ROSEMARY BRANA-SHUTE

"Survival is a form of resistance."
—Meridel LaSeuer

In recent years studies about slave rebellion and resistance in New World societies have grown exponentially. Overwhelmingly, however, they have concentrated on the most overt and violent forms of resistance: large-scale conspiracies and rebellions, arson and sabotage, poisoning, physical attacks, and marronage. All were acts perpetrated by slaves unwilling to capitulate to the total social, economic, psychological, cultural, and physical control that slave owners attempted to impose on them. The laws of every territory which depended on slave labor clearly denounced these acts as illegal and heinous threats against both slaveholders and the viability of the socioeconomic system of slavery. In more recent years, some scholars have explored less overt, and often subtle, forms of resistance to slave regimes, such as satire, malingering, praedial theft, impertinence, and the creation and maintenance of culture practices unsuspected and/or contrary to what slaveowners considered appropriate for their slaves. These less overt acts of resistance to total control by slaveowners were probably the most common during slavery. Given their nature, and probably perpetrated by almost all slaves at one time or another depending on grievances and opportunity, they were the least completely documented as these forms of assertiveness would not have regularly resulted in public indictments and punishment.¹

From the initial colonization of Suriname by Europeans in the mid-seventeenth century until slave emancipation and the end of the institution of slavery in 1863, Suriname exhibited a similar range of experiences of resistance, rebellion, and retribution by owners and slaves alike. To date, however, almost all of the published primary sources and secondary literature dealing with preemancipation Suriname have been preoccupied with the very same issues that obsessed eighteenth century government officials, colonial investors, and the plantocracy: the viability of the plantations, and the related issue of maroon attacks on the plantations. Although there were no large-scale slave rebellions as in some other colonies in the hemisphere, incidents of both individuals and small groups of slaves escaping slavery by running away from plantations were frequent and, unlike most other New World slave societies, a number of maroon communities in the interior survived despite the efforts of colonial militias and European troops to root them out.²

As a result, within the modern historiography of Surinamese slavery, the emergent models of slave resistance to slavery are the maroons, those who deserted the plantations, fled into the interior, at times returned to attack estates, and survived to build societies that were in good part free and separated both from the plantations and the growing population of Paramaribo, the capital and only town in the colony which could presume to call itself a city. Often implied in this historiography is a contrasting negative characterization of enslaved and free people of African descent living in town as docile and accommodating in the face of the white plantocracy. These conflicting stereotypes, as all do, reflect elements of reality but, like caricatures, overemphasize one element while distorting, excluding, or depreciating aspects that might speak to a more complicated truth about slavery and resistance.

Almost invisible in the historiography of slave resistance in Suriname, and elsewhere, are the legal avenues employed by slaves and former slaves to escape both the liabilities of their legal civil status as slaves and the control of owners over them and the lives of their loved ones. This essay explores an unappreciated form of resistance to slavery adopted by an increasing number of Afro-Surinamers during the eighteenth century: the use of legal institutions to challenge and restrict the power of slaveowners and to rescue kinsmen from the control of their masters. Legal forms of resistance generally involved various offices and officers of the bureaucracy and the various courts and commissions which constituted the colonial government. As a result, unlike the illegal escapes to freedom that constitute marronage, largely a phenomenon of the plantation sector, legal escapes to freedom were largely an urban phenomenon, played out in Paramaribo where the colonial bureaucracy and government resided and promulgated the very laws of oppression and exploitation that triggered resistance from slaves, and even from some whites.³ Unlike marronage, which

was largely a strategy of escape employed by enslaved males, legal escapes were increasingly engineered by both enslaved and manumitted women in the eighteenth century. Unlike marronage, which generally saw individuals fleeing the plantations, the evidence suggests that legal avenues were tactics frequently used by and for families. Unlike marronage, the growth of the urban sector, the emergence of a free black and "colored"⁴ population, and the development of multiracial and multicultural households and networks remains almost totally to be explored. Unlike marronage which was blatant, many of the forms of resistance and rebellion in town (and likely on plantations too, if we understood more) were sporadic, individual, and more covert.

The Urban Context

The city experience of slavery was somewhat different from slavery on plantations, and as a result the constraints on and opportunities for slaves also differed. Whereas the plantations had very few whites, and in fact very few free people of any ancestry, Paramaribo enjoyed the largest concentration of both whites and of free black and "colored" men and women in the colony. The overwhelming majority of free women in Suriname, of all ancestries, lived in town. In both rural and urban contexts, the largest group of people were enslaved. Nonetheless, the occupations of slaves also suggests the differences between the two sectors: in town, slaves were active in transporting, mostly by river, the various plantation products destined for export, and in skilled and semi-skilled jobs ranging from carpentry and wig-making to hawking goods along the streets and taking in laundry. Although many townspeople probably participated in some gardening, this endeavor was much different from the regime of plantation agriculture that worked teams of slaves in the rural districts.

The residence patterns of town marked its difference from the plantations. By about 1800 Paramaribo encompassed about 2,000 hectares, including grassy spaces; one could still stroll across town in well under an hour. By the end of the eighteenth century the population had reached about 15,000, up from 10,000 in the 1760s. About a third of its population was free. In the eighteenth century, the ratio of free people to slaves was often much higher than 1:65 in plantation districts, whereas in Paramaribo the ratio decreased as the century progressed so that by 1787 the ratio was about 2:7, and yet more evenly matched by the early 1800s.⁵ There were many more whites in town to scrutinize the always suspect behavior of slaves and ex-slaves, and as a result it was probably harder (though certainly not impossible) to hide behavior and cultural practices offensive to whites. In any case, urban militia units patrolled all the urban neighborhoods every night, on guard against both rebellion and fires, whether set by accident or arson.

Not only multiracial, Paramaribo in the mid- and late eighteenth century was a multilingual, multireligious, and multicultural small city. It is easy to forget that the whites were not an undifferentiated monolith. Not only were resident Europeans divided by class, but they also spoke a number of languages, by necessity including the local creole lingua franca, Sranan Tongo, used by slaves. The majority of urban whites by the last decades of the century may well have been Jews, not Christians; the Christians themselves belonged to a number of different Protestant denominations. The consequent cultural kaleidoscope that constituted Paramaribo was complicated and enhanced by the fact that a majority of its population was African and of African descent and, in the eighteenth century, neither Europeanized or Christianized. Whites were never segregated in neighborhoods separate from blacks or coloreds. Rich and poor free blacks and whites generally lived next to each other; whites occupied the houses on the street front, in deference to their lofty status, while slaves lived in the yards behind them.

Although a minority population group subdivided within itself by class, national, and religious origins, the urban white elite nonetheless monopolized the mechanisms of power. The residence patterns dictated to slaves in town probably made it difficult to build a sense of a shared community separate and distinct from whites. Slaves lived scattered throughout the city, most often in fenced yards behind large gentlemen's houses (herrenhuizen). Part of the slave population was also rotated regularly from town to plantations, even more than the white population was regularly changed with the arrival and departure of sailors, soldiers, and would-be plantation employees and bureaucrats. There were trade-offs for slaves, however. The physical mobility of slaves appears to have been much greater in town than on plantations (especially during the daylight hours), opening opportunities to meet more both free and enslaved people of African descent. Close proximity to whites meant the ways of whites could be more closely scrutinized, their conversations more carefully monitored, and their needs and weaknesses more evident and therefore more readily exploitable. This also meant that slaves, and former slaves, were exposed to a broader range of languages, behaviors, habits, and information than what life on the plantations would have offered. This certainly could make for a more interesting and varied life to be experienced in town, and, more to the point here, helped to make long-resident urban slaves and free people of color more adept in dealing with a variety of whites.⁶ For increasing numbers of slaves, the concentration of relatively large numbers of free people in town—colored and black as well as white—meant more potential patrons, allies, and free agents from whom a slave might garner support in bucking a system bent on bondage and compliance, and from whom one might also learn some new survival strategies. And survival was the key concern, especially for slaves who, as an exploited group, lived close to the edge of malnourishment and exhaustion; close to being physically, emotional-

ly, and sexually abused; and always close to being sold away from family and friends.

For most slaves in eighteenth century Suriname, a successful, that is permanent, escape from the institution of slavery was never a realistic option. For some, on plantations and in town, the importance of staying with kin precluded the option of running away and perhaps facing permanent separation from loved ones. For those who wished to escape slavery legally, so as to still be with family and friends, there was manumission, the freeing of individual slaves by owners who would agree to relinquish their property. Manumission, however, was a very elusive goal; less than one percent of the slave population was ever freed in any year during the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, despite the terrible odds, manumission was an option increasingly chosen by a number of slaves in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.⁷ So too was the use of colonial courts to force both the law and owners to recognize limits to their (ab)use of enslaved kinsmen. These initiatives were forms of resistance increasingly used by slaves in town who refused to accept the claim of the plantocracy that slavery was a permanent condition to be inherited by each generation, and that slaves should accept the power, the authority, and the right of owners to decide the use to which they would put their human property. Slaves could and did recognize the power of owners; what they challenged was their right to exercise that power unquestioned, and the plantocracy's wish that slavery be accepted as the birthright of those of African descent.

For those who did not run away but who remained within the slave colony and the institution of slavery, laws and customs dictated that owners had full rights to their private property, including their human property. One consequence was that slave families (both consanguineal and affinal) were regularly separated. This aspect of slavery was perhaps the most egregious and infamous in terms of its inhumanity, and an aspect of slavery that slaves themselves clearly fought hard to avoid. Both individual owners and the colonial government had recognized early in the colony's history that the callous disregard for maintaining slave families together was the basis for much of the resistance of slaves to the plantation regime.⁸ The laws of colonial Suriname did not protect slave families except to prohibit the sale of infants and young children from their mothers; once children reached the ages of 12-14, they were deemed capable of a full day's labor and could be removed or sold away from their mothers at the owner's discretion. An owner's discretion could and did involve threats of sales as a mechanism of controlling slave behavior, particularly over women with children. In addition to family separations planned and executed by owners, human property was often transferred from deceased owners to estate creditors and inheritors. This was an added, more frightening measure of instability in the lives of slaves and their families beyond routine oppression.

Whenever an owner died, all property was in abeyance until legal disposition was determined. There were no safeguards for slave families who might unexpectedly be separated at the auction block to pay estate creditors and taxes. According to the law, slaves had no voice in or control over the sale and distribution of an owner's property, even if that property were a son, or daughter, or companion.

Or did they? The following story offers one example of the unwillingness of a slave to acquiesce to the powers and authorities that threatened her children. Comments follow thereafter on how this case (and consequently many other similar ones) can enlighten our understanding of the versatility of urban slaves in legally resisting the dictates of a regime in which they were not entitled to a voice or a measure of control. The account should be read with the urban context in mind; one cannot understand the story without the nature of the urban environment which gave this form of resistance the potential for success.

The Case of Mariana van Pinto

In Paramaribo in 1763 a mulatto slave woman by the name of Mariana approached Joseph Bueno de Mesquita and asked his help. She related that her owner Isak Pinto da Fonseca had vouchsafed in a testamentary codicil that she would be someday be a free woman, but only after she had reached the age of forty. Over the many years since that codicil had been written and legally registered, she had guarded her notarized copy, outlived her owner, and experienced some of the ramifications of his widow's subsequent remarriage. As the widow Pinto passed under the jurisdiction and control of her new husband, so too did Mariana and the rest of the human and inanimate property the widow brought into that new marriage. When Mariana turned forty, she reminded the widow's new husband, Moses de Aron Henriquez Morron [hereafter called Morron], of her long-promised freedom. Morron refused to comply with the manumission laws which required him to formally request the Court of Justice and Policy, the most important legislative and judicial body in the colony, to publicly recognize and sanction her freedom. Without the official approval of that court, Mariana could never safely exercise her own free will or independent action. Legally she would remain a slave, subject to Morron's whims and demands.

The help Mariana received from Joseph Bueno de Mesquita was what she needed most: his willingness to serve as her guardian. As a slave she had no legal competence; codicil or no, someone legally free and adult had to speak for her. As her guardian, Bueno de Mesquita petitioned the court for her freedom, justifying his request with the codicil Mariana produced as legal evidence. In accord with proper legal procedure, the court ordered Morron to comment on

Bueno de Mesquita's request, in effect asking Morron if it was true he had failed to honor a solemn and binding testamentary bequest. Morron tried to excuse his neglected duty by noting that he had not continued to demand Mariana's labor, and by defensively arguing that he should not be held liable for the legal costs of realizing another owner's desire that Mariana be freed from slavery. Morron's response was unsatisfactory, and the court found in favor of Mariana's guardian. The court further charged the legal costs for Mariana's manumission to the estate of the deceased owner, in effect forcing Morron to pay up. Some ten days before Christmas in 1763, Mariana was declared a free woman. As a such, she was now in possession of all the rights and liabilities of other free women--which were few--and the added burden of the stigma of having been a slave. Legally, as a "manumitted slave," she continued to owe gratitude and special respect to Morron and his family as her former owners, and when she died a quarter of whatever estate she had accumulated in life. No compensation was due her, or paid her, by anyone on the occasion of her change in civil status from slave to free woman.

Meanwhile, outside the government sphere, there was other business being negotiated. Within three weeks of the court's decision to free Mariana, Morron agreed to sell Mariana's two sons, who were still in his custody, in a private transaction with one David de Robles, a resident of Paramaribo. The contract between the two men specified that the sale was contingent on Robles formally requesting the Court of Justice to free both boys; and that Robles was to ask for the legal letters of freedom in Morron's name. This was a maneuver that would become increasingly popular in Suriname by the end of the century, and frequently used in the next century until emancipation: a private transfer of slaves from one owner to another owner, with a sale contract stipulating that the new owner must legally manumit the purchased slaves within a specified period of time. This gave the original owner of the slaves a chance to sell them, sometimes at rates higher than the market would bring, while at the same time getting rid of slaves whose behavior might only become problematic if they were denied their chance at freedom. The new owner, meanwhile, would be stuck with all the legal paperwork and the costs of manumission, which in the 1760s meant paying for the stamps, paper, public advertisement of intent, and usually a lawyer or notary. Based on many similar cases in the second half of the eighteenth century, it is most likely that Mariana herself arranged the sale by reaching a private arrangement with Robles, perhaps to repay him the costs of the purchase of her sons from money she and the boys would earn as free people. Morron may well have decided that life with the two boys in his household would be a constant source of aggravation as Mariana would most likely have pestered him to sell the boys to her, and/or to have the boys live with her. The likelihood Morron could expect Mariana to passively accept his refusal to free the boys was probably nil, given her insistence on having her freedom, and her resourcefulness in getting the court to find in her favor. Morron's parting shot

in the private sale was to demand that Robles pay the costs while freeing the boys in Morron's name. That ploy legally meant that the boys would always owe Morron and his family a special debt of deference and gratitude as former owners, and a quarter of whatever estate they might leave behind them at death.

Subtleties and innuendos aside, Robles was willing to act the part of a new owner and the agent who would facilitate Mariana's sons joining her in freedom. In February of 1764 Robles petitioned the Court as contracted. The requisite public announcement by placard and town crier of the pending manumission alerted one Rafael de Britto who appeared out of the blue to oppose the boys' freedom, arguing that Morron had had no legal right to sell them to Robles in the first place. De Britto claimed that his own wife should have received the boys as part of her inheritance from the late Isak da Pinto who had first owned and freed Mariana by codicil. De Britto claimed that, although Morron may have had these slaves under his control, he had no legal claim to them. Lawyers drew up supporting documentation for both Morron and de Britto, tracing the transfer of property and authority from the original da Pinto will of 1720, and arguing the rights of owners to decide the disposition of their property. Tangled within the various arguments were residual personal animosities and jealousies of preceding years and former law suits. The contentious nature of the charges and countercharges only encouraged the Court of Justice to postpone the question of freedom for Mariana's sons until a lower civil court ruled on the prime legal question: who owned the two slave boys?

Death often came quickly and unsuspected in those days, to whites and blacks alike, and in the course of the civil case Robles died suddenly. He had requested the boys' freedom as the contract with Morron had promised, but had not yet paid Morron for them, the payment contingent on the manumission; his inconvenient demise in effect made it impossible for Robles to complete his part of the contract. The executor of the Robles estate immediately argued that the purchase of Mariana's sons would be prejudicial to the already "scant" inheritance due Robles' young orphaned daughter, and he proposed to Morron that the purchase agreement be voided, which was done. De Britto and Morron consequently both pulled out of the civil litigation, as no sale had been completed, in effect reverting the two slave boys back to Morron's control while de Britto considered his next move. As a result, Robles' petition for the boys' freedom had no legal support and the process was permanently suspended.

To this point Mariana was not even mentioned. She was the mother of the "property" in question, but legally had no "interest" in the issue at hand. She did not accept, however, the legal dead end that was so clearly oblivious to her concerns as a mother. Once again Mariana took the initiative. She contacted the two men who had secured the financial bond for Robles' original deal with

Morrón, and got their support to proceed with the original sale but with her, rather than Robles, approaching the Court of Justice and Policy for the manumission papers for her sons. As a free, adult, unmarried woman, she had the legal right to petition the court without a guardian, an option not available to most females in the colony who were either married or of minority age. The bondsmen and Mariana moved ahead with the paperwork, and Mariana petitioned the Court for a favorable ruling on the boys' manumission.

Mariana had a number of opponents to her sons being declared free and independent: Morrón, de Britto, and the executor for the Robles estate in particular, each for his own reasons. Sorting out these claims took the court and lawyers a number of years, the documentation mounting steadily: claims and counterclaims, sworn testimonies and depositions, including eyewitness accounts of Mariana surreptitiously removing items from Robles' estate without permission of the executor, and an out-and-out fight between Mariana and Robles' sister. The court finally ruled in favor of freedom, and ordered all the parties to pay a part of the costs. For reasons that remain unclear--and may be just a question of wounded pride--, Morrón refused to accept this verdict, and sent the case to the Netherlands where his lawyers in Amsterdam and the Hague appealed to the national representative legislature, the States General, to overturn the decision of the court in Suriname. The first salvo was an injunction from the Netherlands which ordered the Court of Justice in Suriname to refrain from issuing the formal letters of freedom until the appeal was permanently adjudicated.

The legal battle which ensued when Mariana refused to accept this state of affairs would last sixteen years. Mariana, illiterate, poor, and a newly freed woman of already advancing age, was neither docile nor deterred. She must have found a number of allies in Paramaribo to help her through legal thickets which in that--or even this--day and age would have made even a white male with excellent financial, social, and educational assets think more than twice about proceeding. And she fought Morrón all the way to the States General in the Hague, with lawyers arguing her case in the Netherlands. She needed, and found, advice on how to proceed legally, how to find lawyers, when to appeal for the right to sue pro deo (gratis) in each court, and perhaps even the money to help keep the fight moving. About these aspects we know nothing in detail, unfortunately; the extant documentation is silent on the specific social and economic and political relationships that were forged and tested in this legal battle. It is by understanding what was involved in pursuing legal means for change that we may appreciate the social and economic forces she was able to muster.

What we do have is the correspondence that crossed the Atlantic between lawyers and courts: numbing legal maneuvers, thrusts and parries based on arcane procedures, demands, and counterdemands. For each legal brief submitted by one party came a ruling for the opposition to respond within a specified period; each response had its counterresponse almost ad infinitum. The lawyers focussed on legally defined property rights and proper legal procedure. Mariana's personal resistance to Morron, on the other hand, was based on a right she herself claimed in the fight for her sons' freedom: that she was their mother and therefore their "natural (ex natura) guardian." Her persistence came from her own interests and perceptions of the situation, and her unwillingness to acquiesce to Morron, even if her sons were still in his power.

In 1769 court decisions and legal countermoves crossed in the mail, and as is often the case, timing was everything. Based on dated information from the Netherlands, the court in Suriname decided to issue the long-contested letters of freedom, which Mariana immediately collected and took into her possession and used to claim her sons from Morron's household--all done two days before papers ordering her to respond to new legal demands in the Hague were formally served to her by a local court official. It seems clear that she had heard, through rumor or bureaucratic sympathizers, of the arrival by ship of orders which would stop the court from issuing the letters of freedom. By moving before she could be formally served these orders, and before the court could act on the new orders, she had in effect made the orders useless. The letters of freedom had been issued, and legally it was not the court's role to declare them invalid. Whereas the odds had been against Mariana, the burden now became Morron's: how to prohibit her from enjoying the fruits of her quick action? How to reclaim her sons from her? He moved to charge her with having obtained the letters of freedom while knowing a legal injunction was imminent.

More years ensued. It would be exhilarating to read that Mariana finally won her case based on her natural right as a mother. In fact, Mariana beat Morron on a technicality: she petitioned the States General to dismiss the entire case because Morron had failed to respond to an order within a stipulated period. After sixteen years in court, everyone seemed weary, and the case was closed without a verdict. Morron after all those years decided to let the matter rest. In any case, a verdict was not necessary for Mariana who already got what she wanted: her sons and their legal escape from slavery.⁹

Appreciating Legal Resistance

The story of Mariana is unusual in the extraordinary duration of the legal battle she pursued in her refusal to accept continued slavery for her sons. In key ways, however, her story is not uncommon. In particular, her story illustrates that there were many forms and patterns of resistance to a slave regime that could and did take place in the urban context of Paramaribo. It also suggests the constraints and opportunities available to those who were unwilling to accept the grinding exploitation that was common fare for slaves in that time and place. A number of these constraints and opportunities were more characteristic of town than plantation life and have largely been overlooked or ignored in the story of resistance to slavery. The case of Mariana van Pinto also highlights characteristics of town life that provided contexts for both selective accommodation and resistance to people and institutions based on and protective of slavery.

Mariana van Pinto's legal battle illustrates forms of resistance that are rarely discussed and often unrecognized: the use of legal institutions to fight aspects of oppression those legal institutions supported. Mariana's approach was not symptomatic of abandoning her African cultural heritage to imitate Europeans by utilizing European colonial legal institutions, as characterizations of free coloreds and free blacks too often imply. The use of the courts is a symptom that slaves and their free descendants were adding a cultural breadth that allowed them to function in more than one cultural setting, the very essence of creolization, in this case enabling them to fight Europeans in terms that Europeans could both understand and condone. It is clear from the colonial archives that, as the eighteenth century moved into its second half, the legal bureaucracy became increasingly congested—with petitions from slaves as well as their free descendants. Whereas it was almost only whites who utilized the bureaucracy in that century's earlier decades, by the end of the eighteenth century blacks and coloreds increasingly monopolized the system. Many of the legal processes these people initiated can only be characterized as resistance to the racism and economic brutality of the system, especially where it divided families and loved ones.

Accommodation and resistance are not mutually exclusive, as Mariana's fight in the courts illuminates. To loosen Morron's grip on her sons she utilized rather than attacked the very institutions that supported slavery. This approach was used increasingly by ex-slaves, particularly by women, almost always in cases involving the defense of family members. The manumission records, for example are replete with free black and colored women acting in financially and legally crucial roles in securing freedom and some financial and familial independence for slaves and former slaves. Related records document attempts

to force, through law suits when necessary, both private owners and the government to sell enslaved family members to free kin.

What we know of Mariana's behavior illustrates that she understood the importance of contacts. The courts, the lawyers, the bureaucracy were all in Paramaribo: where better to learn the ropes in the white man's world? And it was a white man's world. Mariana took advantage of the urban context and learned, in her years in the city, to make contacts: with free men who could advise, lend money, represent, suggest and approach lawyers. She could never have pursued her case against Morron without figuring out who were, as other black petitioners in a similar case pointedly phrased it, the "good whites." Without help in securing lawyers in the Netherlands and without literate sympathizers, it is unlikely her sons would have moved out from under Morron's control. This was neither accommodation nor docility on Mariana's part: it was a clever use of human urban resources for the benefit of her sons. Mariana had the nerve and persistence, as did others as well, to enlarge her experience to acquire new skills in family survival—to expand her cultural arsenal, not to lose what she had learned as a slave, but to increase her ability to cope on her own terms in a context not of her making.

Does it mean anything that Mariana is a mulatta? Yes, but probably not as much as the literature claiming all kinds of special treatment for coloreds would suggest. Her sons were mulattos, like their mother, suggesting that her late owner, a white Portuguese Jew, was probably not their father. Moreover, the boys were probably born after Pinto died. About half of those manumitted in the eighteenth century were colored, as was Mariana, but usually as children rather than as adults. One should note, however, that her manumission, although granted her by Pinto, cost him nothing, paid her nothing in compensation for years of service, and made no provision for any children she might bear. He freed her contingent on her surviving to the age of forty; that age made her an old woman in eighteenth century Suriname, particularly for a slave. In any case, the archives document many more cases of black, not just colored, ex-slave women freeing their children, parents, and siblings.

It is not a coincidence that women and the city are paired together. Both constitute aspects of Suriname's history, particularly before 1863, that are understudied and underappreciated. Late eighteenth and nineteenth century census data suggest that the majority of the total urban population was female and that the majority of free coloreds and free blacks in town were also female. A clearer understanding of the urban experience and resistance will of necessity need to focus attention on women in town. Their experience in Suriname is likely to reveal patterns similar to women in slave societies elsewhere in the hemisphere. Everywhere slave women were exploited as slaves, as non-whites, and

as women, a triple burden that differentiated their experience in some degree from that of enslaved men. Gender-based distinctions did not end when slave women were manumitted. This essentially meant that as women they faced constraints peculiar to their sex: they were more subject to sexual abuse by owners and those to whom they hired themselves out; they were limited in the occupations and skills they would learn and practice, preempting their ability as a group to develop sufficient incomes and statuses to allow stable and independent lives; they were subject to similar, often unstated, expectations of what was considered proper "women's roles," although without the respect accorded to white women. It should come as no surprise then that slave women as a group resisted slavery not only as slaves but as women.¹⁰ Mariana's case illustrates a response of many women: to fight for the safety of her children and family members. In manumission cases similar to Mariana's case, women manipulated the system and whites where they could, and one of the most successful ways was to use their universal role as mother which whites could understand and appreciate, even if this did not end the practice of selling offspring away from their parents. Mariana presented a visible public model of a mother's unrelenting unwillingness to accept the power of property owners over her sons. In fact, in 1782, in another case dealing with the manumission of a family of slaves, Mariana's dogged pursuit was remembered by one of the lawyers who suggested Mariana's example was a spectre haunting the legal system.

In eighteenth century Suriname, overt, unmitigated, aggressive rebellion aimed at bringing down the institution of human slavery was very much a rarity. More common were attempts to escape the particularities of slavery as individuals experienced them. Individual slaves made their way through life as best they could with what they had to work with, trying to locate opportunities within the constraints of time, place, and the operant economic and political system. Her resistance was limited in its objectives, and not intended to overthrow the system of slavery. Mariana had assessed her personal situation and attempted to deal with it in a way that would benefit herself and her children, despite the odds against her. Hers was only one example of the fight for the survival of Afro-Surinamese families despite slavery. Legal challenges by former slaves to slaveowners were public affairs, and they encouraged others to come forward and do likewise, especially when, in Mariana's case, they were successful. More and more free people came to the aid of individual slaves as the resistance to separating families became more common by the end of the century. The ploys and mechanisms of legal resistance—getting second or new owners, locating patrons and allies, utilizing the skills of lawyers, clerks, bondsmen, and notaries—became better known and increasingly used successfully. Mariana neither dismantled slavery nor rewrote the laws that gave slaveowners the right to deny freedom to their slaves. Nonetheless, Mariana's case and the multitude of others encountered in the archives during a study of manumission in eighteenth century

Suriname should encourage us to assess the importance of the cumulative effect of many Marianas--the constant pushing at the constraints of slavery through a range of large and small acts, legal as well as illegal, that we identify as resistance.

NOTES

1. See, for examples, Mintz and Price (1976: 18) on slaves being "terribly polite" or "uppity" as personal variations on otherwise expected behavior of a person's status. Also, slaves and free people left records in government archives when they petitioned the courts, commissions, or governor for favors; if they were involved, as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators, of some crime; or were taxpayers or liable to militia duty. The colonial government archives have been underexploited regarding urban slavery or resistance to slavery in town. There is something else to consider as well. The majority of the free population of Suriname during the eighteenth century was white and male and, although literacy was common among them, colonial Suriname was a profoundly aliterate society, placing a relatively low value on books, literature, and educational and cultural institutions. The number of colonials who wrote about Suriname as they knew it in the eighteenth century can probably be counted on two hands, with fingers left over. To date we have no diaries, tales and stories, traditions, or memoirs from free men and women who were black and colored as well as white. The absence of this kind of documentation, however, should not be taken to mean that resistance did not occur, as noted by Barbara Bush (1986). The archives remain our best, if limited, source for exploring eighteenth century forms of resistance which must be deduced from behavior recorded by essentially unsympathetic bureaucrats.
2. As far as we know or surmise, most slaves ran away from plantations. Slaves did run away in town also, although this has not yet been adequately examined in Suriname. For documentation on the efforts of colonials to root out maroon villages, see Stedman (1988), Price (1976, 1983), and Hoogbergen in this volume.

3. The system was not only oppressive to slaves because of their status, but also, based on class distinctions, oppressive to lower-class whites as well; based on race, oppressive to slaves and free coloreds, free blacks, and Native Americans; based on gender differences, oppressive to women; and, based on religious distinctions, oppressive to those who were not Protestant, preferably communicants of the Reformed Dutch church. We make a mistake not to remember that there were multiple sources and rationales for oppression and discrimination, and consequently grounds for almost everyone at one time or another to rebel or resist. Sweet and Nash (1981) are eloquent and instructive on the essentially exploitative nature of all New World colonial societies, and on the need to approach understanding the lives and stratagems of survival employed by "ordinary" people within this context.
4. The term "colored," a translation of the Dutch kleurling is used here, as it was used in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Suriname, to refer to those people of mixed ancestry, initially the offspring of a European father and a woman of pure African descent. In time the term came to mean anyone who was neither purely European nor purely African in racial heritage. Because color and shade distinctions were important in Suriname, as elsewhere in the New World, the term is used here to signal the existence of such a group.
5. Paramaribo, which in the nineteenth century finally came to dominate the plantation regions of the country, is still badly neglected in the historiography of slavery. The figures cited here are estimates made by eighteenth century observers, accepted and repeated by historians since, including me. They may be found summarized in Brana-Shute (1985: 41-94). See also Nelemans (1973), which is a brief history of Paramaribo in Dutch, English and Spanish. Temminck Groll and Tjin A Djie (1973) is superbly and abundantly illustrated and has sections in English; the first 265 pages are on Paramaribo and the remaining hundred on the plantation districts.
6. This helps to explain a proverb dating from slavery which suggests that, even if a slave was taken to town to be publicly whipped with the infamous Spanish Bok or whip (described by Van Lier 1971: 130), at least the slave got to see the city. The proverb (odo) was meant to suggest that terrible experiences had their positive aspects as well. It has a second meaning in suggesting the excitement of city life compared to the plantations. The proverb in Sranan Tongo is Tangi foe pansboko mi si Benifoto (Bureau Volkslectuur 1960: 5).

7. For studies of how manumission functioned in Suriname, both in theory and in practice, see Brana-Shute 1985, 1989.
8. The eighteenth century archives are peppered with reports of attacks against plantation directors and owners who abused slave women or ordered work contingents of slaves to be transported to new planting grounds far away from their families. There are also examples in the archives of rewards granted groups of slaves: for protecting their plantations from incursions by maroons, the slaves of some plantations were granted the right to never be sold or moved away, which, while not granting full freedom, guaranteed that families and broader networks of kin and friends would be together in the future, and free from the pervasive worry of separation. This was no small guarantee, as the emotional and physical support of family and community was crucial to their survival as a group and a culture. Van Lier mentions two timber plantations, Berlijn and Bergendaal, whose slaves were granted such privileges (1971: 152).
9. The documentation for Mariana van Pinto is incomplete but large and widely scattered in both the archives of Suriname and of the States General, both housed in the Hague. The key sources are Mariana's 1763 manumission request (Raad van Politie 390, beginning on folio 430); the 1764 manumission request for her sons Mathatias and Samuel (Raad van Politie 392, beginning on folio 284); and the incomplete, partially undated collection of 1764-66? documents relating to the case which was assembled and inventoried in 1769 before a copy was forwarded to the Netherlands. A number of details in my account were supplied through a variety of other sources, such as local "counts" (opgaven) of the free population, tax lists, States General resolutions, and patterns and experiences that revealed themselves as a result of the study of over 3,000 slaves who negotiated their ways through the manumission process. The bibliography in Brana-Shute (1985) describes the basic sources.
10. Fox-Genovese (1986) and Bush (1986) are sensitive and suggestive about how to think about slave women's forms of resistance in North America and the British Caribbean respectively. Fox-Genovese in particular cites much of the basic literature that explores the problems of understanding women's roles in rebellion and resistance. Again, there is little about freed women or legal resistance.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE 'USUAL BARBARITY' OF THE ASIANS?: INDENTURE AND RESISTANCE IN SURINAME

ROSEMARIJN HOEFTE

Following emancipation (1863) and the transition period of state supervision (1863-1873), the planters in Suriname resorted to the importation of foreign laborers. In the ten years before the abolition of slavery, Chinese and Portuguese from Madeira migrated to Suriname to work the fields of the plantations. In 1863 British West Indians (mainly from Barbados) followed. Few of these immigrants, however, were willing to sign new contracts after their indenture had expired. The influx of new foreign laborers became exceedingly difficult after the English and Portuguese closed the harbors of, respectively, Hong Kong and Macao and the Chinese government prohibited indentured emigration.

The planters argued that only large-scale immigration of indentured laborers could save the plantations. Experiences in other Caribbean colonies suggested that British India would be the most feasible place to recruit this new labor force. Between 1873 and 1917 34,304 British-Indians migrated to Suriname. However, these immigrants remained British subjects who could appeal to the British consul and thus undermine both the highest Dutch authority and the submissiveness of the plantation labor force. Moreover, the dependence on a foreign nation for the supply of labor coupled with the growth of nationalism and the concomitant rise of the anti-emigration movement in India forced the Surinamese planters to look elsewhere for indentured workers. In 1890 the first migrants from Netherlands East India (Indonesia) arrived and, when by 1930 the governments in Suriname and the Netherlands steered the course away from contract immigration, 32,956 Javanese had come to the colony.¹

These foreign laborers were contracted for a period of at least five years. The contract stipulated that they were to work seven (factory) or ten (field) hours per day, five days a week. This agreement also included the so-called penal sanction, which through the use of criminal sanctions forced the indentureds to place their labor power at the unqualified disposal of their employers. Thus criminal law was used to enforce a civil contract, which furthermore restricted wage rates, limited the geographical mobility of the workers, and in general guaranteed control over the labor force.

Prior to examining how indentured laborers in Suriname resisted the domination of the planters and the state authorities, this essay briefly addresses the degree and quality of control over contractants. Resistance took passive and active forms. Most frequently the plantation workers expressed their opposition to the 'planters' regime through acts of non-cooperation such as 'neglect of duty' or illegal absences. However, contemporary records kept by the colonial administration, plantation archives, and newspaper articles virtually only pay attention to active resistance, that is spectacular actions. Even a year like 1908 that was dominated by strikes, the Governor of Suriname described in the Colonial Report (*Koloniaal Verslag*) with the following words: 'peace and quiet were not disturbed'. To be sure, no lives were lost but judging from other sources, peaceful it was not. In other words passive resistance is hardly mentioned at all in the sources. The emphasis on eye-catching incidents is reflected in this article. I do not ignore nor underestimate passive resistance; as a matter of fact, I will discuss it first, yet I have opted to follow the archival material as some of the more detailed forms of resistance highlight the relationship between and the reactions of the indentured laborers, the planters, and the state authorities. These descriptions also reveal the violent character such mass uprisings could assume. The question is were they isolated conflicts or a struggle to change radically the existing social structure?

Control

Not only the planters but also the state exercised control over the contract laborers during indentureship. The labor contract specified the rights and duties of the worker, and government officials intervened when a breach of contract occurred. Despite the fact that, unlike the days of slavery, the planters did not legally own the indentured laborers, they exercised a more extensive control over these workers than over the free labor force.

The first and most obvious way of dominating the indentured workers was through the labor contract itself. More subtle means of control included the isolation of workers on plantations through a pass system. Only with the approval of the director, who had to issue the pass, could a worker leave the plantation. When a dispute arose between management and laborers, and the latter exercised their right to complain at the office of the District Commissioner (DC), the management would usually not give out more than three passes at a time, thus preventing a mass exodus from the estate.

In addition, the white minority attempted to increase divisions among their subordinates by: encouraging labor competition between free and contract laborers; emphasizing religious differences; establishing separate housing subdivisions for the different ethnic groups; and employing psychological tactics such as preferential treatment, cooptation, and racial stereotyping. At first the planters used laudatory words to characterize their new British Indian workers who were called 'hard working', while they praised 'the docility' of the Javanese. Soon, however, the authorities saw immigration as a mixed blessing; after all, the necessary laborers belonged to the 'scum of the earth'. They were as vice-ridden as the 'lazy', 'lying', 'drinking', and 'thieving' Creoles. The Creoles, British Indians, and Javanese also had their own stockpile of derogatory racial stereotypes about the other ethnic groups. Thus the dual burden of indentureship and division among themselves retarded the organization of plantation workers.

The law forced the indentured to place his labor power at the unqualified disposal of his employer at specified times. The contract placed the worker under stringent social and disciplinary control. The so-called penal sanction made neglect of duty or refusal to work punishable by jail sentences. This allowed the planters to impose their ideas of work discipline. After emancipation, the right 'formally' to sentence or punish a laborer was transferred from the employer to the state. Before the judicial proceedings took place, a state official had to hold a preliminary inquiry. In case of breach of contract the DC had to first investigate the accusation and to sanction the charge before it could be taken to court.

Justice was dispensed in the 'European way', adhering to European values and enforcing the rules of the plantation owners, thereby frequently ignoring the native customs and traditions of the immigrants. Most of the time the witnesses were part of the plantation hierarchy: directors and managers, overseers, and drivers. On top of that, the immigrants experienced major communication difficulties as interpreters were often not reliable, a problem existing in other Caribbean colonies as well. Immediately after the magistrate had passed sentence, the culprits were taken to jail. The planters repeatedly complained about the light sentences meted out and in their eyes, the relaxed prison regime.²

Passive Resistance

One of the classic forms of non-cooperation is the feigning of an illness. Many planters claimed that their laborers often practiced simulation. Of course, this form of resistance is hard if not impossible to trace. Other forms of passive resistance, however, are registered. Even though statistics as published in both official documents and local newspapers from this period are rather unreliable, these figures do provide a useful indication of unlawful behavior by Asian contractants. A radical form of resistance is suicide, which is traditionally thought of as a typical British Indian action. In the **Koloniale Verslagen** from 1886 to 1920 the Immigration Agent General officially registered 47 suicides through hanging, poisoning, and self-inflicted wounds. In 32 instances he recorded the nationality of the victim: 22 of them were British Indian and 10 Javanese.

For the year 1898 data are available for justice meted out at the plantation with the largest indentured population, Mariënburg. The most common offenses out of a total of 678 convictions are: unwillingness to work (47%), laziness (18%), assaulting another person (9%), theft (6%), and desertion (5%).³ The three major forms of non-cooperation are then: neglect of duty, laziness, and illegal absence.

Under the labor laws for indentured immigrants, workers could be penalized for laziness or neglect of duty. The percentage of Hindustani convicted under the labor laws during the period 1885-1923 range from approximately 11 to 20 percent, with an average of 15 percent. For Javanese contractants the percentage of labor convictions averages at 9 percent, with a range of 10 to 21 percent.

The most obvious form of illegal absence is desertion. In 1904 some planters called the rate of Javanese deserters 'alarming' and four years later rumors in Paramaribo claimed that many indentureds abandoned the plantations. This wave happened to coincide with wage disputes and strikes on many plantations. The planters refuted the allegations, arguing that the laborers were treated correctly and that running-away was a characteristic trait of contractants who preferred stealing to working.⁴ However, newspaper reports suggest that the stories about the deserters were largely true. When the police started a round up of runaways, they caught several in a camp in the forest surrounding plantations along the Commewijne River. The fugitives had stolen chickens and planted corn to support themselves. The police set other deserted 'maroon camps' on fire. The authorities assumed, however, that most deserters did not live from stealing but worked on government settlements where smallholders hired them.⁵

Besides not following labor orders, another form of non-cooperation was the refusal to settle where plantation authorities instructed the migrants to move. For example, in 1886 the estate Resolutie was sold. Most immigrants who worked at this estate were relocated to plantation Mariënburg. The movement of these laborers turned out to be troublesome and displayed some of the power of the contract workers within certain parameters. Many of the older contractants at Resolutie possessed livestock, which could not be held at Mariënburg; as a result, only eleven Asians wanted to move there. The management tried to solve the problem by ordering the immigrants to auction their cattle, but this plan failed because, according to the plantation administration, they asked 'extravagant prices'. Only when the estate eventually dissolved the contract of one of the greatest cow owners and after Immigration Agent General Cateau van Roosevelt had mediated between the parties was the matter settled more than a year later.⁶

When a new owner bought the coffee plantation Mon Trésor he obligated himself to take over a labor force consisting of twenty-four British Indians and six Chinese. The other nineteen indentured workers were to be resettled to plantation Voorburg. Yet, ten of them refused to do so, expressing the wish to move to plantations of their own choice. The wishes of the indentureds were honored, although some of them later regretted their choice and the owner of Mon Trésor then decided to keep all the workers.⁷

Active Resistance

Active resistance ranged from individual acts of violence to mass uprisings. Lone acts of resistance included sabotage, like the obstruction of trains on the plantation, the destruction of crops and/or fields, predial larceny (theft or illegal removal of any living animal or growing crop), arson, and physical attacks on supervisory personnel. The plantation authorities feared the latter two in particular. Arson was one of the major horrors of the planters throughout the centuries. The Colonial Reports mention that especially in the first years of indenture immigrants resorted to arson to protest their lot. According to official records in 1873, 1875, 1876, and 1877 canefields and warehouses were set on fire. However, given that forensic science was still in its infancy, it may have been hard to prove that a fire had been set deliberately. The common use of highly flammable materials and the lack of adequate fire precautions on the estates caused many accidents. Only when an arsonist was caught in the act could the authorities prove a charge of fire-raising. Thus arson may have occurred more frequently than statistics and archival sources suggest.

Physical attacks were directed against identifiable members of the plantation hierarchy, primarily overseers and drivers, who maintained the closest contact with the workers. The overseers, Europeans and Creoles, allotted the tasks and supervised the workers. They were responsible for the work done. Drivers, often called **mandoors** in Suriname and recruited from among the workers, assisted the overseers. The drivers in particular were unpopular among the fieldhands, who accused them frequently of thievery, physical violence, and blackmail. The assaults were directed at Europeans, Creoles, British Indians, and Javanese alike. Often such physical attacks resulted in grievous bodily harm or even death. Yet the case of one woman at Mariënborg showed that one cuff on the ear also could have the desired effect. During an argument the woman hit her supervisor in the face. The management then decided to fire the overseer as he had lost his authority, now that an indentured Asian and a woman at that, had assaulted him.

In the first decades of indentured immigration, major unrest among the indentured immigrants characterized the years 1868, 1873, 1879, 1884, 1891, 1902 and 1908. These uprisings are described in some detail here to illuminate the relationship between the workers, the plantation hierarchy, and the state. The most massive outbreak of violence took place at Mariënborg in 1902. It was the last major violent clash between plantation laborers and state authorities until the 1930s, when general labor protests again stirred grave unrest.

The Chinese were the first indentureds to arrive and not surprisingly the first (in 1868) to protest their conditions. In 1858 they struck at plantation Monsort; the army arrested the strike leaders. In the same year animosity between the Creoles and the 289 Chinese laborers at plantation Resolutie caused many frictions and once led to a fight that required military intervention. Some Chinese were punished, not because of the fight but 'because they misjudged the civil and military authority'.⁸

In 1872 the Governor of Suriname noted that desertion was quite common, and this spirit of resistance increased in the following year with mutinies on the plantations Goudmijn, Alliance, Hooyland, and Resolutie. During the period 1874-1877 'the spirit among the immigrants left much to be desired', according to the colonial administration. Arson and unrest at Alliance, Resolutie, and Waterloo were the major incidents. In these years it was Barbadians and Chinese in particular who rose in protest. In 1879 it was the turn of the British Indians, again at plantation Alliance, who insubordinated authority.

The first lives were lost in 1884 at the estate Zorg en Hoop. The incident took place in the beginning of September at plantation Zoelen, when 47 Hindustani left the estate without permission to visit the Immigration Agent General in Paramaribo. The DC had turned a deaf ear to their complaints about tasks and wages, which he called 'largely unfounded and exaggerated.' According to the official version of the events, the protesters turned down the offer for three passes to leave the plantation and became increasingly unruly. They blockaded the entrances of the estate and prevented the passengers of the boat with the DC, several other officials, and some policemen to disembark. Following attacks on the authorities, the DC called in the military, which occupied the plantations and arrested nineteen ringleaders.⁹

The disturbance at Zoelen led to unrest at plantations in the districts of Beneden-Commewijne and Beneden-Cottica where indentureds demanded higher wages and less work. Three weeks after 'Zoelen' four British Indians attacked a driver at plantation Zorg en Hoop after he had criticized their output. The manager immediately called in the help of the DC and the military police. The four suspects refused to appear before the DC. Attempts to collect them at their houses were thwarted by one hundred laborers armed with sticks. The DC then left for Paramaribo to request army assistance. Two days later he reappeared at the plantation in the company of an interpreter and fifty infantrymen. The four original accused still refused to surrender; eighty immigrants protected them, yelling 'awa' (come on) and 'bahut mara' (well hit). They threw bottles filled with water, stones, and clods of earth at the soldiers who then retaliated by firing. They killed seven persons, including a woman. The death of the woman is described in detail in the colonial report; apparently the authorities felt the need to justify their actions and to point out that even British Indian women were not always as meek as they were reputed to be. She had just thrown a projectile when she was hit by a bullet. It entered her body through her right elbow, and by way of her upper arm and right temple it left via her left temple. The colonial administration stressed that the DC and the military had acted 'sedate and cautiously'; they had fired their weapons only in self-defense. The Governor concluded that the incident had improved the prestige of the colonial authorities.¹⁰

The year 1891 turned out to be one of the most difficult ones for the planters to assert their authority over their labor force and to convince the administrations in both Paramaribo and The Hague that the situation on the estates was threatening indeed. The first problem arose during the Tadjja celebrations at the plantations Zoelen and Geertruidenberg. Muharram Tadjja was the most popular festival of the British Indians. Groups competed with each other for the most beautiful tadjja, a paper and bamboo temple which was to be thrown

into the river at the end of a procession. In this year's procession several different groups from the plantations Zoelen, Geertruidenberg, and Mariënborg fought over the right of way. Calm was soon restored but the arrival of the Attorney General in the company of twenty soldiers stirred up things again. In his haste to solve the affair the very same day the Attorney General made several mistakes. The first was to confront the hostile parties and the second to have six armed policemen take the defendants to court. The latter believed that they were being arrested.

According to the official version, the passive resistance against the authorities soon ceased and the Hindustani started to throw objects at the Attorney General. He decided to free the prisoners, but it was already too late. The military fired shots at the dissatisfied workers and killed four men.¹¹ Yet, according to Findlay, acting director of Zoelen and an eye-witness, the sequence of events was different. First, the military used their rifle butts to drive back the contractants, who only then started to throw lumps of clay. The Attorney-General gave the order to free the prisoners only after the shooting had taken place. The feelings of dismay and alarm were further strengthened when word got around that the government was planning to send a warship to Zoelen. Many indentured immigrants feared the worst and took flight with their families to the surrounding forest. Only when the director guaranteed their safety were they willing to return to the plantation.¹²

In a letter to the Governor, the manager of Mariënborg accused the authorities of misgovernment and the murder of innocent people. This display of power had been unnecessary, since there had been no resistance against the state, property, or plantation personnel.¹³ This concern for safety of personnel ended with the murder of the director of plantation Jagtlust a few months after the incident at Zoelen and Geertruidenberg. According to the planters it revealed the spirit of resistance among the British Indian contractants: 'murder threats are the order of the day'.¹⁴ For example, a laborer of plantation Zoelen, who was convicted for leaving the plantation without a pass, threatened the English consul, the DC, and two plantation directors with bodily harm.

Some planters reacted by arming their overseers with revolvers, others preferred to address collectively both the Colonial Minister in The Hague and the Governor of Suriname concerning the 'alarming growth of resistance among the British Indian coolies.' This group of approximately thirty owners and managers emphasized that they not only wanted to complain, but also propose measures such as those instituted in 'Demerara where twenty-times as many coolies live, yet because of strict adherence to the law the safety of individuals and property are absolutely guaranteed'.¹⁵ In the letter to the Governor the planters were more specific and requested an 'increase in the police force, a fast dispatch of justice,

and the reinstatement of corporal punishment. According to the planters the death penalty did not serve its purpose as a 'coolie' does not value his life and the death penalty through hanging would, according to his belief, not prevent him to obtain everlasting bliss; mutilation on the other hand would. Moreover, physical pain impresses him more than death'.¹⁶ The Governor, however, refused to grant the planters' request, except for a speedy dispatch of justice, and accused them of overreacting to the situation caused simply by, as he saw it, the 'usual barbarity of the Asians'.¹⁷ He also suspected the planters of wanting to glorify their murdered colleague.

The managers of plantation Mariënborg in their correspondence with the parent company in Amsterdam list a number of crimes perpetrated by British Indians under the heading 'coolie murder mania' to illustrate their fear of the plantation laborers. A contractant at Zoelen threatened to kill his wife; the police refused to place the man in remand, and later the woman in question was found dead in the cane fields. At Voorburg a British Indian child was tied and then 'slaughtered' by a compatriot because he had refused to obey the latter's orders. A worker killed a director of St. Barbara with a machete; personnel immediately shot the perpetrator to death.

After the Governor granted a reprieve to the murderer of the director of Jagtlust, the planters listed more instances of British Indian resistance to prove that 'Jagtlust' was not an incident, but a symptom of an intolerable situation. At Voorburg an indentured laborer killed an overseer following a conflict about work. At the police station Sommelsdijk a stone thrown by an arrested British Indian wounded the director of Goudmijn. This contractant had heard from his mates that hitting the director would free one of his contract. While interfering in a brawl an overseer and director of Wederzorg were given a sound thrashing. Two overseers at Rust en Werk shared their fate. Laborers also threatened personnel at Mariënborg, Meerzorg, Jagtlust, Slootwijk and tried to drown several overseers of Alliance. The murder of a nine-year old boy at Mariënborg strengthened the administration of this plantation in its belief 'that it is impossible to govern such tiger natures according to the most advanced humane laws of Western civilization'.¹⁸

Yet, the expected outburst of violence did not take place in 1891 but more than a decade later in 1902. In that year the bloodiest revolt of contract laborers in the history of the country shocked Suriname. Violent riots at the sugar plantations Alliance and Mariënborg took place within a few weeks of each other. A wage reduction caused the workers at Alliance to strike. One hundred British Indians and thirty-seven Javanese left the estate without a pass to complain to the DC of Frederiksdorp, even though Alliance fell under the jurisdiction of the DC of Ephrata. Apparently the protesters mistrusted this official and thus bypassed

him. The strikers demanded less work, higher wages, and the dismissal of a 'tyrannical' British Indian overseer. Following this meeting the protesters turned in their weapons and promised to resume labor.

When the men returned to Alliance they met the DC of Ephrata, accompanied by an interpreter and two policemen, who were to start an investigation. They arrested and bound the leading rebel which caused unrest among the other workers who retaliated by throwing stones and bottles. The DC ordered the police to fire six revolver shots and to release the prisoner. The official tried to flee but the enraged contractants soon found and attacked him. The DC of Ephrata was happy to leave the plantation alive and only with the arrival of his colleague from Frederiksdorp did some semblance of peace return to the estate. Later that day the Attorney General and Immigration Agent General arrived with detachments of army and police, but the DC convinced them not to provoke the workers and to spend the night at a neighboring plantation. An investigation by the Attorney General and the DC of Frederiksdorp during the next two days indicted one Javanese and sixteen British Indians; each was sentenced to six months hard labor. Yet the strike had some success as the owner replaced the manager and raised wages.¹⁹

Three weeks later the workers at Mariënburg rose in revolt. According to the official colonial report, it was again a wage question that started the troubles. All attempts by state officials to raise the daily payments had proven futile. Later these authorities discovered that other problems such as preferential treatment given to some immigrant families, bad choices of overseers, and insufficient control over the drivers had aggravated the unsatisfactory wage situation.

The explosion took place on July 27, when a gang of cane cutters refused to perform their tasks because they considered their pay inadequate. Their overseer informed Mariënburg director Mavor of the wage demands. Mavor agreed, by messenger, to pay a bit extra per bank, but the protesters rejected this proposal. The laborers decided to talk to Mavor himself and marched in orderly fashion to his office. Mavor agreed to come to the fields himself. Three hours later he promised another small raise, which the workers again rejected. They requested to see the DC and Mavor issued a pass to leave the estate to three of them. When Mavor left the field some Hindustani started to throw cane and to follow him. They also attacked the accompanying overseers. Mavor jumped on his horse and sped away, followed by his personnel in a train and two hundred raging indentureds on foot shouting 'maral maral' (hit!, hit!). Mavor arrived at his office to call for help and then left again to go into hiding. A colleague took his horse to request police assistance. The steadily growing mass of people cut the

phone lines to disrupt the communication with the outside world and looted the office and the plantation shop. Discovering that Mavor was hiding in the factory, they invaded that building, destroying everything in their way, and killed the director.

The same DC who had to flee Alliance some weeks earlier, the Attorney General, the Immigration Agent General, thirty policemen, and an army of 126 men arrived, to find peace largely restored. They arrested several British Indians and one Javanese as the main agitators. A great number of indentureds armed with tools gathered in front of the bridge connecting office and factory, calling for the release of the arrested. A lieutenant and ten soldiers had the order to keep the masses off the bridge, which seemed an impossible task. Five times they ordered the crowd to disperse. This only provoked booing and mounted pressure on the military. The Attorney General gave permission to open fire, resulting in the death of seventeen British Indians and thirty-nine wounded, seven of whom later died. The volley dispersed the crowd and on July 31 the laborers resumed work.

In court the twenty-one Hindustani and one Javanese accused of the premeditated murder of Mavor denied the charge. The defendants incriminated each other and agreed only on the arrival of Mavor and the reason for the tragedy: money. Most witnesses agreed that wages indeed had been low during the last few years. It was impossible to single out the chief offenders and the accusation of premeditated murder could not be upheld. Thirteen men were acquitted and eight Hindustani sentenced to twelve years hard labor.²⁰

In the Netherlands, Colonial Minister Idenburg stated bluntly that the abuses by the managements at Alliance and Mariënburg had led to the revolts.²¹ This proved a remarkable admission of maltreatment on some estates. The planters, however, attributed the revolt to other causes than wage reductions. Instead they blamed some 'ill-disposed' British Indians who had come from Demerara. The management at Mariënburg planned to prevent future violence by purchasing twenty-five guns, whereas the colonial government appointed a commission to investigate whether the wage and task system needed change.

These incidents demonstrate that strikes frequently became uncontrolled, resulting in confrontation between workers on the one side and plantation management, state officials, army and police on the other. An exception is the labor unrest that started in the spring of 1908. Strikes broke out at several plantations to protest the low wages and the behavior of field personnel. Unrest also dominated the following month and the Immigration Agent General decided to deport three protest leaders to the western district of Nickerie.²² Even this measure did not stop the protests and the Agent General proposed a new task

and wage system, which most planters ignored. This only increased the unrest among the indentureds; strikes continued to occur until the fall of 1908.

The sugar planters blamed the widespread unrest, including strikes and desertions, of 1908 on the rising wages on the banana plantations, the 'support' the strikers received from state officials, and on the changing political situation in India which was thought to make newcomers unruly. These newly arrived immigrants supposedly incited the old-hands to mutiny.²³ The year 1908 turned out to be last year of major unrest until the more politically oriented protest of the early 1930s.

Immigrant Organizations and Political Awareness

The first decades of indentured immigration saw little organized political action among the Asian laborers. In the twentieth century most energy was directed toward looking after the immediate interests of their own ethnic group. The lack of radicalism and their attachment to Holland and the Queen in particular characterized the labor unions organized during this period.

The most important immigrant association was the Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging (Suriname Immigrants Association, SIV) which was founded in 1910 on the initiative of Immigration Agent Generai Van Drimmelen. Although the SIV was meant to serve both Hindustani and Javanese, soon an amendment of the articles of the union made it an exclusively British Indian association. Its goal was to promote the moral, intellectual, and material interests of the British Indian population in Suriname, yet it did not foster the political awareness of its members. To the contrary, relations with the colonial government were very good. Not all immigrants praised Van Drimmelen or for that matter the British Consul, who was an additional protector of the British Indians and had to look after their personal welfare. Immigrants organized in the union 'Vrijheid en Recht' (Freedom and Justice), founded in 1911, demanded a consul who would do more than play lawn tennis, and accused chief interpreter Sital Persad and Van Drimmelen of only protecting 'high-caste and capitalist' Hindustani. The discontent even led to a conspiracy to kill Sital Persad and Van Drimmelen.²⁴

In little more than a year the membership of Freedom and Justice increased from 300 to 1,700 people, with a majority of Hindustani. The authorities did not trust the organization; several people claimed that they were stopped by the police when they tried to attend a meeting. Despite the fear of officialdom, the topics discussed cannot be considered inflammatory. They included

complaints about the Immigration Department, the quality of food in the military hospital, the lack of drinking water, the flooding of agricultural land, and the presence of justices of Jewish ancestry.²⁵

The Javanese also increasingly expressed their growing nationalistic sentiments and in 1918 organized their own league called 'Tjintoko Muljo' (Miserable but Honorable), which five years later counted about 900 members.²⁶ This union too could be characterized as unobtrusive and quiescent. Like the SIV, the action program of the Javanese concentrated on wage-questions, maltreatment, and immediate social issues.

It was in the 1930s that political activity took wing in Suriname including on the plantations. By then the majority of the population on the major estates was Javanese, and two main political issues received most attention. The first was the support for a leftist political program which climaxed with the arrival and subsequent arrest of the political agitator Anton de Kom. The second matter of interest was the growing nationalism in the Dutch East Indies, and the struggle for an **Indonesia Merdeka** (an independent Indonesia). Obviously these two political programs were not mutually exclusive and many politically aware Javanese supported both causes to some degree.

The Great Depression, resulting in misery and vast unemployment, triggered active political protest in Suriname. In 1931 rioting was largely confined to Paramaribo. In this tense atmosphere the radical left found a fertile ground. In 1932 the **Surinaamsche Arbeiders en Werkers Organizatie** (Suriname Laborers Organization, SAWO) was established. This group enjoyed the support of Anton de Kom, a Creole teacher living in Holland who was an activist in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism. De Kom came to Suriname in 1932 where he was regarded as a hero by Creoles, British Indians, and Javanese alike. One correspondent of the leftist newspaper **De Banier**, called 'Bok Sark' was a communist Javanese woman at Mariënborg who described the secret meetings of Javanese and British Indians at the plantation and the unrest caused by the arrival of De Kom. Unfortunately the reaction of 'Bok Sark' to the February riots described below is not known. First, she did not dare to write anymore because she feared espionage. Later De Banier itself refused to print Bok Sark's letters in order not to alarm the Suriname authorities further.²⁷

The riots of January and February 1933 in Paramaribo that left two people dead and some thirty wounded are often described in detail, but what happened on the plantations is less well known.²⁸ Not surprisingly, the planters characterized De Kom as a demagogue who promised Asians a free return passage to their homeland. After the arrest of De Kom on January 31, the management at

plantation Mariënburg noticed that something was brewing among the workers, which revealed itself in remarkable silence during work, reluctance to answer questions, and general rudeness and recalcitrance. The anthropologist Parsudi Suparlan states that the Javanese in particular often resorted to *mutung* (sulking) to protest their conditions. These signs of a different spirit easily caused apprehension among the authorities.²⁹ The supporters of De Kom wanted to free him on February 7, and during the previous night many Javanese left several plantations to go to Paramaribo. Free and contract laborers at Mariënburg left without notice, thus paralyzing the plantation. After their departure, the staff at Mariënburg lived in great fear since one laborer apparently had said that if the Javanese would come to power no white man would stay alive. Some employees gathered in the home of the accountant where rifles and munition were stored. Yet, in the housing quarters everything remained quiet. On February 7 work was halted at the plantation. Three people from Mariënburg were wounded in Paramaribo, and it turned out that the inhabitants from Zoelen never even reached town because the ferry had stopped working. The Javanese generally were indignant about the passive behavior of the British Indians, whom they accused of desertion by not going to the capital.

A month after the February events the situation had returned to normal, according to Mariënburg director Manschot. He thought that the Europeans had been overly afraid, which he blamed on the lack of reliable intelligence. 'The information provided by domestics, servants, *mandoors*, and mistresses is not trustworthy.'³⁰ Some Javanese might have deliberately given false information to increase the existing chaos and confusion. On balance, the popular protests of the early 1930s were important, yet they never profoundly threatened the stability of the established order.

The Character of Resistance

The indentured immigrants, whom the planters controlled through a strict labor contract, replaced the slaves as plantation laborers following emancipation. The planters thus retained crucial features of the work discipline, even though they had to rely on the courts to enforce their rules. This does not imply, however, that planters and state authorities always saw eye to eye with regard to the indentureds. Sometimes a planter would accuse the police and/or army of use of excessive violence as in the case of the events at Zoelen in 1891. More frequently, the planters complained that lenient sentences and the 'compassion' of the state authorities in general and the Agent General in particular seduced the laborers from their duties. The planters did not accept their own responsibility in

labor problems. The reaction following the bloodbath of 1902 highlights this attitude. Despite repeated official reports which cited wages as the source of the unrest, the planters refused to accept this explanation. Rather, besides blaming state officials, just like in the old (slave) times, they pointed their fingers at outside forces such as 'malevolent coolies from Demerara' or 'nationalist trouble makers from India'.³¹ In short, the planters wished to have their cake and eat it too; they did not accept government interference in wage and social questions, yet expected the government to enforce the strict labor laws, if needed be with rifles.

Meanwhile the planters attempted to increase the division among their subordinates by encouraging labor competition between free and contract laborers; emphasizing religious and ethnic differences; and employing psychological tactics such as cooptation, racial stereotyping, and preferential treatment. As a result, the dual burden of indentureship and division among themselves retarded the organization of plantation workers. Other material relations such as plantation housing and garden plots compounded the financial dependency on the estates. Thus, to use Walter Rodney's words, 'accommodation was a necessary aspect of survival within a system in which power was so comprehensively monopolised by the planter class'.³²

In general it is hard to distinguish between those contractants who defied planter domination and those who complied. Those who challenged the planters employed forms of protest including refusal to follow orders, feigned illness, arson, suicide, predial larceny, desertion, destruction, and murder.

Collective action often took the form of uprisings, which could assume a violent character. Such massive rebellions, however, should be called 'conflicts' rather than 'struggles', since they did not challenge the system of exploitation. Most of the revolts seemed spontaneous and had short-range goals, such as immediate amelioration of material conditions or a thirst for vengeance directed more at specific people than at plantation society in general. Moreover, the rebellions were almost always isolated incidents. A specific incident sufficed to trigger them, while collective action made it difficult to single out ringleaders. Nevertheless, in most cases the authorities identified and arrested some scapegoats. An outbreak of violence on one plantation could have an effect on one or a few other plantations, yet generally did not spark simultaneous uprisings across a district, let alone the country. This in itself is testimony to the enormous power that the plantation system still exerted on the colony. Simultaneously, the harsher the authorities reacted, the more frightened laborers, or other individuals for that matter, would be to protest their conditions.³³ This fear of the authorities might explain the period of relative calm in Suriname after resistance and reaction

had peaked in 1902. It took the Great Depression to unleash another wave of violent protest and repression.

Despite the usually harsh measures by the authorities, the white elite and the planters in particular perceived every sign of unrest as a major threat, for they did not know whom to trust anymore. Telling in this respect is the court testimony of a police officer following a clash in 1925 between Javanese workers and British Indian police at plantation Mariënburg. The officer had thought it strange that during the confrontation the police had received no assistance, even though the residences of the directors and other high personnel were located only about 150 meters away. The even nearer houses of the overseers were closed and dark. He claimed that already several times the situation at Mariënburg had been tense and that personnel had been threatened repeatedly. The police officer therefore concluded that probably all overseers had been killed.³⁴ Even if exaggerated, such a statement expresses great fear about unrest among the immigrants, which could so easily erupt and have fatal consequences. Stereotypes to describe the contract laborers quite suddenly could change from 'docile' to 'barbarous'. As a consequence, the white elite often overreacted with heavy-handed responses. It justified the use of violence and even bullets as self-defense in the face of mutiny.³⁵ This kind of response may explain the reluctance of the indentureds to jeopardize their future freedom and even their lives by challenging the existing system of exploitation. After all, contract laborers differed from slaves in that they, supposedly of their own volition, had signed a time-specific contract. There was light at the end of the tunnel for the indentured immigrant.

Therefore, it is the frequency of prosecution under the penal sanction more than incidental violence that demonstrates most clearly the frustration, regret, discontent, and protest of the indentured laborers.³⁶ The constantly high number of cases concerning a breach of contract before the courts is the best proof of persistent dissent. Moreover, it dispels the myths of both the 'docile coolie' and the 'usual barbarity of the Asians'.

COMMENTS

Many people have commented on earlier drafts of this paper; I would like to thank Jane Landers, Cheryll Cody, James Amelang, David Colburn, Gert Oostindie, and George Pozzetta for their support and assistance.

Notes referring to documents from the Mariënborg files at the Surinaams Museum (SSM) in Paramaribo first give the number of the file, followed by the day, month, and year. NHM (Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij) papers deposited at the Algemeen Rijksarchief (ARA) in The Hague are listed according to their official ARA deposit number.

NOTES

1. On British Indian indentured migration to Suriname see particularly C. J. M. de Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname*. (Amsterdam: Urbi et Orbi, 1953); on Javanese immigration Joseph Ismael, *De immigratie van Indonesiers in Suriname*. (Leiden: Luctor et Emergo, 1949). In my dissertation, *Plantation labor after the abolition of slavery: The case of plantation Mariënborg (Suriname), 1880-1940* (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1987) I discuss both the immigration of British Indians and Javanese in a case study of Suriname's largest (sugar) plantation, Mariënborg.

Please note that in Suriname the British Indian population is most often referred to as Hindustani, even though this group also includes Moslems. The (Dutch) East Indians are generally called Javanese since most of them came from the island of Java.

2. See, for example, SSM 6 Mariënborg 24-9-1906.
3. Koloniaal Verslag (KV) 1898.

4. SSM 7 Mariënborg 24-2-1908. In 1906 the number of desertions by Javanese was called 'alarming' (SSM 6 report over the year 1906). Newspapers had reported for a few years already that many runaways stayed in Paramaribo: **Onze West** 3-8-i 904, no. 503; see also Hugh Tinker, **A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas**. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 196.
5. **Onze West** 4-1-1908, no. 859; 11-1-1908, no. 861; 25-1-1908, no. 865; and 1-2-1908, no. 867. Some of these maroon camps were said to be large enough to house thirty people.
6. SSM 3 Mariënborg 7-4-1886; 23-9-1886; 16-1-1886; 1-9-1887; 18-10-1887; 20-9-1887.
7. SSM 3 Mariënborg 1-2-1886; 7-4-1886.
8. ARA, NHM P 1112-91884, 1868.
9. KV 1885 and SSM 3 Paramaribo 18-9-1884. See also Sandew Hira, **Van Priary tot en met De Kom: De geschiedenis van het verzet in Suriname**. (Rotterdam: Futile, 1983), 204-205.
10. KV 1885. See also SSM 3 Paramaribo 27-9-1884 and Hira 1983, 205-206.
11. KV 1892.
12. SSM 4 Mariënborg 18-8-1891.
13. SSM 4 Mariënborg 26-8-1891.
14. SSM 4 NHM 3-10-1891.
15. SSM 4 Letter to the Colonial Minister 10-10-1891.
16. SSM 4 NHM 3-10-1891.
17. SSM 4 NHM 23-11-1891.
18. SSM 4 NHM 15-2-1892.
19. KV 1902.

20. This description relies heavily upon the government version of the events as published in KV 1902, bijlage K. The NHM correspondence over these years is missing and the yearly reports do not provide a detailed account of the disturbances. Extensive newspaper reports of the court sessions are published in *Onze West* 12-10-1902, no. 318 and 25-10-1902, no. 319.
21. **Verslag en Handelingen der Staten-Generaal 1902-1903**, 24-12-1902.
22. SSM 7 Mariënborg 24-2-1908.
23. ARA, NHM U 1139-91 85, 1 908; see also Walter Rodney, **A history of the Guyanese working people, 1881-1905**. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 155.
24. *Onze West* 14-6-1911, no. 1242 and 31-1-1912, no. 1; SSM 7 Mariënborg 12-1-1909.
25. *Onze West* 8-4-1911, no. 1224; 14-6-1911, no. 1242; 31-12-1912, no. 1306; 28-2-1912, no. 1314.
26. S. Kalff, "Javanese emigrants in Suriname", *Inter-Ocean* 9.10 (1928): 548.
27. *De Banier* 14-1-1933, no. 368; 1-2-1933, no. 373; 21-4-1933, no. 393; 12-7-1933, no. 419.
28. See, for example, R. A. J. van Lier, **Samenleving in een grensgebied: Een sociaal-historische studie van Suriname**. (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1984), 278ff and Hira 1983, 296-321.
29. Parsudi Suparlan, **The Javanese in Suriname: Ethnicity in an Ethnically Plural Society**, (diss. University of Illinois, 1976), 133; see also Bertram Wyatt-Brown, **Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South**. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 409.
30. SSM 26 Mariënborg 7-3-1933.
31. See also Michael Craton, **Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies**, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 241.
32. Rodney, **A History of the Guyanese Working People**, 151.
33. See also Rodney, **A History of the Guyanese Working People**, 159.

34. **Suriname** 18-8-1925, no. 66.
35. See also Rodney, **A History of the Guyanese Working People**, 157-158.
36. According to Rodney the same is true for British Guiana, **A History of the Guyanese Working People**, 152.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE MAROON INSURGENCY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE CIVIL WAR IN SURINAME

H.U.E. THODEN VAN VELZEN

The Antagonists

No end appears to be in sight yet to the drama of Suriname's civil war which continues to pit large sections of the Maroon population (Bush Negroes in the older literature) against Suriname's 'National Army' (*Nationaal Leger*). The army, under the leadership of Commander Desire Bouterse, is in firm control of Paramaribo, the 'city state' and seat of the the central government of the republic. Most of the coastal plain is also in the hands of the military. Bouterse, formerly a sergeant, won his position with a coup in 1980, toppling a civilian government with the cooperation of 15 other NCOs. In 1982 he effectively stifled opposition against his rule by murdering 15 prominent Surinamese university professors and lawyers, and leading figures in the media and the trade unions. Distrust of the urban population brought Bouterse to surround himself with young Maroons, as body guards, military police and members of his intelligence network. Few of these collaborators had any relatives in Paramaribo, a factor which made them useful for Bouterse. Through covert alliances with Cuba (1981-1983) and later Libya (1985-present), Bouterse succeeded in gaining external support for his regime (Franszoon 1989). The nature of Bouterse's relationship with the government of Brazil is difficult to gauge, but in view of recent arms shipments and 'easy' loans it seems likely that some understanding between the two countries has been reached.

From the second half of 1986 onwards, the Bouterse regime came under pressure from a Maroon insurgency, a subject to which I shall soon return. In November 1987, after secret negotiations and continuing internal and external pressure, Bouterse allowed free elections to be held in the territory controlled by the army. The popular vote swung against the candidates supported by the military. On the basis of these election results, a landslide victory for the old political parties, a new civilian government was installed. Without having been given the means to enforce its decisions, and with key positions in the civilian sector in the hands of Bouterse's henchmen, it soon became apparent that the new administration would remain impotent. After more than a year of civilian 'rule', the position of the military is stronger than ever. The new government is little more than a convenient facade for Bouterse's dictatorship. The war with the Maroons continues. An offensive of the National Army against positions of the Maroons (June-August 1988) demonstrated the unwillingness of the present regime to enter into peace negotiations with the population of the interior.

Since the second half of 1986, the Maroon insurgents, united in the **Jungle Commando**, enjoy safety in the hinterland. Their area is protected by the rain forest and by the circumstance that the rivers flowing from the interior to the Atlantic ocean are difficult to navigate due to rapids, water falls and shoals. The rebels can rely on the support of most of the Maroon population (approximately 35,000) of the interior as well as of those Maroon refugees who fled to safety in French Guiana (10,000), following the massacres of civilians in 1986.

MAROONS

Maroons are descendants of African slaves who escaped from plantations on the coast to the interior of Suriname in the 17th and 18th centuries. They built new communities in the rain forest and waged war on the planters and their troops. Three major Maroon groups concluded peace treaties with the colonial authorities between 1760 and 1770. They have enjoyed considerable political autonomy over the last two centuries. The two largest Maroon groups are the Saramaka and the Ndjuka (also known as the Aukaner). Both are involved in the current struggle in Suriname. Together these groups comprise some 50,000 members. A smaller group, the Paramaka (4,000), also takes part in the fighting. The Aluku or Boni (ca. 4,000), the majority of whom live on the French side of the river that marks the national boundary, are sympathetic to the revolt but are only indirectly

associated with the resistance. Ronnie Brunswijk, the leader of the guerrilla army, is a Ndjuka. His (sub)-commanders are of Paramaka, Ndjuka and Saramaka extraction.

This contribution deals with the rise of the Jungle Commando as the military arm of Maroon society. Particular attention is given to the relation between the leaders of the guerrillas and the spiritual leadership of this society, i.e., priests and other religious specialists such as medicinemen. This process of mutual accommodation does not always run smoothly, as the leading echelon of the Jungle Commando consists mainly of members of a younger generation who, before the war broke out, felt at home in an urban environment and showed little interest in 'traditional' Maroon society.

Prelude

Armed resistance against the army started as early as 1984, when a small group of young Maroons, led by Ronnie Brunswijk, a former body guard of Bouterse, seized government property and stopped trucks carrying luxury goods for the military elite from Cayenne to Paramaribo. The army retaliated with round-ups and other collective reprisals against Maroon communities on the coast. Maroons travelling from Paramaribo to their homes were stopped at checkpoints, where they had to strip to show they were not wearing any obeahs. At some places, shrines and other places of worship were desecrated by the army, as if they represented a military threat. These measures caused widespread dissatisfaction and unrest among the population, and readied the scene ready for more ambitious actions by the small Brunswijk group.

In the dead of night on 21 July 1986, a group of nine men attacked the military post near Stolkertsijver, at the bridge over the river Commewijne. The group of assailants, led by Ronnie Brunswijk, alias Ghadafi, was immediately successful. The twelve soldiers stationed at the guard post were taken by surprise, and surrendered their weapons to Brunswijk. The group then drove east to the border town of Albina with the intention of securing control of the garrison's arsenal of weapons. This stage of the operation proved to be a failure. The man who had promised to act as an escort for the Brunswijk group betrayed the plot to the garrison's commander. When Brunswijk arrived at the commander's house, the officer had left for the barracks where he joined his men, waiting for the guerrillas to assault them. Fighting broke out as soon as the guerrillas arrived at the barrack's main gate. It continued until early morning when the attackers had to withdraw for lack of ammunition. The arsenal had withstood the assault.

The Brunswijk group made a second appearance a month later. The garrison of Albina staved off this attack as well. Stronger units of the National Army started a search action against Brunswijk. The rebels, now on the run, managed to reach the river Marowijne south of Albina. The 'Jungles', as the members of the Jungle Commando were called, and their twelve prisoners-of-war, set up camp on a hill behind the settlement of Mopi Kondee. Thanks to a tip-off, the secret police of the National Army found out where the Jungle Commando was hiding. One army unit took up position at Langa Tabiki, situated on an island in the river Marowijne, while another group, the Echo company, considered the best commando unit of the army, set out from Albina for Mopi Kondee. The Echo company pitched its tents a few kilometres from Mopi Kondee, at Awara Kampu. A soldier betrayed their position to Brunswijk. A group of 14 'Jungles' crept up on the Awara Kampu camp by night. Nine 'Jungles' attacked the camp at daybreak, creating panic in the surprise. Shortly after the hostilities had begun, a depot with ammunition and gasoline exploded in flames and the fight was over. Many soldiers of the National Army fled into the jungle. A small group of 'Jungles' had routed the elite unit of the National Army and taken its commander prisoner. Unfortunately for Brunswijk and his men, the fire claimed not only gasoline and ammunition, but most of the weapons as well.

Commander Bouterse made an appearance on Surinamese television to announce that he took a very serious view of the rebellion. At about the same time he recalled his troops from Langa Tabiki. A week later the Jungle Commando attacked Albina, but the 'Jungles' were again unable to win control of the camp's arsenal. After a day of skirmishes the 'Jungles' withdrew into the forest to the south of Albina.

If we look at the first two months of hostilities, the gains resulting from the unexpected and sensational successes of the Jungle Commando look only modest. At Stolkertsijver, a few weapons and a good deal of ammunition were captured. Later, that same night at Albina, without succeeding to secure any more weapons, the ammunition was used up. What they did manage to do was to attract the attention of the national and international media. At Awara Kampu, a month later, the Jungle Commando showed itself capable of mounting an offensive against a fairly large military unit. However, the gains of the latter fight remained predominantly psychological: the people of the interior acquired confidence in the striking power of the Jungle Commando. Hundreds of volunteers joined Brunswijk, who had to disappoint them when they asked for weapons. Many of them would use their hunting guns when taking part in the later fighting.

An anthropological study has little to contribute to a better understanding of such military encounters. Events were dominated by chance: if the surveillance of the Commewijne bridge had been better conducted in July 1986, the Jungle Commando would never have emerged as a political factor in Suriname. Also, if no treachery had taken place at Albina, Brunswijk would have had enough weapons on July 22, 1986 to take the eastern coastal towns of Albina and Mungo. And last of all, had not Bouterse's men abandoned their position at Langa Tabiki in panic, Brunswijk's route to the interior would have been blocked. Still, the point is that all of this **did** happen. The result was a military stalemate; neither of the parties proved strong enough to secure a decisive victory over its opponent. The outcome is known: by the middle of 1989 Brunswijk is still in command of the guerrilla forces in the interior, of the region above the first rapids which is barely accessible by land. The offensive of the National Army along the forest road to Langa Tabiki (June-August 1988) mentioned earlier, was an outright disaster, claiming the lives of at least 60 government soldiers. However, Bouterse still remains the undisputed commander of the National Army, and a *de facto* political boss of the capital Paramaribo and most of the coastal plain.

We will now turn to the social factors which influence the attitudes of the parties in this civil war: both the forces which aim at integration and restoration of relations, and the forces which drive the parties apart. My remarks will be confined to four of these factors: (a) the discontent which was the direct reason for the present conflict; (b) the policy of collective reprisals; (c) the significance of Maroon religious ideology for the cohesion of kinship groups; (d) the part played by religious cults in uniting the main Maroon group of east Suriname, the Ndjuka. This is only an arbitrary selection from a larger ensemble of relevant factors. The important economic links between the coastal society and the interior are only given here in barest outlines. It should be kept in mind, though, that such economic bonds have a strong integrating effect on the wider Surinamese society. Many Maroon shopkeepers and traders, for example, are among the most outspoken in clamoring for a restoration of relations with Paramaribo.

The Composition and Motives of the Jungle Commando

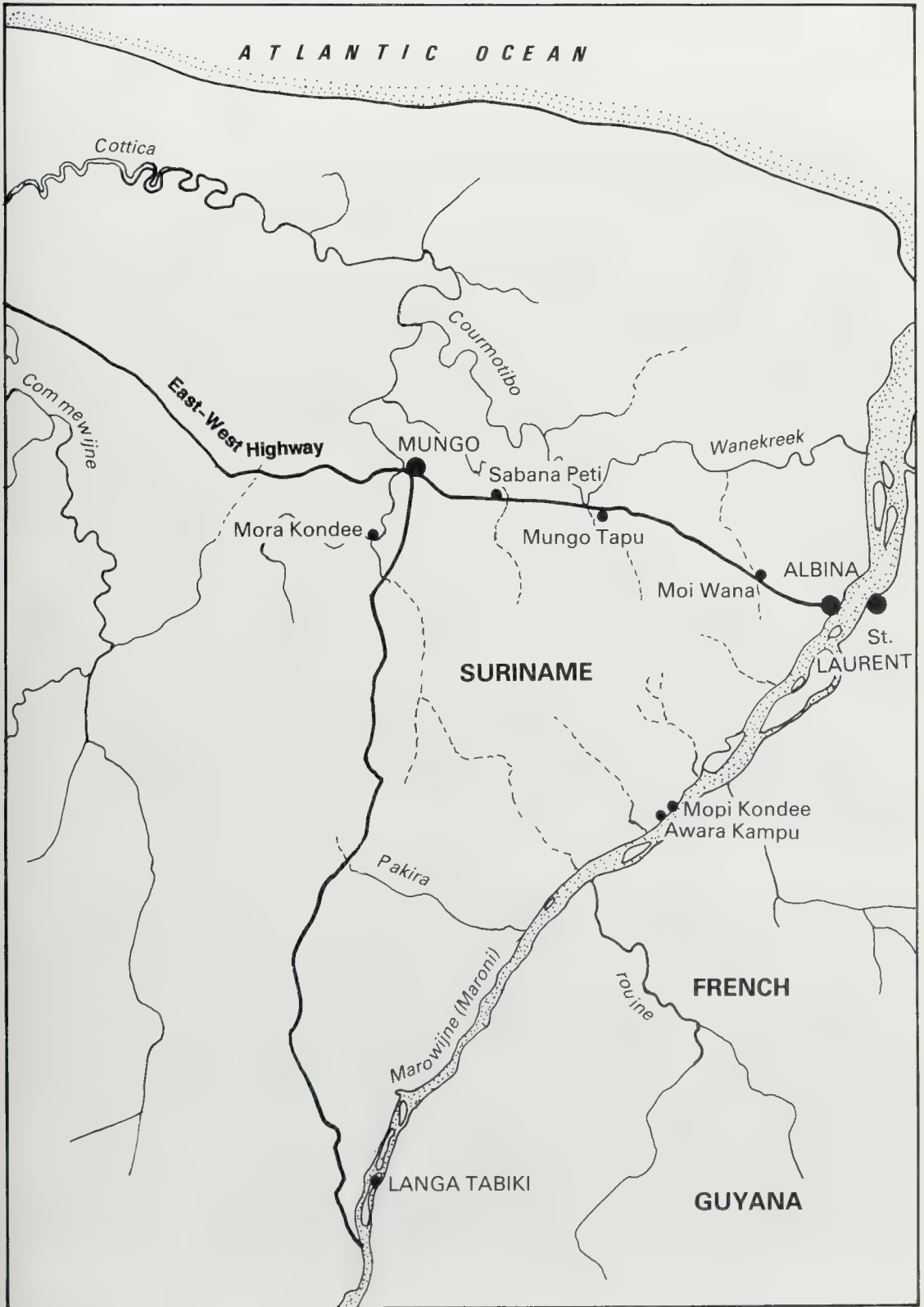
During the first half of the 1980s, Suriname offered both positive and negative prospects to the Maroons. These different perspectives still influence the attitudes of people today, causing divisions among Maroons. For certain Maroon groups Suriname was 'the country of unlimited and (partly) unrealized opportunities'. Before the military coup of 1980, access by Maroons to the public sector was blocked by class interests, family relations, ethnic prejudices and

educational demands favoring those who grew up in an urban environment. Maroons in general had little chance of securing important political or civil service functions. Only the lowest ranks of the civil service were open to them.

This inaccessibility of the public sector stood in sharp contrast to the economic upsurge which many Maroons had experienced since the 1960s. Suriname was marked by a rapidly expanding economy and a growing complexity. The exodus of Surinamese to the Netherlands continued practically throughout the decade before the military coup. During a few years, tens of thousands of East Indians and Creoles sold their property in Paramaribo and migrated to the Netherlands. A few thousand smallholders on the outskirts of Paramaribo abandoned their plots, often without finding buyers. The Maroons took advantage of this situation to buy up houses, shops, vans, taxis and other capital goods, often at ridiculously low prices. They also took possession of some agricultural land in the districts surrounding Paramaribo. From the second half of the 1960s, Maroons began to occupy positions in economic life which had previously been exclusively reserved for urban residents. The new prosperity of certain sectors of Maroon communities led to tensions. One of the symptoms of these can be seen in the bitter anti-witchcraft movements that shook the interior in the 1970s (Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering 1988).

The times were changing, and during the post-coup period it looked as though a number of the restrictions on Maroons in the public sector had disappeared. After the coup d'état, Suriname came increasingly to be dominated by a single center of power, especially after the December murders of 1982. Dictatorial regimes not only promote the social mobility of those who have found a niche in the center of power; they also hold out advantages for marginal groups who, not linked to any of the older parties with vested interests, can be of use to the regime. Small groups of Maroons were selected to provide such services. Bouterse, for example, recruited his bodyguard from among a number of Maroons who had undergone military training. Maroons were also given positions in the military police, in the secret service and the people's mobilisation committees (*Volksmobilisatie*), a paramilitary organisation. A few hundred Maroons were recruited into the National Army. Probably more important than this expansion of employment was the removal of barriers which had hindered participation by the Maroons in public life under the old democratic system. The gradual disappearance of these obstacles for a minority led to a rapid rise of expectations for many. It seemed as if the sky was the limit.

MAP FIVE: East Suriname, 1986



As the supply of consumer goods dwindled daily, the military elite lived a life of luxury. This led to increasing bitterness, especially among those groups who saw the road to their own prosperity being blocked. Most frustrated of all were those Maroon men who had lived in relative comfort, far above the level they could have aspired to in colonial or postcolonial society before the military take-over, and who then fell from grace. Brunswijk, a dismissed body-guard, belonged to this category. Brunswijk assembled a group of young Maroons, many of whom had comparable grievances, and started operating in the Mungo area in 1984, seizing government property. They stopped military lorries carrying luxury items from French Guyana to Paramaribo for their commanders, and challenged both the army and the police. The group was connected with smugglers who were operating in the Marowijne area. Bank robberies, conducted in the Marowijne district in 1985 and early 1986, were ascribed to Brunswijk's group by the police. He confirmed their suspicions by handing out thousands of guilders among the inhabitants of Mungo Tapu and neighboring villages. This action particularly benefitted unemployed young Maroons and members of the older generation who had no source of income. Enthusiastic villagers gave Brunswijk the nickname 'Robin Hood'. Brunswijk and his companions stressed the fact that they were undertaking these actions to support those 'who had nothing' and to protest against the enrichment of the army's elite.

The resistance against the military dictatorship therefore did not come from the mass of unemployed in the city of Paramaribo, nor from the rural poor, but from (ex-) bodyguards, and from certain members of the military police and secret service staff. In short, they were all persons who had belonged to the periphery of the elite, and were thus not directly connected with the dictator, but who were fully informed about the lavish lifestyle and irregularities of the Bouterse junta. It was a group of marginal hangers-on who were uncertain of their position.

The case of Brunswijk himself is interesting in this respect. Brunswijk resented his dishonorable discharge from military service. He had asked for a pay raise because he claimed to have saved his commander's life. When the rifle of a member of the guard of honour went off during a visit by Bouterse to west Suriname, it was Brunswijk who rushed forward to protect him. It was not clear whether the incident was simply an accident or an attempt upon Bouterse's life, but at any rate it was Brunswijk who felt he had proven his loyalty to Bouterse. Brunswijk used to make all the security arrangements for public appearances of his commander. Despite his dedication, Brunswijk was dismissed at the end of 1984 or early in 1985. His immediate superior, Major Bhagwandas, one of those who had been involved in the 1980 coup, even refused to pay Brunswijk the wages that were due him. It was later said that Bhagwandas had told Brunswijk he would have to find a way of getting his money by himself.

Brunswijk's fall was a long one in financial and social terms. After losing his job he worked as a warehouse assistant, kitchen assistant and laborer in the Sara Creek gold mines. He did not earn much in any of these jobs, and they certainly did not give him any prestige in the eyes of other Maroons. Brunswijk showed himself bitterly disappointed in his former employers.

Brunswijk's discharge was soon followed by that of other members of this group. They were almost all Maroons. Many of them maintained contact with one another. Another Ndjuka bodyguard, Romeo Vlakalobi, was dismissed at the same time as Brunswijk. Vlakalobi was regularly seen in Brunswijk's vicinity; he probably took part in actions which had been organised by Brunswijk. This former bodyguard was also one of the founders of the Jungle Commando. Brunswijk maintained contact with other members of the military or police apparatus too. For instance, a sergeant from the military police sold Brunswijk an Uzi in 1985 for Sf. 2,000 (about \$1,500), just one of the many cases of clandestine arms purchases by the Brunswijk group. Brunswijk and his men often received advance warning when the government started police actions directed against their group. At the instigation of a friend who worked in the secret service, Brunswijk voluntarily gave himself up to the police in Paramaribo in January 1986. Brunswijk had been assured that the police would not hand him over to the military authorities. Matters were to be set right as far as he was concerned, and reprisals were to be stopped against his fellow villagers. Something went wrong. The police did hand him over to the military authorities, and the military police locked him up in Fort Zeelandia, the most heavily guarded prison of Suriname. Brunswijk escaped from this prison in February. Some supporters claimed that Brunswijk flew out through the roof like a spirit, while others maintained that he had managed to bend the bars of his cell with a spurt of supernatural power. A friend of Brunswijk told me that a member of the military police allowed him to escape after Brunswijk had promised to share with him the plunder from the next raid.

Contacts had also been maintained between Brunswijk and leading military and civilian authorities. I cannot assess to what extent the fact that Brunswijk is married to a niece of Kenneth Esajas, one of the 16 coup leaders, plays a part here. In 1986, Esajas held a high position in the military intelligence. When **Real Mungo Tapu**, Brunswijk's soccer team, celebrated its 15th anniversary on 30 March 1986, only months before the fighting in East Suriname began, an impressive number of authorities, including ministers and high-ranking members of the armed forces, added to the festivity of the occasion by playing a friendly game against the celebrating team. The goalkeeper on this occasion was no one else but the much searched for enemy of the army and the police: Ronnie Brunswijk. The local police pointed him out to the authorities, and asked whether

they should arrest Brunswijk, but the answer was negative. A bare three weeks earlier a military unit had combed the village of Mungo Tapu looking for Ronnie Brunswijk. Hardly a month later Ronnie Brunswijk's photo was on the front page of the Surinamese dailies with the headline: 'Dangerous and armed'.¹ All the same, Brunswijk still was in contact with police officials and officers in April and May, 1986. The meetings took place near Mungo. These talks probably were meant to make preparations for a meeting between Brunswijk and Bouterse in Albina; for reasons unknown to me this meeting never took place.²

In the first instance it seems strange that the Brunswijk group should form the core of a revolutionary social movement. The adventurous operations of the Brunswijk group took place in a district which bore little resemblance to a third world country. The center of the region, the Marowijne district, was the minor administrative center Mungo. The economy of this area is dominated by a Suralco (a subsidiary of Alcoa Aluminium of the U.S.A.) bauxite mine which pays 600 workers a decent wage. Wealthy Maroon lumberers, with huge concessions to exploit, were working in the immediate surroundings of Mungo. A palm oil factory was being built in the Patamacca area, to the south of Mungo, providing well-paid work for hundreds of Ndjuka's but also for some other Maroons. Of course, there were also the unemployed and old people who had to make do with small social security allowances, but taken as a whole the district enjoyed a level of prosperity that was certainly far above the Caribbean average. In Mungo Tapu, Brunswijk's own village, many large stone houses had been built with sanitation and other modern and, often, luxurious fittings.

But of course it is not absolute levels of prosperity that are at issue. The riches which the military elite accumulated provided a point of comparison that was bound to lead to discontent. Many, especially for those on the periphery of national power, felt that they were not getting their full share of the new prosperity.

Another feature that also has to be taken into account is the belief, that crops up repeatedly among the Maroons, that an era of abundance may suddenly dawn. It is difficult to say whether an historical explanation should be sought for this belief, for example, by trying to locate its origin in the period of prosperity which the Maroons enjoyed between 1885 and 1920 when they worked as river transporters for the gold industry. At any rate, for the aggressive Maroon male the notion that the age of miracles is not past yet recurs regularly in the fantasies which have crystallised in the beliefs of religious cults and in everyday life.³ To take a single example: in the early 1980s rice smuggling from Suriname to French Guyana was an extremely lucrative undertaking and one of the few opportunities for Maroon river transporters to participate in the prosperity of the new Suriname.⁴ The Maroon boat owners on the Marowijne, the border river, often

carried out their smuggling under the eyes of the customs and the police. These authorities found it hard to know whether a boat was on its way to the interior or was making a small detour to reach places on the French bank of the river. When the controls were stepped up considerably and the police and armed forces became involved, Maroon river transporters complained that they were treated worse than during colonial rule. Although there were unnecessary brutalities during these controls, I suspect that the indignation was sometimes due to the idea that border regulations could restrict a Maroon's freedom of movement. The quite substantial profits gained by river transporters from such lucrative shipments were felt to be their rightful share.

One of the most prestigious of the Maroon headmen once summed up the 'causes' of the present civil war. Firstly, the coup-makers had set the central police station in Paramaribo on fire on 25 February 1980, the day of the coup, thus forfeiting any claim to legitimacy. For this headman it meant that violence had been perpetrated against a government that held a just claim to represent the people. The blood of prominent civilians shed in Paramaribo in December 1982 was the second main reason for the civil war, according to my source. From this massacre, in his view, more calamities were bound to occur. Finally, he mentioned the actions of the army and police against river transporters in the Marowijne district as decisive. He considered these controls as an unacceptable interference with the rights of the Maroons to move freely within their own territory - the rivers of Suriname's interior.

Collective reprisals

The support by Maroons from the interior of Suriname turns out to have been of crucial importance for the success of the Brunswijk revolt. Once Bouterse had abandoned his post in Langa Tabiki and Brunswijk went up river with his followers, the latter could count on the support of most of the Paramaka and Ndjuka who live along the banks of the Marowijne, the frontier river. After the fight at Awara Kampu on 21 August 1986, hundreds of volunteers joined the Jungle Commando. This support was to a large extent the side effect of the policy of collective reprisals which the National Army had been carrying out against Maroons in the Cottica region. Communities which were suspected of harboring Brunswijk's supporters (Mora Kondee, Mungo Tapu) were made to pay. Raids were conducted at a number of points along the Mungo-Albina road. Mungo Tapu, the village of Brunswijk's father and the residence of the rebel leader, was searched three times in 1986. During these actions all the residents, numbering some 2,000, were herded together in the buildings of the power station, while the

soldiers searched their homes. When the residents were released again at the end of the day, their homes often had been plundered.

In fact, the entire group was under suspicion. People who were suspected of being Maroons were detained by the army temporarily. People who resembled Maroons physically or culturally were picked out of buses or cars by soldiers and forced to undress. The soldiers searched in particular for the metal bands (**buii**) which some medicine-men produce and which are assumed to be a source of power (**obia**; the word 'power' is also often used nowadays). It was (not unjustifiably) believed that Brunswijk's guerrillas claimed that these amulets provided protection in the struggle. The travellers were searched and their possessions were given a thorough check, during the course of which it often happened that valuable items were stolen or destroyed (Tsjon-A-Ten 1988).

On 1 August a soldier of the National Army shot a child dead in the village of Mora Kondee. On the same day twenty Maroon workers were arrested when they came home from work and maltreated, after which they were taken off to Fort Zeelandia, the notorious prison of the army, with plastic refuse bags over their heads. This aroused indignation, but it was to be only the first in a whole series of collective reprisals. The most tragic ones were to take place at Moi Wana and Poki Gron where, all told, over a hundred civilians were killed. In regions where Amerindians and Maroons lived together, the troops confiscated the hunting guns of the Maroons, but the Indians were given permission to keep their arms. Cases have also been reported of Indians who were provided with weapons by the National Army. During raids on Mungo, a town in which different ethnic groups lived side by side, the Maroons were systematically set apart from the Javanese and the Creole inhabitants and treated as a suspect group (Polimé 1988, 50-52).

Collective reprisals can only be successful if the oppressed group lacks the coherence to meet the oppressor with a united front. Maroons, to a very large extent, close ranks in an emergency. Hence the speed with which indignation and even hatred became a common feature in Maroon public discourse quite soon after the first maltreatment and killings of civilians. This cohesiveness is related to two special features of Maroon society; it consists of corporate kinship groups and it possesses a 'divination apparatus' which can count on a certain degree of recognition among Maroons.

Avenging Spirits

Maroon societies in Suriname have a matrilineal kinship organization. Ndjuka society in east Suriname is no exception. Matrilineal groups, groups of kin who trace their descent in the female line, form the core of Ndjuka society. They vary in size from a small number of persons who recognize a common great-grandmother as their ancestor, to larger groups who share an ideology of common matrilineal descent. The largest group, the clan, feels united by its belief in common descent or common origin. 'Descent' means when mythical female or females of two or more centuries ago are recognized as ancestresses. 'Origin' is when clan members refer to a few neighboring 18th century plantations as places where their ancestors had once lived. Of concern to us here is the matrilineage, a group of the intermediate level, between clan and the smallest matrigroup. The matrilineage, the 'belly', (*bee*), is the largest effective kin group of this culture. Its membership usually varies between 50 and 200. Such lineages share a strong communal ideology. Notions of communality are founded on both material and immaterial 'assets'. Lineages, for example, hold titles to land and the right to be officially represented at council meetings or rites by a headman (*kabiteni*) and two assistants (*basia*); functionaries who in peace time receive a salary from the government.

Even more important for the cohesion of the lineage than these material possessions is the belief in a special relationship between a lineage and a particular class of supernatural beings, the furies or avenging spirits (*kunu*). Such deities or spirits, as the term suggests, visit humans as agencies of retaliation. Sociologically speaking, the consequences of such theological notions are striking and significant. First, at the heart of this belief system is the notion of a collective curse. Although often it is the single individual who has provoked the spirit, the fury will prosecute all lineage members with equal ferocity and determination. The cause for such a marked form of divine retribution varies from murders to, in the eyes of ordinary mortals, relatively modest misdemeanours such as petty thefts.

The belief in avenging spirits also creates bonds between groups, as both the 'belly' of the offender and that of the victim have to honor the fury. To take one out of many examples: during the 18th and early 19th century a number of men and women have been burnt at the stake after being convicted of witchcraft. Later divination demonstrated that these people had been executed without due cause. The spirits of these victims are believed to haunt the lineage(s) of their executioners. The furies return to take possession of one of the members of the executioner's group or less often, one of the members of the victim's group, and use this person as a medium to announce their intention of punishing the

wrongdoers, for example, the lineage of the man or woman responsible for the sin. Their descendants will not escape their fate either: sickness, death and disaster await them.

A well known example of a fury or avenging deity is the spirit of Atokwa, a Ndjuka who grew cash crops in the coastal region in the 1840s for the plantations and the market in Paramaribo. Suspicious kin claimed that he was a witch and that some of his success was attributable to this. A number of men drawn from three 'bellies' managed to get their hands on Atokwa. He was tortured and finally burnt at the stake. Years later, his spirit appeared to a relative of one of the murderers. The medium pronounced a curse on his own group and the two other 'bellies' which had taken part in the execution. The relatives beseeched the spirit to desist, honored his medium and held large feasts of reconciliation. In the end Atokwa's spirit did bend. The fury promised to desist from anger on condition that services in its honor were to be regularly performed, and that his murderers and their descendants would conduct the rites in complete harmony. Each of these three 'bellies' is still obliged today to serve the spirit of Atokwa, and they dutifully fulfill that obligation. At the death of a medium a male or female successor steps forward without much delay.

The 'belly', the matrilineal group of kin, bears the collective responsibility for the spirits. The 'belly' must collect money and offerings; the group assumes responsibility for the service in honor of this spirit and for all actions by its members which might have a negative effect on the spirit. Rumor and dissension activate the avenging spirits - at any rate, that is how it is formulated theologially. In social terms it means that in a dispute influential individuals within the community can attribute the cause of sickness and disaster to the wrath of the fury. Belief in avenging spirits can thus play an important role in the process of social control. Sharing the same fate is the feeling strongly promoted by such religious notions.

Despite the central place occupied by this belief in avenging spirits in Ndjuka culture, in specific cases its significance for social life is often contested. The relation between religious representation and social behavior is never a simple one, and even the belief in furies is molded by social forces. Some individuals may assert that they have become the medium of an avenging spirit, but their claims to this status are not always recognised by the family or other groups of kin. A medium may step forward to relate divine experiences in public, while the matrilineal kin, the other members of the 'belly', are not prepared to take it seriously. A good example is provided by my informant, Asawooko from Diitabiki, the residence of the Ndjuka paramount chief. A long time ago, in the 1920s, Asawooko had an argument with a French gold prospector whose goods he transported. The argument grew more pronounced and led to blows in which

the Frenchman met his death. The spirit of the dead man accused Asawooko in the 'assembly of the gods' and received permission to return to the survivor as an avenging spirit. The spirit chose Asawooko himself as its medium. The matrilineal group of Asawooko accepted the trance as genuine, but refused to attach any conclusions to it. His possession thus remained a personal experience. No service in honor of this avenging spirit was ever performed in public. While in theory the 'radius of action' of an avenging spirit covers the entire matrilineal group, in fact it is highly variable, depending on the type of fury, the status of the medium and the impression which the performance of the spirit makes.

Religious representations such as that of the 'avenging spirit', therefore, do not always reinforce the unity of a group. Moreover, it is debatable whether the hostilities of the last years and the violence inflicted on the Ndjuka people will effect religious phenomena of this kind. Avenging spirits usually arise as the result of injustice inflicted on other Ndjukas. In a restricted number of cases an avenging spirit may operate if the interests of a stranger (i.e., not a Maroon) have been seriously damaged.

The question is whether these same religious concepts operate when Ndjuka are killed by strangers, as occurred in *Moi Wana* and *Poki Gron*. Can avenging spirits be expected to arise from such calamities? One precedent could be mentioned. In October 1910 the Maroon prophet *Atjaimikule*, or *Akule*, created a sensation in the *Cottica* region (*Thoden van Velzen* and *Van Wetering* 1988, 160-170). *Akule* presented himself as the prophet of *Na Ogii* (The Danger), one of the three main deities of the Ndjuka. As a new set of rites instituted by prophet *Akule* lasted for many weeks, and as this seriously affected Maroon economic life in the area, functionaries of the colonial administration arrested *Akule*. After being detained for two weeks in the capital, *Akule* was prohibited from returning to the *Cottica* region. Soon after *Akule's* banishment from the region, divination revealed that the wrath of the gods had been aroused by the comportment of the colonial administration. To punish the Europeans, 'the council of gods' unleashed the First World War. Soldiers died by the thousands. *Akule's* followers were quick to point out that the European soldiers were killed in such great numbers as revenge for the humiliation of *Akule*. Later divination brought new complexities to light. The spirits of the dead soldiers, in their turn, clamored about injustice. The dead had nothing to do with the injustice to which *Akule* had been subjected, and yet their lives had ended prematurely. They took their case to the 'council of gods' which decided in their favor. They, spirits of the slain soldiers, were granted permission to revenge themselves on the Ndjuka. Even today, a few of these *Sudati* ('Soldier') mediums are still active among Ndjuka. During earlier decades they had formed a powerful new spirit medium

cult. The strangers first had been punished and were then recognised to be in the right, and the Ndjuka had to pay for it.

Herrenberg's Fury

Another instance which is important for an understanding of the Maroon insurgency is the fury which persecutes Herrenberg and his relatives. Herrenberg, a confidant of Bouterse, held various important public positions during the past few years, ranging from ambassador in the Netherlands to Minister of Foreign Affairs and secretary of Bouterse's cabinet. It was in Diitabiki, a village on an island in the Tapanahoni River far in the interior, that I first heard about Herrenberg's fury. Ma Foida, a Ndjuka woman, claimed that she had heard Herrenberg on the radio make insulting remarks about the Ndjuka.⁵ When I asked Foida why this upset her so much, she explained that Herrenberg had once asked the Ndjuka for help to reduce the high rate of illnesses and deaths in his family. He had gone down on his knees before the paramount chief of the Ndjuka, **gaanman Gazon**, to beg him to put in a good word for him with the medium Melina. For many years, Foida worked as an assistant to Melina, a Ndjuka female as herself. Melina is a medium of the avenging spirit of Berg en Dal, an old plantation village on the Suriname river. Herrenberg's (Creole) family originally came from Berg en Dal. The story is as follows:

Long ago, probably after 1760 (the year of the peace treaty between the Dutch and the Ndjuka), but before 1800, a few Ndjuka murdered **basia** (black overseer) Kwaku Akendoi. Ndjuka who worked near Akendoi's plantation suspected Kwaku of having bewitched one of them. The conflict erupted in the plantation area along the Suriname river, probably not far from the present site of Berg en Dal. Soon after the killing of Kwaku, a Ndjuka man became possessed. The medium stated that Kwaku's spirit had seized him. The spirit had returned to take revenge on his killers and their relatives; Kwaku's spirit asserted that he had never indulged in witchcraft. The Ndjuka, who had this murder on their conscience, were filled with dismay. They organised feasts of reconciliation to get the spirit of Kwaku to desist. Kwaku's spirit eventually conceded to their pleas. Moreover, as often happens if a spirit has been kept at bay, the avenging spirit turned into a protecting spirit, a spirit to which people can turn to in difficulty. As usual, however, the proviso was that Kwaku's descendants and the families of his assassins, were to be reconciled for ever. This was agreed upon and events ran smoothly for more than a century. After the death of its medium, Kwaku's spirit took possession of another medium from the same 'belly', and the veneration of Kwaku's spirit continues to the present day. About twenty years

ago Melina became the medium of 'Basia Kwaku', as the spirit is still called today. Ma Melina soon achieved great prestige among Ndjuka and among Creole descendants of Kwaku.

These descendants can be found today in all walks of life of Surinamese society. The majority live in Paramaribo; a few still live in the neighborhood of Berg en Dal where the former plantation of Kwaku was once situated. During the early 1970s, Henk Herrenberg called on chief Gazon when he came to visit Paramaribo. With this courtesy visit to Gazon, Herrenberg intended to gain his permission to consult the medium of 'Basia Kwaku'. Serious problems (illnesses, quarrels) plagued Herrenberg's family. Chief Gazon was requested to entreat the spirit to state his grievances so that the Berg en Dal delegation could make proper amendments. Gazon complied with this request. The problems of the Berg en Dal people were then put before Melina, the medium. Things seemed to have worked out well for both parties. Herrenberg's family felt relieved and for the medium of the spirit a period of prosperity appeared to have begun. Melina and her assistant Foida set themselves up in the neighborhood of Paramaribo in order to meet a hefty demand for spiritual and medical aid.

In 1986, shortly before the outbreak of the civil war, an important delegation from Berg en Dal visited the Ndjuka village of Mainsi on the Tapanahoni River where the most important shrine for 'Basia Kwaku' is situated. High-ranking officials from Paramaribo and successful migrants who had come over from the Netherlands flew with Melina from Paramaribo to the air strip at Diitabiki. The group travelled from there to Mainsi, where a ceremony was conducted at the shrine of 'Basia Kwaku'. Part of the delegation also paid a courtesy visit to **Gaan Gadu** (Great Deity), whose permission is always required when important consultations of spirits and deities have to be conducted. Herrenberg was not present on this occasion, but, as Foida assured me, Herrenberg had given a civil servant from The Ministry of Social Services in Paramaribo an expensive present to take for Melina and her assistants on the Tapanahoni River. Foida wondered why Herrenberg had then chosen to heap abuse on the Ndjuka. Foida claims that this attitude not only conflicts with his earlier acts and statements but, worse, that it also breeds conflict. Nothing stirs an ancient spirit so much as hostilities between the groups who had once concluded a pact with him. Foida expects that Herrenberg's abusive language will give rise to even more disaster: she anticipates cases of illness and death in the Ndjuka families which must respect this spirit and in Herrenberg's own Berg en Dal group. In religious and symbolic language Foida's account demonstrates the underlying affinity between Creoles and Maroons. At the same time it reminds us of the tragedy of the present rift between these groups.

A Fury in the National Army

At the end of 1987, a strange affliction troubled a sergeant of the National Army. It concerned 'M', a Maroon who had fought on the side of the National Army in various actions. He was wounded, but even before he had recuperated he announced, to the delight of his superiors, that he would soon be taking up arms again against Brunswijk's terrorists. However, something went wrong in November 1987. Neighbors in Paramaribo divined that 'M' was seized by a spirit. Observers agreed that it was a female spirit who spoke a Maroon language. The spirit shouted through the silent night of Paramaribo's middle class suburbia: 'They killed me while I was pregnant', followed by a few sentences with atrocious details of the massacre. According to the information I received 'M' is possessed by the spirit of a woman killed at Moi Wana. In 'ordinary life' 'M' remained an active member of the National Army, proud of his uncompromising attitude towards 'Brunswijk's Gang'. Many of this sergeant's relatives had fled to the interior, afraid of being associated with this sordid affair by other Maroons or being called upon by their relative to lend services to the military. In particular, religious specialists from 'M's' family, knowing that their services are always in demand, had departed for the interior. At night time quite a different persona continues to make its appearance in nocturnal Paramaribo. 'M', donned in female attire and with a high pitched voice, makes his walks. No shrine is erected for the woman killed at Moi Wana; there is no evidence of any other cultic activities. The agony shown by this sergeant might remain a personal tragedy without few consequences for social relations either between different Maroon groups or within his own matrilineage. It seems likely that, as a result of this civil war, more avenging spirits will make their appearance in the near future. The social consequences of such religious phenomena are difficult to foretell. In the eyes of Maroons, these spirits will be of varying stature and menace. The only thing that seems certain is that the spirits will burden new generations with their tales of atrocity and coming retribution.

Religious Specialists

The events of July and August 1986 appear to have been decisive in many respects for the attitudes of the leaders of the Jungle Commando. A group of young Maroons, who initially were entirely oriented to the urban setting, were faced with the necessity of having to establish contact again with religious specialists (*obiaman*). The flow of volunteers and the transfer of the guerrilla base from the coastal plain to the interior played a part in this, but even more important seems to be the social position that religious specialists occupy in their

own society. Such medicinemen are the formal or informal leaders of their kin groups. The reorientation toward these specialists was already well under way in 1985; if some one from the Brunswijk group was wounded or had to go into hiding, he would look for a trustworthy medicineman. Those on the run from the police and the army, like Brunswijk in 1985 and early 1986, sought asylum in their houses. They thereby came into closer contact with the Afro-Surinamese religion of an older generation. Brunswijk has given his biographer (Van der Beek 1987:84) an account of how he gradually became more and more convinced of the power of *obia*, the objects and medicines endowed with supernatural power:

"Brunswijk is now 100% in support of the culture. He believes in it completely. A person who is not fully convinced by it cannot count on protection. "I never used to", he says. "Formerly I thought it a lot of hocuspocus. Until I experienced that I was really being protected. I had to feel it a couple of times before I really started to believe in it."

By the time the 'Brunswijk group' was turning into the Jungle Commando, the case for 'traditional Maroon culture' had already been won. All the same, as happens so often with similar phenomena, conversion is sudden and unexpected. When the guerrillas had pitched their tents behind Mopi Kondée on the Marowijne in August 1986, two members of the Jungle Commando found an ancient stone bottle in the forest behind the base. When they discovered that the bottle contained a strange elixir, the men knew that fate had placed a weapon in their hands. This was a *Sweli*, an obeah of the most powerful type, deriving its strength from the highest supernatural sources in the universe, granting humans its powers on condition that they would uphold a covenant. What precisely the conditions of this covenant was not immediately clear to the finders. Very often, the obeah is used as a weapon of defense against witches, hence the first priority for the believers: to refrain from witchcraft. Upon their return to the camp, the two Jungles were in trance, seized by the powers of the elixir. The trance immediately captured the others in the camp. The guerrillas were in a state of spiritual ecstasy. They walked round the camp uttering incomprehensible language; others were singing or shouting. From then on this god would have to lead the rebels. The stone bottle was wrapped in cloths and tied to a plank. The deity of the elixir could now be consulted. Two 'Jungles' carried the plank with the bottle through the camp like a tabernacle. Others posed questions to it. The deity answered by directing the movements of the bearers. In most cases it was not difficult to interpret the movements. A step forward meant an affirmative reply, while shaking in a sideways direction indicated a reply in the negative. Wild gyrations betrayed the deity's excitement or rage. Two months later a Dutch

journalist was eye-witness to the consultation of this oracle in Brunswijk's base to the south of Mungo:

'Religious life starts up as dusk is falling ... It is a matter of gaining the support of the spirits for the approaching attack. Two men carry a plank through the camp on their head. It supports the **obia**, a bundle put together by an **obiaman** (medicine-man) and sprinkled with beer. All the men follow the pair to an open space in the forest. By torch-light they assemble around the two bearers of the plank, who move their head and the plank in answer to questions from Brunswijk and the **obiaman**. The plank indicates who can take part in the attack. One of the first to be selected is Kenny, a mercenary. Then come most of the rest, delighted at being chosen, which makes them invulnerable in the fight. This ritual lasts for two hours.⁶

It is around this time that the leadership of the rebel army attempted to recruit the support of as many religious specialists as possible. 'Who is not for us is against us' seems to have been the motto. The relations of the **obiaman** with the military regime are carefully checked. An **obiaman** who does not give up his practice in Paramaribo may be suspected of being a traitor. It can probably be said of all prominent Ndjuka **obiaman** that they have benefitted from transactions with Paramaribo's elite, whether military personnel or civilians associated with them. Sometimes it will have been a consultation for the Commander himself; sometimes for ministers or high-ranking officials. After all, religious specialists are businessmen. They want to earn their wages and attract the attention of the authorities. These activities go together. A minister who visits an **obiaman** provides free advertising for his practice. Some of the specialists were paid by the government to visit popular healers in Africa or Asia or to attend congresses abroad on native healing practices. Others were given official positions in departments of cultural affairs or as political advisors. Their payment could be of various kinds. In 1988 there were five **obiaman** more or less in the permanent employ of the Jungle Commando. Others regularly offered their services to individual 'Jungles' or to the Commando as a whole. However, some were under suspicion. The following three examples are of **obiaman** who were viewed with suspicion by at least some of the leaders of the Jungle Commando.

Obiaman 'D'

In the 1960s **obiaman** 'D' was famous in the Tapanahoni region. He had established himself as the medium of a new sort of spirit. This spirit, the **Seewenti** (Spirit of the Sea), called for a reform of the religious institutions of Ndjuka society. 'D' met with nothing but opposition and suspicion. In the end the hostility became so marked that he decided to transfer his medico-religious practice to the coastal area. This move was also dictated by the awareness that he would then be more accessible for those Maroons who were earning salaries on the coastal plain. 'D' was highly successful. Patients poured in from all around. His clientele included Creoles and even some East Indians. Moreover, 'D' was a smart businessman. He bought parcels of land, hired labor and began the large-scale cultivation of cassava for the market in Paramaribo. He reinvested part of his income in real estate. This attracted the attention of the Maroon migrants in the capital. The rumor soon spread that 'D' provided Bouterse and other members of the armed forces with **obia**. Soon after the establishment of the Jungle Commando, 'D' was advised to leave the city and to work for the guerrillas. The messenger's mission was in vain. This confirmed the suspicion of his enemies, often rivals in the medico-religious field, that 'D' worked for Bouterse and thus against Brunswijk. In March 1987 the Jungle Commando's team of **obiaman** pronounced a curse in public. This took place in a Maroon settlement in French Guiana.

Sawini

Similar rumors circulated about the **obiaman** Sawini, but in August 1986 Sawini opted for the rebels. He joined Brunswijk's religious staff. Sawini presented them with an important weapon, a ritually prepared machete wrapped in a cloth. Sawini was seriously wounded in the first action in which he participated, an attack on the town of Albina, in early September 1986. He was taken to the interior for treatment. Soon after his arrival there Sawini died. Through divination, a team of **obiaman** who were investigating the death of Sawini discovered that he had sworn a secret oath with Bouterse to help him in his struggle against Brunswijk. The machete wrapped in a cloth did not contain any **obia** to help the Jungle Commando in their fight, the medicinemen pointed out, but evil ingredients which would damage the rebels' cause.

Pakosie

The **obiaman** André Pakosie established Sabana Peti, a medico-religious center on the Albina-Mungo road. His clientele included both Maroons and Creoles and Javanese. A few ministers and high-ranking civil servants had also employed his services. Besides this medico-religious practice, he also worked as an official in the Ministry for Cultural Affairs in Mungo, and was political advisor to the chairman of the National Assembly, Riek Aron. From the outbreak of the civil war Pakosie tried to avoid having to choose for or against Bouterse. He stopped his activities as a political advisor but continued his work in the Cultural Affairs office in Mungo. In October 1986, against his inclinations, he became involved in the military confrontation. Pakosie was taken by an armed escort of 'Jungles' to Brunswijk's camp on the Albina-Mungo road. Brunswijk directly asked him to take part in the forthcoming battle of Mungo on the rebel side. Pakosie promised to help. He and a few other **obiaman** from Brunswijk's camp made an **obia** to be used in the fighting at Mungo. Mungo was taken the day after the **obia** was ready. Mungo was lost again at the beginning of December. Pakosie fled with his family to French Guyana immediately after the first killings at Moi Wana (29 November 1986). In the ensuing period some of his colleagues accused Pakosie of having provided the Jungle Commando with a poor **obia**. Others raked up his past as a political advisor and the numerous treatments that he had provided for ministers and other leading figures. Pakosie was eventually forced to flee to the Netherlands (Van Westerloo 1987).

Religious Cults

The religious cults of the Maroons are an important organisational framework for their societies. During periods of war they may play a decisive role in uniting and motivating resistance fighters against an oppressor. There are three which generally operate in close cooperation: the cult of **Gaan Gadu** (Great Deity), **Agedeonsu** (God of nature and fertility) and **Na Ogii** (The Danger). This triad occupies the highest place in the supernatural hierarchy of the Ndjuka; it ranks above all **wenti** and other spirits or gods. Only **Masaa Gadu** (The Lord God) is higher, but he is a **deus otiosus**, who only intervenes in His creation through the three divinities just mentioned. They will here be called High Gods, and their servitors 'priests' instead of medicinemen.

The first two cults are connected with the worship of the ancestors from the 'escape period' (**lowe ten**), the 18th century wars of independence against the Dutch and the subsequent establishment of Ndjuka society. Each of these cults

has its own sanctuaries, rites and priests. The Ndjuka are obliged to cooperate if they wish to make the veneration of these gods a success. Mutual differences must be cleared up first and hostilities brought to an end. The Ndjuka, and sometimes other Maroons as well, are summoned together at regular intervals to propitiate the gods. Pilgrimages are made to secret places in the forest. An outsider or traveller through the interior by river might chance on hundreds of Maroons on their way to a pilgrimage center. At times like these, the outsider realises that this is a society which still possesses a large amount of cultural autonomy. For example, during a service in honor of **Agedeonsu** held in 1987, the Ndjuka people were called together to receive the approval of the deity in this new period of war and trial. Lengthy rites, consisting of feasts, ceremonies and pilgrimages, brought a few thousand Ndjuka together. Such an event is, of course, an important forum for the shaping or confirming of ethnic identity.

The oracles each of these cults boasts are equally important. The pronouncements of such oracles may affect public opinion considerably. The oracular utterances relate to everyday occurrences, but also to weightier matters such as illness and death, calamity and war. The oracles generally follow a policy of cooperation, thus presenting Ndjuka society with a central 'divinatory apparatus'. Divine speech is authoritative only if it is uttered by the three leading gods in concert, the 'sacred tripod', as some Ndjuka put it.⁷

Now that Brunswijk's fighters have withdrawn from the coastal plains to the interior, it is worth looking more closely at the relationship between the Jungle Commando and the priests of the three cults. It is best to begin with that between the Jungle Commando and the paramount chief (**gaanman**) of the Ndjuka, Gazon Matodja. Gazon is the best intermediary between Ndjuka and their High Gods. As chief, Gazon holds an important position in the worship of **Gaan Gadu**. He also has to officiate at certain rites for **Agedeonsu** if these are to be performed efficaciously. His assistance is not essential for the veneration of **Na Ogi**, but his communications would be taken very seriously by this deity's priests. It is therefore of the greatest importance to understand Gazon's attitude towards the present conflict and its protagonists.

On various occasions Gazon has told the outside world that he intends to maintain his neutrality in the conflict between the Jungle Commando and the National Army. The first group in particular regrets this. One of Gazon's arguments for this attitude is that Brunswijk started the war without consulting him or even informing him of his plans. It was only after the event, at the end of August 1986, that Brunswijk and a few of his supporters visited Diitabiki, the residence of the chief, in the hope of gaining his assistance or at least his moral support. Their mission was a failure. The paramount chief bears it against

Brunswijk and his 'commanders' that they started a war without assuring themselves of the support of the elders, but above all, that they did not even take the trouble to present advance information to the High Gods and their servants.

It is worth examining the circumstances which led Brunswijk to commit an error of this kind, which is all the more surprising since he has been trying to win over as many religious specialists as possible. At the capture of Mungo in November 1986, for instance, Brunswijk was assured of the support of a team of **obiaman**, specialists who are able to produce amulets and other sources of power. As we have seen, on the eve of the attack on Mungo (at the end of October 1986), he did his best to add yet another specialist, Pakosie, to his team of religious assistants. Besides being a **obiaman**, Pakosie is also the medium of **Na Ogii**, and thereby the leading priest of this cult. Nevertheless, Pakosie was not consulted as the servant of the **Na Ogii** cult, but only as a religious specialist who could be expected to produce **obia** to serve as weapons in the fighting.

Secret diplomacy between the top of the Jungle Commando and the priests of the main Maroon cults must have started quite early. The first example I know refers to a contact of the guerrillas with Maroons on French soil. In January 1987 a message was brought to Brunswijk's headquarters on Stoelmanseiland from the servants of **Odun**, the main cult of the Aluku Maroons. The Aluku live on the Lawa, the continuation of the border river, the Marowijne. Most Aluku villages are on French territory, and they consider themselves French subjects and are seen as such by the authorities of French Guiana. The Aluku have not taken part in the fighting themselves. One of the 'Jungles' told me: 'Why should they risk their lives for us? They know they're protected by the French army'. But the Aluku certainly sympathise with the rebels and have helped the Jungle Commando with transport and information on various occasions. **Odun's** message for the leadership of the Jungle Commando was that the time had come for the 'Jungles' to receive religious preparation from his priests for the fight. **Odun** had observed that the 'Jungles' carried out religious ceremonies at his sanctuaries in the lower reaches of the Marowijne River.⁸ In the opinion of this deity, it would have been more polite to address him directly. The Jungle Commando was planning an important military operation. Those who were to take part in it first travelled to the sanctuary of **Odun** to be assured of his religious support. The support was provided. The rites lasted a number of days.⁹ Immediately afterwards this unit of the Jungle Commando left for Victoria on the Suriname River to fight Bouterse's troops.

The question here again is why the Jungle Commando failed to establish similar positive contacts with the priests of the High Gods of the Ndjuka. First, it has to be reiterated that the discontented young men who provided the initial

impulse for the armed uprising in the coastal plain were not the most obvious group for establishing easy contact with the priests of the High Gods. Some hardly knew that such deities existed; generally it can be said that most of their interests lay elsewhere.

Of much graver consequence for an alliance between the generation of guerrillas and the priests at the oracles was a protracted religious conflict and subsequent stalemate in the Ndjuka heartland, the villages along the Tapanahoni River. The difficulties started in 1972. A prophet of Na Ogi, Akalali, condemned Gaan Gadu's priests for political scheming, frauds, and even graver sins against Ndjuka values. Akalali focussed his attack on the funerary rites which he criticized as costing too much time and money. That by itself was a popular stance in a society where men in particular have to invest months of work and thousands of guilders in post-burial rites. More violent, and receiving even more acclaim, was Akalali's assault on the anti-witchcraft ritual of the Gaan Gadu cult. In the 1960s, the decade preceding Akalali's reforms, one out of every two dead was posthumously accused of witchcraft (Van Wetering 1973). Gaan Gadu's priests carried the corpses of witches to a 'cemetery', where these remains were abandoned without burial. The possessions of the witches were confiscated by these same priests. A quarter of a century ago, institutions of this kind had been the object of much grumbling, but few of these complaints had been brought into the open. The *obiaman* 'D' (see above) was a notable exception, but his opposition did not lead to a revolt against the religious establishment. Resistance remained an isolated phenomenon. Maroons, for example, who had found work in the city put their money in savings accounts to prevent Gaan Gadu priests from getting their hands on it once they were dead.

When it became clear what measure of support from Ndjuka's they could hope for, Akalali and his followers demanded that the two main oracles of Gaan Gadu were to be closed. Under great pressure from the population in the Ndjuka heartland of the Tapanahoni, Gaan Gadu's priests had to give in: from then on, public consultation of this deity was no longer allowed. If Brunswijk had gone to Diitabiki to ask Gazon's permission before attacking the military posts in the Marowijne district, he would have had to consult a chief who was detached from his own (Gaan Gadu) cult. It is impossible for Gazon to consult his oracle unless explicitly requested to do so by the Ndjuka people; at any rate, it cannot be done in public, certainly not on such an important issue. Many Ndjuka were afraid that any such request will give the group of priests in Diitabiki the opportunity to reintroduce the old religious institutions. Many feared that if the paramount chief were to be asked to revive a part of the cult - the consultation of the oracle - the rest of the institutions which were formerly connected with it would be

reintroduced as well. This was the impasse facing Brunswijk when he attacked the military posts in the Marowijne district in July 1986.

Conclusion

The discontented young men who provided the initial impulse for the armed revolt did not form the most suitable group for establishing rapid contact with religious specialists or with the priests who play an important part in the service of the main deities. It is likely that this problem of liaison with the priests of the main deities only arose when the revolt began to spread to wider sectors of Maroon society. The founders of the Jungle Commando lived with their gaze fixed on what Paramaribo, Cayenne or Amsterdam had to offer. They had not turned their back on their own society, but their interests lay elsewhere: in the new opportunities offered in a larger world. The aggression of the armed forces was selectively directed against Maroon society. The National Army's policy of collective reprisals against the people of the interior confused categories which were in fact caught up in a process of separation. From the force of sheer necessity, work is now going on to restore the relations with the more traditional elements in their own society. The Jungle Commando has hereby become involved in a complicated religious-political situation in which religious specialists and cults interpret traditional concepts while leaving room for political maneuvering. The course of the civil war has now come to depend partly on the development of relations within the religious world of the Maroons.

NOTES

1. The first public appeal to provide information on the whereabouts of the suspect Ronnie Brunswijk appeared in Surinamese newspapers on 23 April 1986 (*De West*). A similar appeal was printed in *De West* on 26 April, but this time it was lengthier: '**Suspect Brunswijk: Dangerous and Armed**'. The deputy commander of the Military Police, Sergeant-Major M. Zeeuw, asked for extra attention from the public to assist in every way which might lead to the arrest of the suspect Ronnie Brunswijk: 'The party concerned displays serious forms of aggression at the moment and has during the past months committed the following criminal acts: bank robberies in Mungo, Tamanredjo, a robbery in Patamacca, robbery of various gold prospectors in the interior and arson. The Military Police has also received nine depositions concerning robbery or attempted robbery of various civilians on the Mungo-Albina road and the Patamacca road. The afore-mentioned Brunswijk, Ronnie, is heavily armed, probably with automatic weapons, and is thus believed to be highly dangerous (...)'
2. André Pakosie, member of the cabinet in 1986 and district commissioner for Marowijne, told me that he went with a delegation to visit Mora Kondee, the village of Brunswijk's mother, in the second half of April 1986. Brunswijk was walking about in the village openly. A high-ranking police official and an officer of the National Army took Brunswijk aside for a talk. Pakosie understood Brunswijk to say to these representatives of authority: 'If he's serious, I'll come to Albina'. He later heard from a Maroon who worked for the government in Albina that Brunswijk had also had contact with members of the police force and the army there. The members were instructed by the chairman of the district council not to mention the meeting with Brunswijk to anyone.
3. Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering (1983).
4. During a meeting of Ndjuka heads on 2 September 1987, the Paramaribo authorities were accused of cutting the links with society in the interior. The following specific measures were censured: (1) the cessation of social benefit payments; (2) the failure to pay salaries to officials in the interior; and (3) the declaration that the old Surinamese currency was not legal tender at the moment when the links with the coastal plains were broken. This meant that thousands of Maroons lost their savings.

5. Ma Foida is a fictional name. Ma Melina is the medium of 'Basia Kwaku'. This story was published in *Het Parool* on 3 October 1987. I am not sure that Herrenberg did speak words of a pejorative nature about the Ndjuka. It is certainly not clear from his own publication (Herrenberg 1988).
6. This piece was written by Albert de Lange. It was published on 1 November 1986 in *Het Parool* under the heading: "Armed by the "Winti" for an attack on Bouterse."
7. The formulation is by Andre Pakosie, medium of one of the chief deities.
8. The religious specialists of the 'Jungle Commando' organised their rituals at sites in the lower reaches of the Marowijne where, according to tradition, the 18th century rebel leader Boni also got his *obia* ready for the fight. Boni is one of the great ancestors of the Aluku. (Hoogbergen 1985, 232-337).
9. Michel van Rey, who acted as advisor to the Jungle Commando for many months, told me of the arrival of the Aluku messenger. He also witnessed the departure of a relatively large Ndjuka delegation to the Aluku. Franklin Misidjan, alias 'Commander Reagan', told me that the attack near Victoria in February was one of the biggest set backs in the history of the Jungle Commando. Four of their best men were killed. I do not know whether this has led to a cooling of the relations with the Aluku.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

SURINAME: TRANSCENDING ETHNIC POLITICS THE HARD WAY

EDWARD DEW

All societies in the Caribbean are plural societies. Gordon K. Lewis has lamented the focus of so many academics on the concept of cultural pluralism,¹ and I sympathize with his position. Looking at what divides societies - their racial, religious, or other primordial attachments - is sometimes done at the expense of those emerging phenomena that unite them. Cultural pluralists like myself should hope, one day, to work themselves out of a job. Or, better yet, cultural pluralism should work itself out of political science and leave anthropology with the job of studying - and celebrating - a society's cultural riches. But for the time being at least, the political manifestations of cultural pluralism are very much in evidence in the world, and that includes the young Caribbean republic of Suriname.

Suriname is a very complex plural society - a culturally plural society defined loosely as a society composed of two or more distinct ethnic segments. In much of the Caribbean, according to M.G. Smith, this pluralism derives from the division of Creoles into two major groups: a very westernized, generally light-skinned Afro-European elite and a large, radically darker, traditional folk society in the shanties and the hinterland. Each is distinct in a host of ways identifiable to the ethnographer: family structure, belief system, customary behaviour, etcetera.² In Suriname, there is an even more complicated social mosaic - one that fascinates the rare visitor because of its incredible diversity (see tables 1 and 2). There is, for starters, an amazingly wide variety of racial groups, and within each of these there are the same subcultural cleavages (i.e., western versus traditional) that are found among the Creoles. In the 1971 census - the last detailed one

available³ - 31 percent of the population was Creole. Like their fellow Blacks throughout the Caribbean, these are the descendants of slaves, culturally oriented to traditional beliefs or to the West, or spread-eagled somewhere in between. In Suriname they speak Sranantongo (an Afro-European creole) and/or Dutch - most of them both.

A slightly larger group, 37 percent, was East Indian or Hindustani, descendants of contract laborers imported from India in the period after slavery was abolished in 1863. The first group arrived in Suriname in 1873 (thirty-five years after their first appearance in the Caribbean). Hindustanis are divided religiously between Moslems and Hindus, while the Hindus are further divided between orthodox and reform Hinduism. Some of the Hindustanis have also become Christians, while some Blacks have become Moslems. Hindustanis speak Sarnami Hindustans, Sranantongo, and/or Dutch - most of them all three.

Fifteen percent of the Surinamers were Indonesian (Javanese). Though all of them are Moslem, they still display divisions between those traditionally praying to the West and those more 'modern' ones who pray to the East. They speak an archaic form of Malayan (dating from the time that they were brought to Suriname as contract laborers from the 1880s through the Great Depression). Most also speak Sranantongo and Dutch.

Eleven percent of the population were Bush Negro (or Maroon) - descendants of escaped slaves who fought several bitter wars of independence against the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, with ultimate victory, established five distinct states within a state in the interior. Large numbers have moved into the margins of the capital, Paramaribo, in the 1960s and 1970s. There are both 'push' and 'pull' reasons for this: i.e., their conditions in the interior have worsened somewhat and the urban economy has provided some employment to them, generating further migration and straining the retention of their social institutions. Three percent of Surinamers were Amerindians, descendants of the original Carib and Arawak peoples who originally inhabited the Caribbean islands and Guiana coast. These, like the Bush Negroes, have traditionally lived in tribal groups but in recent years have followed the path of urbanization, risking the loss of their culture.

Finally, in a highly visible position because of their commercial and managerial functions, there are four other ethnic groups, comprising about four percent of the population: Europeans (including Americans), Jews, Syrians, and Chinese. There has been a fair amount of assimilation and intermarriage among these four and between them and the Creole group.⁴

After the end of slavery in the 1860s, and with a domestic outcry over abuses in the East Indies, the Dutch in Suriname adopted a policy of cultural assimilation for the native population. But this was accompanied by special treatment for the Asian groups that replaced the Black labor force on the sugar and other plantations. A critical showdown over such 'separate development' came in the 1930s and 1940s, leaving both sides - Creoles and Asians - uncertain and politically aroused. V.S. Naipaul is characteristically more generous to the colonial authorities than is warranted when he described the resultant society as he viewed it in 1960:

The Dutch have offered assimilation but not made it obligatory. Their tolerance and understanding of alien cultures is greater than the British, and the very reverse of the French arrogance which makes the French West Indian islands insupportable for all but the francophile.... Surinam has come out of Dutch rule as the only truly cosmopolitan territory in the West Indian region. The cosmopolitanism of Trinidad is now fundamentally no more than a matter of race; in Surinam diverse cultures, modified but still distinct, exist side by side. The Indians speak Hindi still; the Javanese live, a little bemused, in their own world...; the Dutch exist in their self-sufficient Dutchness, the Creoles in their urban Surinam-Dutchness; in the forest, along the rivers, the bush-Negroes have recreated Africa.⁵

Dutch aid disbursements in the post-war period were sizeable, permitting an excellent school system and a talented, if overblown, civil service. It is possible that Suriname has the largest middle class in the region. Certainly a large percentage of both the Creole and Hindustani groups had achieved such status by the 1970s. In 1980, Suriname enjoyed a GNP per capita of \$2,950, putting it, in the Caribbean, behind only the Caribbean territories of France and the United States, the Netherlands Antilles, and the oil-rich state of Trinidad and Tobago.⁶

Given its small population of roughly 400,000, Suriname is fairly well-endowed economically and capable of considerable self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, cultural influences of 'The Motherland' brought it an inflated degree of consumerism and the politically unpopular need to husband its foreign exchange reserves for capital goods expenditures. Suriname draws about 80 percent of its foreign exchange from the export of bauxite and its refined products of aluminum oxide and, until recently, aluminum.⁷ Most of the rest of her foreign exchange comes from exports of rice, lumber, shrimp, and various tropical fruits. Tourism is almost negligible.

The Political Evolution of Communalist
and Consociational Politics

Suriname had an advisory legislative council for some 80 years before she became fully self-governing in 1948. At that time, the Dutch extended universal suffrage to Suriname after a popular multi-ethnic campaign led by a Dutch Catholic priest, Leonard Joseph Weidmann, and a young Hindustani lawyer, Jagernath Lachmon. Shortly thereafter, home rule was established - that is, a full-fledged system of parliamentary government, complete with cabinet and prime minister - a few years after Jamaica but before Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

With universal suffrage and meaningful self-government, the phenomenon known as **apanjaht** quickly emerged. In the Caribbean, this is the practice of voting for your own race, your own group. Although deriving from Hindi words, the term is culturally neutral as applied in the Caribbean. It refers to the practice of ethnically based political parties playing upon prejudice, fear, and/or communal interest to gain support. **Apanjaht** politics is generally condemned for feeding a 'we-versus-they' set of group identifications that is counterproductive to national identity and national development. But it can also be argued that **apanjaht** rests on positive foundations. At the time in which it made its entrance to the Caribbean in the 1940s and 1950s, it served not only as a means of political mobilization but also as a source of social liberation. It asserted an identity that usually had been scorned or abused by the earlier elites - elites that now were being displaced.

In Suriname, Protestants, Catholics, and light-skinned and dark-skinned groups each tried to mobilize followings within their respective subcultural camp in the Creole segment. Among Hindustanis, Moslems and members of the Hindu Sanatan Dharm and Arya Samaj also tried their luck - some Hindustani Moslems crossing over to mobilize Indonesians as well. While Creoles buried most of their subcultural differences to form the Protestant-oriented Suriname National Party (NPS) and the smaller (Catholic) Suriname Progressive People's Party (PSV), Hindustanis amalgamated all their religious factions into the United Hindustani Party (VHP) under Lachmon's leadership; Indonesians, rejecting Hindustani tutelage, set up their own Indonesian Peasant's Party (KTPI). Any visionaries who tried nonethnic, programmatic organizational principles were systematically left out of the running.⁸

TABLE I
Population by Cultural Origin and Religion, 1964

Group	Total	Percent	Protestant	Catholic	Hindu	Moham- medan	Heathen	Other & Unknown
Creoles	114,961	35.4	59,630	47,658	272	443		6,958
Hind.	112,633	34.7	1,136	4,021	86,911	19,157		1,408
Javanese	48,463	14.9	1,319	1,668	162	43,933		1,381
Chinese	5,339	1.7	804	3,456	4	28		1,047
European	4,322	1.4	1,544	1,666	2	11		1,099
Bush Negro	27,698	8.5	5,548	5,275			16,875	
Amer indians	7,287	2.3	284	5,889	8	16	960	130
Other & Unknown	3,508	1.1	802	1,533	216	221		736
Total	324,211	100.0	71,067	71,166	87,575	63,809	17,835	12,759
Percent	100.0		21.8	21.9	27.1	19.7	5.5	3.9

Source: Algemeen Bureau voor de Statistiek. *Derde Algemene Volkstelling. Suriname in Cijfers. No. 33 (Paramaribo, 1967), Table 7, n.p.*

As Surinamers sorted themselves out into viable ethnic political parties by means of **apanjaht**, they developed another institution to minimize its worst attributes. In political science, it has been given the cumbersome name, 'consociationalism' or 'consociational democracy',⁹ a form of government for culturally plural societies in which the ethnic issue is addressed by means of proportionality and power-sharing.

To make consociationalism possible requires various things: ethnic multipolarity, talented leadership in each segment, and the material means to erode the segment's communal defensiveness. Theoretically, where work is plentiful and rewarded equitably, multi-ethnic leadership can become legitimate, stimulating a similar cooperative behaviour elsewhere. Consociationalism should thus carry within it the means of its own transcendence. Power-sharing logically can move from post-election coalitions to pre-election 'deals'. From there, alliance-formation may evolve from an activity among parties to a practice of 'balancing tickets' within a single party.

Apanjaht and Revolution in Suriname

In Suriname general perceptions of growth and improved well-being, together with the remarkable leadership of Jagernath Lachmon, Johan Pengel, and Iding Soemita (Leaders of the VHP, NPS, and KTPI, respectively), made **apanjaht** consociationalism work at the post- and pre-electoral levels for nearly twenty years.¹⁰ This is all the more remarkable given the grassroots fears and hostility recorded among groups at the time. **Apanjaht**, however, encourages extremism of two kinds: ethnic outbidding (by rival leaders in one's own group who condemn the compromises required of power-sharing) and anti-**apanjaht** utopianism (which tries to use ideology as a means of transcending cultural parochialism). Suriname's politics demonstrate these two reactions and the more general proposition that consociational democracy, even where it does work, is not much appreciated - especially by the young. It is an ad hoc, incremental kind of politics which, if not immobilized by its very mechanics, looks at times as if it is.

In an atmosphere of perceived newer economic constraints, struggles over patronage, developmental priorities, and social policy led to a falling out between the two largest political parties, the NPS and the VHP. Accusations of 'selling out' their own people were increasingly heard from dissidents in each party, and splinter groups emerged. Responding to this ethnic outbidding, the NPS and VHP increased their own demands on each other, finally breaking the alliance.

Ironically, the small splinter parties stepped into take their rivals' places in the multi-ethnic alliances that followed: the NPS with several smaller Hindustani parties, the VHP with several small Creole parties. Caught in between were the parties of other ethnic groups - Indonesians, Bush Negroes, and others - which now had to scramble to be taken as allies in what was only a token effort at power-sharing. But even as things were falling apart, the various non-ethnic ideological parties were themselves condemned to a futile search for votes - drawing enthusiasm from younger voters but rarely enough to get any members elected.

It was under these polarized conditions that the struggle for independence took place in the mid-1970s.¹¹ Ethnic tensions reached their peak at this time, with stoning, arson, and continued protest demonstrations mounted by Hindustanis and others against the Creole-led movement. A new constitution was adopted on the eve of independence (November 25, 1975), but only after bitter debate, unavailing appeals to the Dutch, and last-minute concessions by all sides.

Despite a hefty foreign aid package from the Netherlands, Suriname's government was immobilized by party deadlock for the next five years, as the VHP (now called the Progressive Reform Party) fought the NPS with every tactic at its disposal. After a year of independence, new elections were held in 1977, but the two major parties remained polarized - each controlling a small galaxy of ethnic allies. In 1979, the death of an NPS member led to a 19-19 tie in the legislature and a paralyzing impasse. The VHP-bloc refused to provide a quorum for the swearing in of a new representative, and without that new representative, no legislative activity was possible.¹²

Consociationalism had degenerated into a demoralizing shouting match between two camps of token power-sharers. Thus, it was a matter of general relief, if not enthusiasm, when, in February 1980, a group of young non-commissioned officers, led by a sports instructor named Desi(re) Bouterse, took over the government. Most likely, the coup was the accidental capstone of a chain of events. The events were not entirely random, yet their sequence was so easily alterable that the end product was like a bolt from the blue for everyone - the NCOs included.¹³

The military successfully articulated the public's discontent with the old regime, arresting most of the old leaders and subjecting them to scrutiny for possible acts of corruption. They tried, at least in the beginning, to clean up the waste and low productivity of the civil service; they cracked down on street crime; and they purged the military of most of its senior officers. They also

condemned the **apanjaht** character of the old order, promising a wholly new system in two years time.¹⁴

With the big **apanjaht** parties licking their wounds, several radical parties of reimmigrating former students stepped forward to offer their assistance. Thus, after a year or so in which Bouterse tried to govern with civilian partners representing only an anti-**apanjaht** general reformism, he and his men began to talk in a more radical vein.¹⁵ There are two puzzling ironies in this gradual movement to the left. At each stage, from the first moderate government through the five cabinets that followed, there has been at least a token adherence to the principles of ethnic power-sharing. Of course, that might be expected given the balanced distribution of talented professionals, especially between Creole and Hindustani groups. But when one considers that the military itself is overwhelmingly Creole, this strategy demonstrates the recognition of consociationalism's symbolic significance, even where **apanjaht** politics has been suppressed.

The second, more puzzling, irony is the failure of the small leftist parties either to amalgamate or to build a popular following. Betty Sedoc Dahlberg has described these groups as having their origins in the Dutch universities. For whatever reason - the influence of their professors or the intellectual orientation of their leaders - they each acquired somewhat different ideological directions, modelling their vision of an ideal Suriname after such widely different experiments as the Chinese, the Cuban, the Albanian, and the Tanzanian.¹⁶ Ironically, they devoted as much effort to attacking each other as they did the ills of the larger society.¹⁷ Unable to get anywhere electorally, they each encouraged Bouterse's appetite for power. If he was initially in a quandary with these small groups jockeying for influence around him, he learned quickly to use and manipulate them. Together they made some headway in awakening class consciousness among the poorest elements in the society, and Bouterse provided patronage in the growing armed forces, newly created popular militia, etcetera. Still, they were never able to draw large crowds to their rallies.

In 1982, following the forced resignation of the moderate government of Henk Chin A Sen, who had had the temerity to propose a new constitution and newer elections, a prolonged series of demonstrations took place. In both the lower and middle classes, there was a new surge of the old **apanjaht** parties. In the fall of 1982, a series of rallies and marches took place, accompanied by published declarations calling for a return to democracy by most of Suriname's newspapers, unions, religious organizations, and civic groups. What especially irritated Bouterse was that a government rally for Maurice Bishop, the Grenadian leader, drew far fewer people than an anti-government demonstration on the same day. Strikes in a number of industries also took place, reportedly prompting

TABLE 2
 Surinam Population
 Age Six and Above/Best Spoken Language

Ethnic Group	Dutch	Sranan-Tongo	Sarnami Hindostans	Javanese	Other	Total
Creole	61,389	27,939	195	90	1,318	90,931
Hindustani	11,250	1,496	71,505	23	443	84,717
Javanese	2,724	561	22	34,766	35	38,108
Amer indian*	980	944	1	--	447	2,372
Chinese	2,581	237	1	5	1,663	4,487
European	3,455	15	1	4	144	3,619
Other	1,558	156	2	37	528	2,281
Total	83,937	31,348	71,727	34,925	4,578	226,515
Percent	37.1	13.8	31.7	15.4	2.0	100.0

*Not living in tribal groups.

Source: A.B.S., *Derde Algemene Volkstelling, Suriname in Cijfers*, No. 33 (Paramaribo; 1967). Table 36, n.p.

Bishop and the Cuban Ambassador to advise him that he should do something about the opposition.¹⁸ Bouterse did. On December 8, 1982, he arrested sixteen prominent leaders of the redemocratization movement (including a number who had been his close advisors at the outset), and, after brutal torture, he and his lieutenants killed fifteen of them.¹⁹

One year of stunned silence followed. Because the Dutch cut their \$ 100 million/year aid program to Suriname after the murders, Bouterse and his civilian front-men quickly began to exhaust the country's good credit-rating and supply of foreign exchange. Efforts in the spring of 1983 to woo aid from Cuba while simultaneously courting Brazil were not appreciated by the latter, and Suriname was forced into at least a token repudiation of this flirtation, exiling their best-known 'Cuba-liners' in the military elite.²⁰ In December, to try and balance the budget and win favor at the IMF, Suriname imposed new taxes on the bauxite workers. This was too much. The workers went out on a five-week strike that cost the nation over 25 million dollars in foreign exchange.²¹ Remarkably, it was to all appearances leaderless. But it was effective in forcing the government into some major concessions. The civilian government was blamed by Bouterse for the strike and forced to resign. In its place came a tripartite government, made up of labor leaders, representatives of the business community, and a large bloc of Bouterse's civilian supporters. Among their responsibilities would be the drafting of a new constitution to return Suriname to some form of democratic government. Pledges were also made by Bouterse to restore a free press and other fundamental freedoms.²²

The tripartite structure of Bouterse's new military-business-labor arrangement was reflected in both the Cabinet and a 'Supreme Council'. But it soon became clear that without the old *apanjaht* parties, nothing effective could be done in moving the country back to a legitimate democracy - one that would convince the Dutch to resume their foreign assistance. As debate on the new constitution developed in the assembly, business and labor representatives spoke up on behalf of the old parties, and Bouterse quietly began to meet with Jagernath Lachmon, then with Henck Arron of the NPS and Willy Soemita of the KTPI. Although many Surinamers had fled the country into exile, they had not. Their popular backing must have been abundantly clear to Bouterse and after prolonged negotiations, the three were invited into the Supreme Council in January 1986.²³ It was here, and not in the Assembly, that the main decisions were made on the new constitution.

TABLE 3
Hindustani and Creole Attitudes Toward
Other Cultural Groups, 1959-1961

Hindustani Attitudes	Positive %	Negative %	Neutral %	No Answer %	No Opinion %
Creoles	9.5	63.0	9.5	2.0	16.0
Javanese	16.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	18.0
Chinese	46.0	16.0	12.0	2.0	24.0
Dutch	60.0	2.0	4.0	9.0	25.0

Creole Attitudes	Positive %	Negative %	Neutral %	No Answer %	No Opinion %
Hindustanis	2.8	83.3	13.9	--	--
Javanese	16.3	3.5	18.8	—	11.4
Chinese	15.9	33.3	5.5	--	45.1
Dutch	39.6	35.4	21.5	—	3.5

Source: J. D. Speckmann, "De Houding van de Hindostaanse Bevolkingsgroep in Suriname ten opzichte van de Creolen," in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, CXIX (1963), p. 88; and H. C. van Renselaar, "De Houding van de Creoolse Bevolkingsgroep in Suriname ten opzichte van de Andere Bevolkingsgroepen," in *ibid.*, p. 103.

Consociation or War?

The theory of cultural pluralism is a conflict theory.²⁴ Yet throughout the post-War period, and even after the coup, consociational principles had helped Suriname to ease ethnic fears and temper conflict when it arose. Now it came close to its form back in the heyday of cross ethnic collaboration. Bouterse named Pertab Radhakishun, a member of the VHP, as Prime Minister, giving half a dozen posts to prominent members of the three old parties. What a surprise then, when in June 1986, just as the old parties were getting back into action, ethnic conflict exploded in a stunning manner and in a totally unexpected quarter!

The Bush Negro tribes of the interior declared war on the government in Paramaribo. For years, the tribal chiefs, or **granmans**, had expressed discontent at the shortcomings and abuses (as they saw them) in the coastal government's policies. But these grievances suddenly swelled after atrocities were committed against several Bush Negro villages in the military's hunt for a Bush Negro defector from their ranks. The individual, Ronny Brunswijk, was suddenly transformed from a bankrobbing Robin Hood into leader of the 'Surinamese Army of Liberation'.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1986, Brunswijk's band carried out raids on military outposts and extended its control over the eastern and south-central part of the country. Recruits trickled into his jungle camps from the Netherlands and the coastal area, including still more defectors from the National Army. The rebels were dislodged from Albina, the lovely border town on the Marowijne River (across from French Guyana), but only after it had been totally destroyed in a firefight; and Bouterse's troops proceeded to level a number of Bush Negro villages and bomb still others (with hand grenades thrown from Destroyer aircraft). Bush Negroes living in the coastal area were harassed by members of Bouterse's people's militia or arrested by the police. As many as 200 civilians lost their lives according to human rights monitors in Suriname and elsewhere.²⁵

While Brunswijk was effectively kept out of the Paramaribo area, his activities affected everyone's life. Service in the military, prestigious and lucrative for the enterprising, now became more dangerous. Recruits reportedly mutinied against jungle duty on several occasions. A raid at Raleigh Falls in the interior netted Brunswijk a small commercial airliner and left a group of tourists stranded. Then, in January 1987, generators at the Afobaka Dam were damaged, knocking out power to Alcoa's aluminum smelter. Fighting in the Moengo area forced evacuation of Alcoa's principal bauxite mine as well, and guerillas seized the country's palm oil plantation nearby. It was a national emergency.²⁶ Bouterse was

caught between a jungle rock (Brunswijk) and an urban hard place (civilian resistance, coolly managed by the old parties).

Back to the Future

One of the 'revolutionaries' more popular goals in 1980 had been restructuring government in Suriname away from the 'crippling' impact of western-style democracy. According to this view, the Westminster (or Hague) model of government-and-opposition could only lead to polarization, deadlock, and immobilization in a multiethnic society like Suriname's. But the more one looked across the field of alternatives, the more one realized that this might be the least bad choice available. Surely, to force a new and unnatural organization of interest articulation upon people at the grassroots was to risk taking away more freedom than could be given. A small number (at most ten percent of the population) had shown a willingness to participate in Bouterse's organizations (e.g., a popular militia, women's and youth organizations, and the national 'Stanvaste' political movement) after the 1983 murders. More ominously, the 'revolution' was accompanied by a hemorrhaging of resources - both human and physical.

Jaggernath Lachmon, Henck Arron, and Willy Soemita (of the VHP, NPS, and KTPI, respectively) watched these developments closely and, by staying put in Suriname, helped shore up the confidence of their followers. Lachmon repeatedly used the image of rice to explain his behaviour: the big cottonwood tree (*kankantrie*) stands tall, but the storm topples it with a crash. Rice 'bends long and deep' before the winds to rise again and grow.²⁷ The winds of dictatorship, in fact, had seemed to ease in 1985. Recognizing his isolation, Bouterse pragmatically opted for compromise (and the retention of at least some power in a new order). Deliberations on the Constitution took place at both the legislative and Supreme Council levels, with radical proposals frequently tabled in the former only to be removed in the latter under pressure from the old parties. The final product is a curious document - full of high-minded goals and principles that might command respect throughout the Third World.²⁸ Its structural machinery, however, is rather vague.

A concession to the radicals that should be of civic value is the introduction of local and regional assemblies. The new assemblies might not only give greater attention to regional development but they could also become a useful training and recruitment ground for a more representative national political system. But the old political parties balked at the radicals' proposal to indirectly elect the national legislature from or by these lower bodies (as in Cuba).

It was a critical test. If direct elections took place at the national level, this would surely permit the old political parties to return to power. But were they not easing their way back to power as it was? The old parties got their way.

As a safeguard against *apanjaht* forces using a narrow majority in the National Assembly to impose their will (or a strong minority attempting again to paralyze the government), the President was to be chosen by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly, and the President, not the Assembly, would pick the members of the Government, including a Vice-President who would serve effectively as Prime Minister. Thus, a 'grand coalition' (of ethnic and/or other parties and interests) was a prerequisite for effectively installing a new government. It was uncertain how the President, Vice-President, and National Assembly would relate to one another - the President appeared to enjoy a Gaullist transcendence, but specific powers of accountability or of advice and consent were missing. He might well become whatever a 'grand coalition' chose to make of him.

Yet another restriction on *apanjaht* was imbedded in the article on political organizations. While granting citizens the right to create political parties, the article required that their programs be consistent with the national interest, the Constitution, and other criteria to be established by law. They must be 'accessible to the Suriname citizen', internally democratic, and financially open to public scrutiny. As long as ethnic associations, per se, were not barred, and assuming that a multiethnic coalition would have the national interest at heart, the old parties accepted these conditions.

In the spring of 1987, as the deadline for the draft constitution approached, a new outbreak of violence shook Paramaribo. Students protesting the war went on strike, and daily demonstrations by thousands of secondary and college students took place. Several students and teachers were killed on February 20, when members of the security police pursued demonstrators onto school-grounds to 'punish' them.²⁹ The situation was so strained that Bouterse moved the February 25 'celebration' of his coup to the western frontier town of New Nickerie, on the Guiana border. Schools were closed for an extended period, and students continued their demonstrations for a thorough investigation into the military police forces' behaviour.

In this atmosphere, the old parties fought some of their hardest battles. They had balked at ratifying the existence of the hated people's militia or at denominating the military as the vanguard body for the country's development. Now such language was removed. Nevertheless, it was informally agreed that the military would be given representation on the new Council of State, an advisory

body to the President, and its leaders were explicitly made part of the National Security Council, a special governing body that the Council of State could call into being in time of emergency.

The final document, presented publicly by Bouterse on April 1, 1987, was top-heavy in ideals and contingencies, and almost mute in terms of everyday functionality. Nevertheless, Bouterse announced that there would be a referendum on the Constitution September 30, and, if it were accepted, national elections would follow November 25. In the meantime, people were free to make suggestions for improvements in the document (to be ratified by the Assembly and Supreme Council), and to begin to gear up for the two elections.

The Committee of Christian Churches (CCK) in Suriname compared themselves to the rabbis of pre-War Warsaw, alleging that the rule of law and protection of human rights had been sold out.³⁰ In a detailed critique of the Constitution, they urged people to vote against it.³¹ But members of the old political parties, acknowledging the fears of the CCK, felt that it was better to move onto this new playing field than to stay where they were. In particular, the party leaders were hinting that a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly would allow them to change language in the document anyhow.

The fact that the old consociational alliance of NPS, VHP, and KTPI was back together again and working effectively reassured many. On August 2, a combined rally of the three parties to announce formation of the Front for Democracy and Development drew 60,000 people - the largest political gathering in Suriname's history.³² Pronouncing the invocation, a Protestant minister prayed for Suriname's deliverance from the devil, and Lachmon and the other party leaders seemed to pull out all the stops in castigating the military for its bad government. The strong language - and huge response - led a number of military supporters to demand that Bouterse punish his critics. But Bouterse had gone that road before. Instead, he resigned from the Supreme Council, throwing all government responsibility to the old parties. This wasn't exactly what they had wanted. So, rather than invite a fresh coup, the party leaders met yet again with Bouterse and agreed to temper their language in the interest of national unity.³³

Public approval of the Constitution in the September referendum was overwhelming. Although the turnout was fairly low (62 percent nationwide and only 53 percent in Paramaribo), it received a 95 percent approval.³⁴ Now for the elections themselves! Party lists were entered by the Front; Bouterse's New Democratic Party (NDP); the Party of Labor (PvdA), representing a radical wing of the working class; the Progressive Workers and Farmers Union (PALU), competing for the same radical vote; and the Pendawalima, a Javanese party allied with the Progressive Bush Negro Party. Although Surinamers enjoy the

festivity involved in a political campaign - the oratory, music, dancing, and other benefits, their attention was centered for the most part on the Front's challenge to the NDP.

The Front picked a shoe - an old shoe (*oru shu*) - as their symbol and spun out a whole raft of slogans, e.g., '*Oru shu no ati*' (an old shoe doesn't hurt). Lachmon, as leader of the Front, was identified as 'Jumbo', because of the VHP's elephant symbol. "We want Jumbo", crowds would shout whenever Lachmon was present. 'Jumbo shoes' became a challenge that no one but the Front could fill. The NDP came up with the slogan '*soso lobi*' (only love), but then found it transformed by graffiti into '*soso trobi*' (only trouble) and '*soso lasi*' (only losers).³⁵

Gary Brana-Shute tells the alarming story that two nights before the election, when it was clear that the NDP would go under, Bouterse arrived at a major rally three hours late and clearly intoxicated.

He mounted the podium, wearing sunglasses and a shirt more than discretely open, wobbled a bit, mopped his brow and launched into a discussion of how socialism would remove the perils of multi-ethnicity. He was surrounded by his Creole lieutenants. Groping for a metaphor he claimed that Suriname can no longer have 'Hindustani pandits huddled in their temples going 'kakara, kakara'.

... He then made reference to the fallen comrades of the revolution and demanded of the audience they remove their campaign caps for a moment of silence. Some did, some did not, and in an outburst of anger he told them to put their caps back on and to remove them again when he gave the order ... He began to wobble, yanked at his slipping pants, and was escorted off stage'.³⁶

As members of a delegation to observe the Suriname elections, my wife, Anke, and I observed immense lines at every polling place we separately chose to visit. This being the country's first election in ten years, many in the electorate were voting for the first time, and delays in the process were inevitable. Nevertheless, representatives of every party were on hand, helping to explain the ballot to voters, keeping running tallies on their registration lists, and later verifying each ballot as it was hand-counted. There seemed no doubt as to the outcome. Caravans of cars waving Front flags began to roll through the streets by late afternoon. With a final announcement still several hours away, Lachmon ordered

his supporters to stop their celebrating-incidents near the army bases lest they get out of hand and the victory aborted.³⁷

The final tallies showed the Front winning 40 of the Assembly's 51 seats. The NDP picked up three, PALU four, and Pendawalima four.³⁸ The Front clearly had enough seats now to form a government and change the Constitution. Stripped of his hoped-for legislative bargaining power, would Bouterse honor the results? He showed up at a Front reception after the results were in and repeated his earlier commitment to accept the outcome.

The Front now took its time. The Constitution called for the new legislature to be sworn in 'within thirty days at the latest', the new President to emerge from that body within another thirty days. The Front took the maximum amount of time as if they really needed it. Ultimately, Lachmon resumed his long-standing (1958-1966 and 1969-1973) role as Speaker of the National Assembly, and Arron resumed his role (1973-1980) as Prime Minister (i.e., 'Vice President' in the new constitutional language). By naming Ramsewak Shankar, a respected engineer-businessman, as President, the party leaders were effectively saying that the role of the President ought to be ceremonial and secondary to that of the Speaker and leader of the Cabinet.

When asked if there was any intention of amending the Constitution, Lachmon and Arron indicated that there were far more important matters of immediate concern. Indeed there were. The economic crisis was unprecedented. Financial credits were needed to get the machinery, materials, and spare parts to resume economic activity. Consumer goods were in desperately short supply. Everyone's 'first priority' was a resumption of Dutch economic assistance. But this would entail far-ranging talks and planning. The Dutch had suspended their aid because of the 1982 human rights violations. But as the guerilla war produced allegations of even greater abuses, the Dutch were likely to practice linkage-type bargaining. Unlike the years following independence, when the Dutch were almost recklessly cooperative in their aid disbursements, they now wanted to look through everything in detail. Emergency food aid, Dutch Development Minister Piet Bukman declared, should not include Gouda cheese and tins of sardines. Lachmon retorted that national morale was so low that more than staples were needed to lift people's spirits.³⁹ But as of October 1988, the talks over emergency aid were still stuck, and preparations for talks on the larger package of developmental aid were slipping behind schedule. Public frustration was such that, when he appeared recently at a public reception for Olympic Gold Medal winner Anthony Nesty, Vice-President Arron was booed.⁴⁰

The caution - and frustration - of the leaders must have been considerable. With the eastern region and interior of their country controlled or vulnerable to attack by the guerillas, a settlement was essential. Yet the Shankar government might have difficulty making it stick if Bouterse disapproved, and for the military there was no substitute for victory. "You can't negotiate with terrorists," they insisted, and at several junctures in 1988 small but bloody skirmishes took place in the region just east of the capital. Bouterse and some of his lieutenants accused Dutch and French intelligence of coordinating the guerilla war from French Guiana.⁴¹ But as long as between eight and ten thousand Bush Negro refugees remained on French soil, and the Bush Negro *granmans* refused to make peace, the bitter stand-off would continue, much as it had two centuries before between the Dutch and the Maroons in the same region. Shankar's negotiations were still proceeding behind an impressive news black-out as this was written. When the details would be made public, and how they would be received by Bouterse, was anybody's guess.

Perhaps there was method in the maddeningly slow pace of the old parties. No one was sure what government would be like under the new constitution until some life had been pumped into it. Carefully shaping it as they went, the old parties fashioned something different than many, especially the military, had expected. By Arron and Lachmon taking over the Vice-Presidency and Speakership, they had placed real power outside the President's office. Shanker became a figurehead, and the State Council that was to advise him (where the military would have some representation) was reduced in authority as well. In fact, that body had still not been formally installed a year after the elections, a fact that led radical military leader Badrissin Sital to accuse the civilians of breaking the constitution.⁴²

Conclusion

This lengthy chronicle, whatever its value, should demonstrate several important points about consociationalism, at least as it was practiced in Suriname. First, it has provided a logical, if not always authoritative, model for the practice of democracy in an ethnically mobilized, multipolar, plural society. Second, since the principle of power-sharing was more easily affirmed than applied, we can detect two clear threats to the viability of a consociational arrangement. These are the practices of ethnic outbidding and of ideological repudiation. In Suriname, we have seen that ethnic outbidding weakened the authority of consociationalism, while permitting token power-sharing to continue. The more devastating challenge came from ideological repudiation which, in the hands of a radicalized

military, tossed the baby (democracy) out with the bathwater (ethnic politics).

But even then, a sort of ethnic power-sharing remained in practice under the military's rule. Hindustani and Indonesian figures achieved posts of high visibility and leadership in both the military command and in the civilian governments that fronted for it.⁴³ Given the highly Creole (i.e., Black) composition of the armed forces and the hostility to the coup from the Asian groups in society, this gesture towards the latter was clearly not the product of a random draw of candidates. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that proof of the government's dedication to making 'color-blind' decisions with regard to domestic policy required a 'rainbow coalition' of decision-makers, not just a 'rainbow' of policies. This seems to augur well for the restoration of consociational democracy, *per se*, but it also requires further study into the reasons for the military's failure and old parties' comeback.

In particular, we need a comparative study of policy-making under the old parties in the 1970s and under the military more recently. To what extent were the needs of groups acknowledged and served?⁴⁴ Is it possible that the widespread repudiation of the military (finally 'outbid' collectively by the old parties) reflected fundamentally non-ethnic influences (the Dutch aid cut-off, an externally funded guerilla war, and widespread military corruption)? Brana-Shute's work in symbol-manipulation will also be valuable in determining the grounds of legitimacy in public expectations.

Finally, the question remains as to whether *apanjaht* consociationalism, even if it can deliver the goods, will proceed to evolve into higher, less *apanjaht*-charged organizational form. In particular, one worries about the VHP. Jagernath Lachmon has been the 'old fox' of Suriname's politics. He is now in his seventies. When he passes from the scene, there will be a crisis in the ranks. The VHP has never been very democratic in the formal sense, nor did it have to be, given the authority of its founder. But will it survive his death? Can Shankar take the reins? Will its new leaders seek to merge it with the NPS and KTPI in a multiethnic party to replace the Front? Or will there be a struggle for power within the VHP that stimulates ethnic outbidding and a fragmentation of the political front that won Suriname back its democracy? While the same questions might as easily be asked of the NPS and KTPI, the VHP's pivotal position - and Lachmon's stalwart leadership over the past forty years - makes it the focus of greatest concern for Suriname's political future.

NOTES

This is a revised version of an article in Scott B. MacDonald, Harald M. Sandstrom, and Paul L. Goodwin, Jr., eds., **The Caribbean After Grenada: Revolution, Conflict and Democracy** (New York: Praeger, 1988), 127-137, and draws from another forthcoming article in **Caribbean Review**.

1. Gordon K. Lewis, review of Eric Williams, **History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago**, **Caribbean Studies** 3.1 (April 1963), 104. See M.G. Smith's classic statement in "Social and Cultural Pluralism", in **Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences** 83 (1960), reprinted in his collection **The Plural Society in the British West Indies** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 75-91.
2. M.G. Smith, "Structure and Crisis in Grenada, 1950-1954," in **The Plural Society in the West Indies** 276-279.
3. The census of 1964 remains the most detailed and useful to social scientists. The cutback, and ultimate cancellation, of decennial census-gathering is due, in large part, to ethnic rivalry. Disproportional growth among Hindustanis vis-a-vis Creoles invited shifting recipes for resource- and power-sharing. As in Lebanon, those benefitting from the status quo (i.e., Creoles) were not eager to see its legitimacy undermined.
4. Edward Dew, **The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society** (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), Ch. 1.
5. V.S. Naipaul, **The Middle Passage** (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 170.
6. John P. Lewis and Valeriana Kallab, eds. **U.S. Foreign Policy and the Third World: Agenda 1983** (New York: praeger, 1983), 216.
7. Guerilla warfare had the effect of knocking out power to one of the smelters (for aluminum production) in the fallout of 1986.
8. Dew, **The Difficult Flowering of Surinam**, Ch. 3.
9. Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," **World Politics** 21.2 (January 1969): 207-225.
10. Dew, **The Difficult Flowering of Surinam**, Chs. 5 and 6.

11. Dew, **The Difficult Flowering of Surinam**, Ch. 7. The tensions of these years were prefigured in survey research among members of the Staten, as the legislature was called at this time, in Dew, "Testing Elite Perceptions of Deprivation and Satisfaction in a Culturally Plural Society," **Comparative Politics**, 6.2 (January 1974), 271-285; and "Zero-Sum Politics and the Perception of Group Satisfaction in Suriname," Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 1984.
12. Dew, "The Year of the Sergeants," **Caribbean Review** 9.2 (Spring 1980): 355-356.
13. Henk Boom, **Staatsgreep in Suriname: De Opstand van de Sergeanten op de Voet Gevolgd** (Utrecht: Veen, 1982).
14. Dew, 'Suriname', in Jack W. Hopkins, ed., **Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record**, Vol. I: 1981-82 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 355-356.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 357-359; and 'Suriname', in Hopkins, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. II: 1982-83 (1984), 412. In August 1980, Bouterse had already suspended the Constitution and replaced the President, Johan Ferrier, with Henk Chin A Sen, his Prime Minister. Eighteen months later, Chin A Sen was ousted and replaced by the Acting President of the Supreme Court, Fred Ramdat Misier. Bouterse and Ferrier were both Creoles; Chin A Sen, a Creole-Chinese; and Ramdat Misier, a Hindustani.
16. Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg, **Surinaamse Studenten in Nederland: Een Onderzoek Rond de Problematiek van de Toekomstige Intellectueel Kader-vorming in Suriname** (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1971), 121-125; and "Refugees from Suriname," *Refuge* 3.3 (March 1984), 5-10.
17. Sandew Hira, "Class Formation and Class Struggle in Suriname," in **Crisis in the Caribbean**, Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen, eds., (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), 181-183; and Dew, "The Year of the Sergeants," *op. cit.*, 7, 46. For a further discussion of the role these groups have played, see Henk E. Chin and Hans Buddingh', **Surinam: Politics, Economics and Society** (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), 36-50.
18. Andre Haakmat, **De Revolutie Uitgeleden** (Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1987), 172-173; and **De December Moorden in Suriname: Verslag van een Ooggetuige** (Bussum: Het Wereldvenster, 1983), 22.

19. **De December Moorden**, 46-50; and Peter Hoefnagels, "Schrikbeeld Paramaribo," **NRC-Handelsblad**, weekeditie, 29 December 1982; Sig Wolf, "De Vuile Handen van Bouterse," **Elseviers Magazine**, 18 December 1982, 12-16. The sixteenth man arrested was labor leader Fred Derby. His survival is still shrouded in mystery.
20. **Algemeen Dagblad** (Amsterdam), 11 June 1983. On the Brazilian tie, see **Latin American Weekly Report**, 21 October 1983. These events are summarized in Dew, "Suriname," in Hopkins, ed., op. cit., Vol. III: 1983-84 (1985), 448-449.
21. **NRC-Handelsblad**, 22, 23, 28, 30 December 1983; and 7 January 1984. See also Dew, "Suriname," in Hopkins, ed., op. cit., Vol. III: 1983-84 (1985), 450-451.
22. **NRC-Handelsblad**, 20 January - 3 February 1984.
23. Dew, "Suriname," in **Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record**, ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal, Vol. V: 1985-86 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), B194.
24. See Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, **Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability** (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972), 74-92.
25. **NRC-Handelsblad**, 19 December 1986, 23 January 1987.
26. The guerilla war is described at length in Dew, "Suriname," in Lowenthal, ed., op. cit., Vol. VI: 1986-87 (forthcoming). (New York: Holmes and Meier, forthcoming).
27. Evert Azimullah, **Jagernath Lachmon: Een Politieke Biografie** (Paramaribo: Vaco, 1987), 235.
28. The constitutional debates are described in *ibid.* See also **Constitution of the Republic of Suriname** (unofficial translation), Paramaribo, 1987.
29. **NRC-Handelsblad**, 7 April 1987.
30. Hans Buddingh, "Niemandslan," **NRC-Handelsblad**, zaterdagbijvoegsel, 18 April 1987.

31. Comite Christelijke Kerken, **Kommentaar op Voorontwerp Grondwet van de Republiek Suriname** (Paramaribo: n.d.).
32. NRC-Handelsblad, 3 August 1987.
33. Ibid, 11 August 1987.
34. Ibid, 30 October 1987.
35. Gary Brana-Shute, personal communication, February 1988.
36. Brana-Shute, *ibid.* See also NRC-Handelsblad, 19, 20, 21, 23 November 1987.
37. Brana-Shute, personal communication, February 1988.
38. There was a sharp dispute over the ten seats assigned to the three electoral districts in which the guerilla war was taking place. As most inhabitants had fled to the safety of French Guiana, there was hardly anyone left to vote, even if they dared. Bouterse insisted that the elections be held, virtually guaranteeing him ten seats - a good start towards the one-third bloc he needed to influence the composition of the incoming government and block any constitutional amendments. To everyone's surprise, the **Pendawalima** (i.e., the Progressive Bush Negro Party, closely aligned to the Front) won four of these seats and the PALU another four, to the NDP's two. (Another NDP seat was won in Paramaribo). By terms of an agreement worked out before the elections, a referendum would be held in the three districts after the guerilla war had ended, giving the residents the option of holding new elections (NRC-Handelsblad, 20, 22, 26, 28 October; 23, 24 November 1987).

In the party distribution within the victorious Front, seats were allotted as follows: VHP-17, NPS-14, and KTPI-10 (NRC-Handelsblad, 5 December 1987).
39. NRC-Handelsblad, 15 September 1988.
40. NRC-Handelsblad, 11 October 1988.
41. **Latin American Regional Reports-Caribbean**, 3 November 1988.
42. NRC-Handelsblad, 25 July 1988.

43. See the photo essay on the members of the Military Council and first cabinet in 1980 in Jules Dubois, **Developments and Changes in Suriname (A Pictorial Account)** (Paramaribo: Dubois and Dubois, 1980), and the lists of subsequent cabinets in my articles for the Hopkins, ed., and Lowenthal, ed., yearbooks (*op. cit.*).
44. Donald L. Horowitz offers some interesting suggestions for such research in **Ethnic Groups in Conflict** (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 596 and 693ff.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OLD SHOES AND ELEPHANTS: ELECTORAL RESISTANCE IN SURINAME

GARY BRANA-SHUTE

There seems to be a certain passion among many academics with the notion of resistance, leaving us with the idea that virtually everybody, everywhere is resisting. And, in fact, this may be the case. However, such a broad concept applied to a variety of cultural and political situations suggests that we should examine the phenomenon—call it the weapon of the weak if you will—more closely. At worst, academics may prefer resistance as a form of insurgency, subversion or revolution; a sort of 1980s radical chic. To dismiss homelier forms of resistance is a mistake.¹

Perhaps the issue that we first must tackle is the definition of power in its cultural, ideological and political context. Beginning here, resistance may be a measure of the health and nature of power relationships. Rather than ask if a group is oppressed or subservient, we may ask how they define power, justice and the cultural system in which they operate. What then does resistance tell us about power and society rather than the tactics of the resisters? Resistance may also be a tactic to defend what people have, to protect their sphere of influence, rather than a means of getting 'more'. We should not be surprised to uncover numerous contradictions, shaped by age, gender, ethnicity and class. Resistance also can take on many styles which possibly conflict one with another in terms of tactics, timing, goals and personnel.

Songs, for example, serve as a public form of protest. Irreverent discourse of lampoon and ridicule can make fun of a system when the authorities fail to live up to their high ideals and rhetoric. Jokes, riddles, folktales, irony and

euphemisms are all homely forms of such dialogue. Without attention to such tactics we may inadvertently overlook less manifest but equally important forms of resistance or, perhaps worse, employ abstract models of our own making that are inappropriate to the resistance and power relations employed in the society under examination. All these questions are related to culture and power or, in that which follows, the power of culture.

The Stage

The Republic of Suriname, after seven years of tumultuous and sometimes bloody dominance by a left-leaning, military authoritarian government, staged its first free elections in November 1987.² Following a dialogue in 1985 with the so-called 'old' politicians representing the three major ethnic-based political parties, and coming under increasing pressure from an armed insurgency in the eastern portion of the country, the military junta agreed to allow formerly outlawed political parties the right of mobilization, campaigning, and mass meetings. The disenfranchised population took to the window of opportunity with gusto and for over one year staged exhilarating and emotional mass meetings in backyards, on street corners and in public squares throughout the country which culminated in a massive electoral victory over a military-sponsored political party. The game is not yet over. Although returned to operating the administrative organs of state affairs, the civilian rulers now face the formidable task of returning the military to the barracks and reducing their influence in policy matters and governance. Shortly before the 1980 coup, Suriname's population measured some 375,000 persons, most of whom resided in and around the capital and only city of Paramaribo. Creoles (Afro-Surinamers) dominated the urban and suburban areas as well as high positions in the civil service and business houses. East Indians, although becoming increasingly involved in commerce, were rural agriculturalists as were the Javanese (Indonesians). Syrians, Lebanese, Chinese, a handful of Europeans, and descendants of 19th century Dutch farmers were found in urban trades, middle range civil service positions, modest shops, and several importing houses. The vast and fundamentally underexploited savanna and rainforest interior was home to several groups of American Indians and five groups or tribes of Maroons.³

Three major parties dominated the political scene through the 1960s and 1970s and divided power between themselves in an atmosphere of tactical coalitions, trade-offs and back room agreements, strategic treachery of several against one, and, of course, patronage passed up and down and across the social structure. Party politics seemed to work best when both the Creole NPS

(**Nationale Partij Suriname**) and the East Indian VHP (**Vooruitstrevende Hervormings Partij**) were members of a coalition government. The Javanese KTPI (**Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia**) would regularly join with either the Creoles or the East Indians when feelings and policies prevented collaboration between the two larger groups and thus earn themselves the reputation of providing the swing vote in times of acute Creole-East Indian rivalry.⁴ Two narrow Creole-Javanese victories in 1973 and 1977 led to consecutive governments excluding East Indians from government power and largesse. The country was tense and angry; development policies were corrupt, short sighted and vague; and the brittle structure of power snapped under a coup fomented by fifteen army NCOs and one officer. For many there was joy that the young sergeants would restore a balance to politics, clean up corruption and move the country ahead. The military proclaimed a revolution, collaborated closely with small radical leftist politicians, established close relationships with Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua and ruled with a heavy and bloody hand. By 1982 any vestige of support among the population had evaporated and the military resorted to routine means of thuggery to maintain power.

Counter Move

Political parties went underground after the coup as, the *New York Times* put it, "another set of lights went out in Latin [sic] America." Henck Arron of the NPS was jailed on allegations of corruption while Willie Soemita of the KTPI and Jagernath Lachmon of the VHP went back to private business pursuits. Seven appointed civilian cabinets followed as the military attempted to co-op and garner support from shifting civilian coalitions within society who themselves were attempting to maneuver into positions of power. Neither the military nor the civilian opportunists succeeded, however, in gaining the support or sympathy of the masses. Despite efforts to create a revolutionary Peoples' Mobilization (**Volks Mobilisatie**) structure these cadres, redolent with promised patronage and perks, did not connect with traditional social organization at the grassroots and community level.

Each ethnic group in Suriname has its own particular configuration of social, religious and political sodalities that lend texture and organization to their everyday lives. One example from the urban Creoles should suffice.⁵ Most urban Creole women belong to a variety of clubs, societies and associations that are vertically integrated from the household level to (but not in) the highest levels of national political power. R. Brana-Shute reports that 'teams' of women are bundled together at the household and sub-neighborhood level (Sranan: *oso* and

birti) in mutual exchange and support networks. Building on these the women create burial societies (*fonsoe*), rotating credit organizations (*kas moni*), and social clubs (*straati vereniging*) to celebrate shared rites of passage. The apex transforms the groupings into political arms of the Creole NPS (*politieke kern*) which function to electioneer and maintain enthusiasm prior to elections. Throughout the revolutionary period all save the political clubs continued to be active, although obviously the raw social material to activate the political section remained latent. The groups, at all levels, are permeated by symbols of 'womanness', particularly the role of mother-nurturing, respectful, disciplined, sexually active, and, often, defiant of the whims, boastings and unreliability of men.⁶ Much of their activity was articulated with the Creole religious system *winti* and gatherings often took on a deeply spiritual air when African spirits and ancestral ghosts would join in the proceedings of the living.

The Peoples' Mobilization attempted to graft their priorities 'top down' onto these neighborhood groups through the instrument of Peoples' Committees (*Volks Comite*). They failed for a number of reasons, perhaps the most profound being their totally male orientation. Young soldiers ('sons') would enter uninvited backyard parties of clubs ('mothers') dressed in combat fatigues and black jump boots with an Uzi sub-machine gun slung cavalierly over their shoulders. Young males were appointed Peoples' Committee leaders and charged with organizing men, women and children into revolutionary worthies dedicated to the cause of socialism, development and political consciousness building. Women would attend, eat, drink and politely listen to the rhetoric. They would return home to dismiss the proceedings with a sharp hiss of the teeth (*djuri*) and in reply to repeated questions of why they went in the first place would answer, "I am not a fool, if food and drink are available I will take it." The limits of patronage went only so far. Indeed, many would volunteer: "The NPS is not a political party, it is a belief you can't take from my heart" (...*na wan bri-bri joe no man puru na mi ati*). Opportunists were many of course, and numbers signed up for ration cards available only to members. For virtually all however it was only playing the military for the fool. Concepts of Surinamese Negritude were also violated. Many of the young soldiers spoke *Sranan Tongo*, the Creole mother tongue and lingua franca of Suriname, quite badly and presented their orations in school book Dutch. European cadence and metaphors did not stimulate the cultural juices of the masses nor play well in the back yards of Paramaribo.⁷ The military had also deposed the police, who have an excellent reputation in Suriname, from power and barred them from maintaining law and order, replacing them with Military Police heavies. And, in an irony common to neo-colonial societies, the military offended many by their crude denunciations of the former colonial power, the Netherlands. The abstractions of Dutch exploitation fell flat as many women genuinely liked the Netherlands and

wrapped much of their sentiment around Queens Wilhelmina and Juliana. Railings against the Dutch were perceived as being rude/bold (*vrijpostig*), an attribute of the misbehaving young and unrefined, a similar quality of the unformed.⁸ Analogous failure took place with other ethnic groups. The revolution got no further than the 'Peoples Palace', the military barracks, and select bank accounts swollen by graft and thievery. Their fate was sealed when, in December 1982, fifteen, probably more, prominent dissidents were tortured and murdered; their bodies unceremoniously dumped at the hospital the next day. As many Surinamers believe, souls of the deceased who are not properly dispatched to the afterworld return to involve themselves in the affairs of the living.⁹

The Game

By 1984 support, both domestic and international, for the revolution had evaporated and Commander Desi Bouterse was compelled to enter into dialogue with the 'old' political leaders. The meetings were held in secret. For most in Paramaribo these events signaled a hope that democracy could be restored although deeper thinkers realized that during the transition period danger was acute as the old politicians could be co-opted or themselves liquidated if their demands or positions were deemed unsuitable. Everyone knew that democracy had to be restored; they wanted it and Bouterse needed it as he presided over his bankrupt, demoralized fiefdom. The Dutch and Americans supported the cause as well, while Cubans, Libyans and Soviets subtly moved to the margin, knowing the military charlatans for what they were. Throughout 1985 and into 1986 it appeared that the game was being played but was going no where. No palpable concessions were made nor exact definition or timetable for the reincorporation of Suriname into its future and its past. It is precisely at this moment that a young Maroon, formerly in the army and a one-time bodyguard of the Commander, began a small, poorly equipped insurgency in the Maroon areas of eastern Suriname. He denounced the regime in Paramaribo and promised a return to democracy, via free elections, although scarcely nothing was known of his ideology or intentions.¹⁰ His support came from young, urban-oriented Maroons and by 1987 he controlled one-third of the country (primarily jungle). His efforts were denounced by the democratic hopefuls in Paramaribo. Why? In the eyes of urban residents Maroons occupy the lowest rung of the national social hierarchy. Their traditional Afro-American culture is self-servingly excoriated as unrefined, if not barbaric. Despite their warrior past and heroic battles against white armies—the very inversion of colonialism—their past and present exploits went unappreciated by ethnic Paramaribo. Was it only the fear

that (phenotypically) black Maroons would garrison Paramaribo and destroy Afro-Asian dominance there (regardless of the military's ultimate control)? Or, was it because Maroon leader Ronnie Brunswijk dared to challenge the messianic hopes of the urban civilians and thereby scorn their strategies? In so doing he reaped the bitter harvest of being banished from Paramaribo's reality.

Nevertheless, it was Brunswijk who ultimately moved the military to concede to civilian elections. Bouterse had to secure his urban flanks against jungle attacks and promised elections for late 1987.¹¹

Old Shoes and Elephants

By early 1987 rival political groups began organizing in earnest. The military transformed its political arm into the National Democratic Party (NDP-Nationale Democratische Partij) while the three old political leaders confederated--not united--the NPS, VHP, and KTPI (and several smaller parties) into the Front for Democracy and Development (**Het Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling**). The NDP dominated the mass media, the state and private radio, television and newspapers as all were still effectively censored. (In order to avoid blatant charges of censorship the government would deny paper and ink print import licenses to uncooperative publishers.) The Front held its first mass meeting in August 1987 and drew together 60,000 celebrative citizens--the largest body of persons ever assembled in the history of Suriname--who were addressed by Lachmon, Arron, and Soemita who appeared jointly on the dais. Such public gatherings were scheduled up to two days before the elections and on two later occasions drew even larger crowds. For four months it was Mardi Gras in Paramaribo and, dizzy with their collective energy, Surinamers began for the first time openly criticizing the military and, especially, Commander Bouterse.¹²

The keystone of revolution in Suriname and, indeed elsewhere, was to mobilize the young. Commander Bouterse, handsome and fit at forty-two, constantly railed against the old 'grey heads' and promoted his acolytes as young, vital and hip. Eschewing his military uniform the Commander began appearing in 'Miami Vice' garb: woven shoes, silk stockings, linen suit with sleeves pushed to the elbow, gold chains, a boldly colored tee shirt, and aviator sun glasses. Disjuncture was provided by his pre-mature baldness and mouth-encircling moustache and beard. On state occasions he wore a European-cut three piece pin stripe suit. He appeared discomfited. Although the Miami-look is in for the young (who can afford it) his costume did not generate the youthful enthusiasm

it had intended. For many it was precisely the military's disastrous fiscal policies that prohibited them from acquiring such garb. Envy is a very powerful emotion.

Arron and Soemita, both in their fifties, wore tailored Caribbean shirt-jacs and campaign caps with either the Front logo or their own political party sign (for Creoles the flambeau or flame, for Javanese the Wajang puppet). Lachmon, seventy years old, played to the humility and traditional outfit of the East Indian farmer; old black lace-up shoes, black slacks, white shirt open at the collar and all cinched up by a belt doubled back through the first two loops. His cap was either the VHP elephant or the Front emblem containing each of the three symbols in their own circle surrounded by a larger circle. Slow, lumpy and cumbersome 'Lach' was just what the people wanted.

Rival theme songs were broadcast daily, sung ad hoc on the streets, and blared endlessly at gatherings. The NDP selected as its testimonial a rap-rhyme number sung in Sranan Tongo. Again aiming at the young, a young black performer in obligatory sun glasses and gold chains rocked and chanted, "**Wan wie tan, toe wie do, drie wie sie, fo wie go, febi wie n'e befi**, etc." (One we stay, two we do, three we see, four we go, five we are not afraid, etc.). If explicit behavior counts for double this gambit failed too. The young would mockingly recite the verses, invert them into negatives and rain ridicule on the singer while merrily singing out the theme song of the Front. Older Creoles excoriated the singer as a 'street negro' (**straati nengre**) and protested that they did not like the beat. The performance of this song was recorded by one person, not a group, and he alone always appeared on screen. It was not collectively sung. Also, sung in Sranan, it associated the military/NDP too closely with the Creole ethnic group. The linguistic politics mirrored exactly reality; the military and its profiteers were dominated by Creoles.

The Front selected a pop number in Dutch extolling the virtues of ethnic collaboration. Dutch, the colonial language, would in this case affront no one. Dutch, for the many the language you love to hate; a mastery of it indicates ambiguous respectability. Innocent and non-threatening, the kind of ditty that mom and dad would sing after a few drinks, 'Vote Front' (**Stem Frontaal**) promised: "Everyone is a front, then the country is healthy again, vote Front, Surinamers all. Democracy and development, that is the whole thing, brother don't lose your vote" ("**Iedereen een front, dan wordt het land weer gezond. Stem Frontaal, Surinamers allemaal. Democratie en ontwikkeling; is dat hele ding, brada no go lasi yu stem.**") The crowd would end by roaring out "**DAT IS DAT DING**" (That's the thing) and the air would be filled with waving V for victory fingers. People meeting on the street would ignore normal conventions

and greet each other with "Dat is dat ding," while motorists, whose driving panache rivals only that of Rome, waved V-signs at one another.

Slogans were popular and threaded throughout all discourse. The NDP's contribution to political opera was 'soso lobi' (only love) which was offered up by candidates in a gooey mix of wide smile, open arms, and silky pronunciation. People had difficulty reconciling this slogan with the murders of 1982 and the ravages perpetrated by elements of the national army against Maroon women and children in the interior insurgency. Love is a highly charged word and many considered the slogan further evidence that their daughters were under siege. 'Soso lobi' shortly became transformed into 'soso trobi' (only trouble) and 'soso lasi' (only losers).

In a revelation that brings to mind Naipaul's *Sufferage of Elvira*, the Front selected an old shoe (*oro su*) as its symbol. Old shoes began appearing all over Paramaribo; hanging from flag poles, nailed over doorways, mounted on hoods of automobiles, and as elections neared, carried about by the faithful. The old shoe was described as 'old shoes don't hurt' (*oro su no ati*). Endless discussions revolved around the nature of old shoes. One entire afternoon I spent discussing with five well educated men the nature of old squeaky comfortable shoes, new shoes that pinch and how one goes about breaking in new shoes so that they don't squeeze your toes. The references were clear. One zealot mounted a cardboard and paper mache footwear around his motorcycle and toured the city in a self-propelled shoe. The sexual allusions were peppery. Men would ask women if they had an old shoe they could stick it in. Women replied that they would consider opening their shoe but only under certain conditions. This game was played out by men and women who deliberately made known their support of the Front. Creoles added their own cultural flair by likening the shoe to a boat that would carry them across the waters to salvation. East Indians, playing on their cultural symbolism, said that they had jumbo shoes; jumbo being the VHP elephant and the nickname of Lachmon. Not wanting to be outdone by Creole waterborne salvation, East Indians likened the jumbo shoe to a jumbo jet which would carry them across the divide. It was pointed out that one of the responsibilities of parenthood is to provide shoes and food for children to raise them properly. Shoes were hard to come by in the shops as there was no local industry and they were not imported. Well fed, sexed and shod, what greater gift hath man? Political symbolism permeated society right down to the basics.

Meetings were carefully staged in public terrains rather than political party headquarter yards. Old and young, all urban ethnic groups each sporting their own ethnic costume—Creole women in *koto*, East Indian in *sari*, Javanese in *sarong*—attended. There was no pretension to merge the identity of the ethnic

groups into one national culture (as did the NDP); the goal was unity in diversity and the US motto "united we stand, divided we fall" was widely used in the original English.¹³ Ethnically exclusive meetings were also scheduled at different times in separate political party yards. Even though the military and its revolutionary administration were dominantly Creole this ethnic adjective was never used by the Front. The opponent was the ethnically faceless army. The delicate alliance of ethnic groups, recognizing their politically confederated ethnic plurality, dared not reference an ethnic opponent who was also now among them. The use of ethnic pride was blatant and Surinamers argued for a return to the past hopefully with lessons learned.

The NDP offered up a recipe of love and socialism. No mention was made of ethnicity save one occasion with disastrous results. Two nights before the election it was clear that the NDP would go under it was only a question of degree. Commander Bouterse was the keynote speaker at an NDP night meeting and was going on three hours late. Free food and beverages had already been consumed and the crowd was getting restless. The rap singer was growing hoarse. When the commander arrived he was clearly quite intoxicated. He mounted the podium, wearing sunglasses and a shirt more than discreetly open, wobbled a bit, mopped his brow and launched into a discussion of how socialism would remove the perils of multi-ethnicity. He was surrounded by his Creole lieutenants. Groping for a metaphor he claimed that Suriname can no longer have "Hindustani pandits huddled in their temples going 'kakara, kakara, kakara.'" The live broadcast became the talk of the town. Not only had the commander singled out one group for excoriation but he insulted their language by using a crude onomatopoeic descriptor. He then made reference to the fallen comrades of the revolution and demanded of the audience they remove their campaign caps for a moment of silence. Some did, some did not, and in an outburst of anger he told them to put their caps back on and to remove them again when he gave the order. This move was interpreted as the last desperate command of a weak and demoralized dictator. He began to wobble, yanked at his slipping pants, and was escorted off stage.

On 25 November 1987 Surinamers voted conclusively to return to the status quo ante. Their traditional world of ethnic structures and patrons was symbolized and reinforced by the four months of ceremonials. The Front won 90 percent of votes cast and secured forty of the fifty-one seats. Despite barring the Front from running candidates in the war zones, the NDP won a paltry total of three seats. Even areas which were heavily populated by NDP supporters (insofar as housing and land tracts were granted to them for supporting at one time or another) voted for the Front. It was a massive psychological and political victory for the people of Suriname.

The night of the election, as returns were pouring in, Lachmon, in a moment of braggadocio, announced "Gentlemen, the game is over, you have to go home." But alas, it was not. As the crowd grew evermore festive and spilled onto the streets singing and waving flags, Lachmon once again rose to the podium. In his strictest and most commanding voice he ordered the crowds to go home, not to torment the military and stay off the streets. There were still a few hands of the game left to be played and many would later argue that the decline of civilian power was coincident with its very beginnings.¹⁴

Betwixt and Between

No society can perpetuate uncertainty indefinitely nor allow the game to run away with them. This is known by the people of Suriname as well as their leaders. Certain very definite structural changes had to be made in the society so that the country could return to the comfortable old order. The first week after the elections was tense and quiet in Paramaribo. No public announcements or proclamations were made by the victors. There were rumors of comings and goings and military personnel attending meetings behind closed doors. One disappointed Surinamer told me that "this is nothing but angst, we want to have a feast" ("...wie e wani firi a feest"). She was not far from the mark; the feast would be closure and climax to the process. The political victory was there but that did not in itself satisfy the final surge of energy. Many were fast losing their spirit and optimism and faith in the politicians who, in times past, had let them down. Tidy borders and categories, rules and conduct, faces and roles had not been established. Most perhaps not even those in charge themselves did not know who was in charge; . The closure should be two-fold: identification of the new civilian leadership and appointment of a cabinet and, further on, the hidden agenda, getting rid of the military and their minions. That, the last, would be the purge and the maximum closure.

By January 1988 a President (East Indian), a Prime Minister (Creole) and a cabinet (carefully balanced Creole, East Indian, and Javanese) had been assembled. As they have for years, Surinamers scrupulously observed what ethnic group obtained what ministry. Indeed, the faces were new but the ethnic assignments were old: Creole minister of foreign affairs, East Indian minister of finance, Javanese minister of agriculture. Larger issues were left unresolved: would amnesty be granted to the military for the 1982 and other murders, what would be their role in power or power-sharing, would the police take over the administration of law, would the military continue to absorb a huge piece of the budget, would the war in east Suriname continue, what would eventually happen

to Bouterse, still commanding the military? It is likely that these questions will remain unresolved for a time to come. One can then legitimately wonder if the spirit of unity and resolve so grandiosely expressed between August and November 1987 will continue to propel Surinamers on to rescuing their country. Dangers lurk in the unresolved. Will there be a dramatic counter-coup by the military to reassert itself? Will the delicate coalition of civilians begin to crumble into competitive ethnic blocks each securing scarce resources for its patrons? Will the evil head of corruption and self-interest reemerge? The game still must be played in spite of players and spectators growing weary.

Conclusion

The symbols employed in the Suriname election campaign of 1987 referred to a social order that once existed, did not exist at the ceremonial moment, and would hopefully be reimplemented following the civilian victory. Thus the political unity shared by Front faithful referred to a concrete and experienced social order and restoration of normalcy. I have hoped to, among other things, demonstrate that through the eyes of political carnival one could link the case study ethnographic symbolism to larger social contests and, indeed, the social order as a whole (or, at least, the urban component of it) as Surinamers thought it 'should be'.

The NDP failed horribly. Setting aside for the moment the atrocities committed by the military and the secret police, their symbolism was an unsavory mix of imported American jive and undeniably Creole-oriented content. Mouthing the platitudes of 'soso lobi' and 'unity' accompanied by rap-rhyme, they came across as exactly what they were: young Creole males with illicit bank accounts and blood on their hands.

The old Fronters, however, came across with "good vibes" during the pre-election period. The slogan captured the ecstasy: "Dat is dat ding" and no more questions or elaborations were necessary. To question "dat ding," to argue, refine, analyze, or debate it would deflate the ecstasy...for dragons lurk in the shadows of uncertainty. Hence the qualities (and shortcomings) of the old leaders were never discussed nor the tradition of spoiled alliances between ethnic parties in the past nor any other of the plethora of problems associated with parliamentary democracy in a neo-colonial, plural society. Not a peep. None of this had to be said for the symbols spoke it all. Never promising ethnic oneness nor ever explicitly naming ethnic groups, shoes, elephants and wajangs, koto, sari, and sarong, among other things, said it all.

Resistance, then, signals areas of conflict and tension. Some things were resisted---for example, lack of ethnic privilege---while other things---equally as important, were not---such as corruption and continuing military dominance. Electoral resistance in Suriname appears to be actually a conservative process whereby people attempted to maintain and revitalize a traditional system that was partially swept away during a 'revolution'. The military dominated system was criticized because it did not support them at the level the old ethnic-based system did. Resistance, during the electoral process, was at once an adaptation to a changing environment while at the same time an attempt to return to the status quo ante revolution---all of it done within the traditional definitions and confines of power as it is known among the different ethnic groups of Paramaribo. In this case I have emphasized the positive face of resistance, not the negative; the homely not the romantic. Resistance during the elections in Suriname was protest against a set of power relations that was not delivering as people thought it should. The statement was made by young and old, male and female, rich, modest and poor, and Creole, East Indian and Javanese.

NOTES

Portions of this article have appeared in "Politics and Militarism in Suriname," *Hemisphere: A Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs* 1.2.

1. One can discover such a refined perspective in Abu-Luhgod and Okihiro.
2. For political reportage and analysis of contemporary politics in Suriname see G. Brana-Shute 1981, 1986 and 1987 and Dew 1978 and 1983-1988. For general historical background and a discussion of Suriname as a plural society see van Lier.
3. The 1971 Suriname census reports that East Indians composed 38 percent of the population, Creoles 30 percent, Javanese 15 percent, Maroons 11 percent, American Indians 3 percent, Chinese 2 percent, and Others 1 percent.

4. See Dew 1978 and Azimullah for background.
5. For the interplay of power, pleasure, and ethnic solidarity among American Indians see Kloos; for Maroons see Price; for Javanese see de Waal Malefijt and Derveld; for East Indians Speckmann and Choenni, and for a general overview see de Bruijne.
6. For a discussion of rival male Creole organizations and sentiments see G. Brana-Shute 1978 and 1979.
7. Sranan is a wonderfully expressive creole language spoken with great creativity and panache. It is full with metaphors.
8. For the reminiscences of a young man who was a leader of one of the committees and later grew disenchanted with the revolution see van Sauers.
9. See R. Brana-Shute and G. Brana-Shute.
10. The literature on Ronnie Brunswijk and his Jungle Commandos is extensive. Thoden van Velzen's articles in the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* and his work with Polim provide the best overview. See also van der Beek.
11. This role of Brunswijk is rejected by most in Paramaribo. Whether it is disguise, subterfuge or self-deception, urban dwellers bestow upon themselves the role of election mantle bearer. Brunswijk, also, was associated with several ex-patriot resistance movements in the Netherlands who were perceived of as "runaways" by those who stayed in Suriname. Thus a double curse upon the house of Brunswijk: his ethnicity and his patrons.
12. Suriname was fundamentally bankrupt with all the consequences that has for an import dependent country. The decline in world market prices for major exports, bauxite, rice and bananas; the withdrawal of millions of dollars of Dutch aid per annum; and the damage inflicted by Brunswijk on the domestic economy had laid the country low.
13. The use of American metaphors was extensive. A favorite was "You can fool all of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time, but not all of the people all of the time." Front would often be referenced as "Freedom Regained On November Twenty-fifth."

14. The crowds, thousands strong and ethnically mixed, were prepared to surround the two main military barracks. We shall never know what would have happened. Suffice it to say that soldiers would have been called upon to open fire on kin and neighbors in full view of international observers and media.

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CHAPTER NINE

PRELUDES TO THE EXODUS: SURINAMERS IN THE NETHERLANDS, 1667-1960s

GERT J. OOSTINDIE

By the late 1980s, some 200,000 people of Surinamese descent were living in the Netherlands, as opposed to nearly 400,000 in Suriname. This bifurcation of a nation's population, remarkable even by Caribbean standards, has its immediate origins largely in the 1970s. In 1973, Surinamese Prime Minister Henck Arron announced that Suriname would become an independent republic in 1975. This constitutional change was indeed effectuated. Yet many Surinamers decided not to wait and see what independence would bring. Net migration from Suriname to the Netherlands had been less than 1,900 in the 1960s. In the 1970-1980 period, annual net migration almost sextupled to a figure of 11,000. In 1975 alone, this figure amounted to 36,537.¹

Mass emigration to the former metropole thus has become one of the most dramatic ingredients in Suriname's recent history. This exodus has had serious consequences for the country's post-independence development. Also, the massive immigration has confronted the host society with new challenges. Yet all this is not the subject of this contribution. It is rather the prehistory of the exodus which I will highlight here. In doing so I will argue that one of the causal factors of independence (hence, of the emigration boom) was the emergence in the previous decades of a nationalist ideology precisely among Afro-Surinamers living in the metropolis.²

Natives, Slaves, and Masters

Not unlike the other European conquerors, the Dutch showed some interest in exhibiting at home the 'weird natives' they encountered in faraway places. Amerindians were thus shipped to the Netherlands from the earliest years of conquest. Shortly after Suriname had become a Dutch colony in 1667 a group of seven Amerindians accompanied the Governor's son to the mother country. As late as 1883, a Colonial Exhibition in Amsterdam featured a live presentation of the various ethnic groups of the country, including its original natives.³ Yet Amerindians came to the Netherlands only in negligible numbers. This is not surprising. They stayed aloof, as far as possible, from colonial society.

The colonial history of Suriname is, more than anything else, a history of plantation agriculture and, until its abolition in 1863, slavery. Not surprisingly, migrants in the two centuries between conquest and abolition were mainly masters or slaves. Again we are talking small numbers. The white population of Suriname never consisted of more than a few thousand people before 1863. Members of the Euro-Caribbean settler population regularly came to the Netherlands, be it on leave, retirement or for studies. Already in the 1740s the governor of Suriname, Mauricius, criticized the widespread absenteeism caused by the white population's 'animus revertendi'. Indeed, the rate of absenteeism of Surinamese plantation owners was high even by comparative standards.

The history of the first Afro-Caribbean people coming to the Netherlands is very much comparable to the experience in other Western European countries. Most came as slaves accompanying repatriating whites, thus providing their masters with household services and a touch of exotic conspicuous consumption. Their numbers were modest, as is witnessed by the scarce archival materials available. In the 1729-1749 period, 87 slaves left Suriname for the Netherlands, whereas 83 returned; in the 1749-1781 years a peak of 569 slaves plus 10 groups of unknown size left for the metropolis, returning 544 slaves and 2 groups. The figures for free coloreds are much lower: 7 against 9 in 1729-1749, 67 against 29 in 1749-1781.⁴

Figures of migration from the Dutch Caribbean islands, mainly Curaçao, were significantly lower.⁵ It seems therefore unlikely that the Afro-Caribbean population in the Netherlands ever totalled more than a few dozen at a time during the era of slavery. Accompanying their masters, most must have returned with them within a short time to Paramaribo or, even rarer, Willemstad. Therefore it does not make sense to speak of a genuine Afro-Caribbean community in the Netherlands in the era of slavery. Neither was there a black community of wider definition. Slave trade was never allowed within the confines

of the Netherlands itself; Africans thus only very occasionally turned up in these parts.

From the available evidence it is clear that the number of Afro-Caribbean (or, generally, black) people in the Netherlands never reached a high level during slavery. Its size most definitely cannot stand comparison with the black population in sixteenth century Iberia or eighteenth century Britain, to name the sharpest contrasts. This had consequences for one or two questions which I will examine in some detail.

The first issue concerns the juridical status of slaves, once landed in the Netherlands. Though slave trade was not allowed within the country, the very existence of slavery itself in the metropolis through the entrance of West Indian slaves seems to have become problematical from the 1740s. Recent research has made clear that the Dutch legal system never reached an unambiguous position regarding this matter. There were occasional and at times contradictory judgements. Some particularly insistent slave might win freedom through a sojourn in the Netherlands.⁶ Yet slavery on Dutch soil was not abolished unequivocally until its abolition in the West Indies itself (1863). In the preceding two centuries, ambiguity was the rule. This juridical wavering may be explained in terms of the unimportance of the subject. Few West Indian slaves came to the Netherlands; only an incidental juridical case was raised and the need to go beyond *ad hoc* solutions not felt.

The numerical insignificance of the black presence in the Netherlands had other consequences as well. In contrast to France, there were no regulations to restrict the immigration of West Indians into the metropolis - at least no such arrangements arising out of xenophobia.⁷ Some restricting legislation was enforced; this however came about through political pressure of shareholders in Surinamese plantations, who rightly perceived the coming of slaves to the metropolis as a dislocation of highly prized capital goods belonging to their West Indian enterprises.⁸

The absence of a conspicuous Afro-Caribbean (let alone African) community in the early modern Netherlands prevented the emergence of a sense of xenophobia, as is reflected in the images constructed of black people. No doubt, until the twentieth century Dutch opinion of blacks was basically Eurocentric and characterized by feelings of superiority. Still, one gets the impression that the stereotyping, albeit ambiguous, was less vehement in the metropolis than in the colonies. In the latter after all, negative images added up to an ideology instrumental in maintaining the rigid class-cum-color hierarchy.

A rather less predictable image of blacks may indeed be observed in metropolitan painting and in the literature of the era of Enlightenment. This theme cannot be discussed here at any length. Suffice to point at one rather symbolic question. In the Dutch West Indies, the planter class vehemently opposed the Christianizing of their slaves: wouldn't it cost them precious working hours? Couldn't it make the slaves too smart and perhaps even rebellious? It is interesting to note now that the issue of Christianizing became crucial in the image of blacks once they were in the Netherlands. A black's ability to be Christianized and to stick to 'the true faith' became a yardstick for measuring his or her civilization or even for establishing the sheer possibility to civilize any black person.⁹

Even negroid features and black skin, such unfavourable attributes in colonial perception, could be washed away by the whitening Christian faith. Thus, a Dutchman wrote this poem (1742) on the African Jacobus Elisa Joannes Capitein, who had studied theology in the Netherlands:

Beholder see this Blackamoor! his skin is black; but white his
soul, since Jesus himself prays for him as a Priest. He will teach
Faith and Hope , and Love to Blackamoors, so time and again
they will, white-washed, honour with him the Lamb.¹⁰

Capitein's preaching in Africa did not prove successful; neither did his own conduct live up to the expectations. Those opposing the Christianizing of slaves used Capitein's story as another argument proving their point that blacks, even when 'white-washed', remain black, that is, unreliable.

Equivocal as its finale may have been, still the remarkable career of Capitein, who attained a measure of popularity in the Netherlands through his preaching,¹¹ is one of the very few early success-stories of a black man in the Netherlands. Still, life may have been better in the Netherlands than in Suriname for a black person. There was no absolute juxtaposition of white and power here, nor any question of a large black population to be controlled and exploited by a tiny white minority. Conditions were simply less oppressive in Europe. Perhaps this explains the fact that the number of free coloreds coming to the Netherlands in the second half of the eighteenth century more than doubled the number returning.

In Search of Education

After Emancipation (1863), education became the main motive for coming to Holland. The development of the West Indian student population in the metropolis closely reflects historical patterns within the Dutch Caribbean. A case in point is the fact that most West Indian students came from Suriname rather than from Curaçao and the other Antillean islands. This was partly a question of sheer numbers: Suriname's population totalled 57,000 in 1815 and 86,000 one century later, whereas comparable figures for the main Dutch Antillean island, Curaçao, were only 13,000 and 32,500 respectively. In the twentieth century the divergences diminished, yet with 205,000 inhabitants at mid-century Suriname still counted a larger population than the six Antilles altogether with 163,000 souls.

Sheer numbers do not tell the whole story; wealth is another aspect. During the colonial era, quite a number of residents of the plantation colony Suriname could afford the costly trip and even a long residence for studies in 'Patria'. In Curaçao,¹² fewer people could spend their money on trips and residences abroad. Moreover, those who did migrate would rather stay within the Caribbean than go to the Netherlands. In contrast to Suriname, neither economy nor culture of the Antilles was orientated towards the Netherlands. Whereas for the Surinamer 'abroad' meant the metropolis, the Antillean knew of many other countries and would rather settle in Venezuela, Santo Domingo and later also the United States than in the faraway 'mother country'.

This Caribbean orientation in the Antilles was only reinforced by the fact that careers in Curaçao were made in trade rather than in the professions or government bureaucracy. A Surinamer of means might study law or medicine to pursue a career in his country's sub-top levels - the elite still remaining all Dutch. An Antillean with ambition and capacity would follow a commercial path, for which an academic training was no prerequisite. It was only after the Second World War that the Antillean government, in its policy to replace Dutch officials by qualified Antilleans, came to stimulate young Antilleans to pursue formal and academic training in the Netherlands.

Surinamese student migration to the Netherlands has a longer history and traditionally involved larger numbers. Again, it should be noted that 'larger' is a very relative term here. At the universities of Utrecht and Leiden, at that time the most important institutions for West Indian students, no more than a total of 51 students and 34 post-graduates were enrolled in the eighteenth century, as against 101 and 56 respectively in the nineteenth. In the twentieth century the

number of students increased, but only modestly. By 1947 a few dozen Surinamese were studying at Dutch universities; in 1952 just above 100 and some 430 in the mid-1950s.¹³

The composition of this student group reflected Surinamese society in many ways. This applies to socio-economic characteristics of the group, the lower classes only beginning to participate from the mid-fifties onwards. Next, the ethnic composition of the Surinamese student population is telling. Up to Emancipation (1863), the students had come almost exclusively from the white population. The economic decline of Suriname during the nineteenth century however had a remarkable side-effect. Among the Dutch there was no longer much interest for a career in the backward West Indies, particularly because the Dutch East Indies provided much better opportunities. The retreat of the former white planter class and the reluctance of Dutchmen to settle in the West thus created a vacuum at the sub-top of Surinamese society. This gap was filled up in the second half of the nineteenth century by the resident Jewish and the lighter-skinned Afro-Surinamese elite.

Success of individuals from these circles then provided the possibility to send one's children over to the metropolis for studies. On returning they would be able to pursue a professional or bureaucratic career, thus prolonging and extending the family's success. The historian Van Lier, himself a pre-World War Two representative of this group, wrote about this early twentieth century Surinamese ambience:

Cultured mulattoes ... tried by reading books and magazines to acquaint themselves as much as possible with current events in the mother country. The educated Surinamer's highest ambition was to travel to the Netherlands and to give his children a European education. Many people denied themselves the modest luxuries which they were able to enjoy in Surinam in order to give their children the opportunity to study in Holland.¹⁴

In the twentieth century, this attitude gradually spread to those of the Afro-Caribbean group who could afford to think about making the move. Non-whites were slowly making their way up the societal ladder; the next step in this process of emancipation was to visit Holland, preferably for educational purposes. The very fact that until the 1970s those of British-Indian and Javanese origins were clearly underrepresented within the student population reflects again the development patterns within Suriname itself. The emancipation of the descendants of the British-Indian and Javanese indentured labourers was lagging at least half a century behind the social ascent of the Afro-Surinamese group.¹⁵

A Paradise of Orange?

As illustrated by the above quotation of Van Lier, the psychological orientation of Surinamers towards the Netherlands, today so often criticized among Surinamers themselves, has a long history. Obviously this tradition can be traced straight back to the era of slavery, when for the black majority being a white Dutchman was all too often synonymous with being wealthy, mighty, superior. An early Dutch writer on equated Suriname, Herlein (1718), even made this appalling claim:

These people [the Surinamese slaves] hardly if at all worry about dying, saying that they will go to Bakkerare, that is, Dutchman's country, and return after some time as a white to their Brothers.¹⁶

Surely Herlein's words may partly be explained in terms of the low opinion he had of black slaves. Still, even if in caricature, this quotation reminds of a glorification of everything Dutch which has definitely stimulated emigration from the Dutch Caribbean to the metropolis over the centuries. But what happened to this image of a 'paradise of Orange', so carefully constructed by Dutch education in the tropics, once a Surinamer actually came to live in the Netherlands?

An answer to this question is to a certain extent simply a matter of speculation. Obviously, apart from individual characteristics, the socioeconomic position achieved in the metropolis played a part, as well as possible experiences with discrimination on the basis of skin colour. It is not feasible to venture statements on this for the period preceding the twentieth century since reliable sources are not available. For the present century at least some material for this reconstruction may be found in written records and through oral history. Again though, the evidence is scattered and the need for further research paramount.

It is not surprising that for many the real Holland was not what they had expected it to be. It proved not to be the country of milk and honey, or as the Surinamese writer Bea Vianen so aptly called it, the 'Paradise of [the royal family of] Orange' that they had been told about. The country was small, its nature somewhat dreary in comparison to Suriname, its richness below expectations, ways of living quite dull.

These disillusionments were however partly offset by unexpected positive qualities of Dutch society, especially the fact that colour hadn't the tiresome weight here it had in the colonies. An important case in point was the fact that white Dutchmen were doing all kinds of manual jobs that in the colonies only black people were supposed to do. Whiteness in the Netherlands did not necessarily involve the level of arrogance so characteristic in the colonial setting.

In this sense, the metropolis pleasantly amazed many Surinamers, though experiences were not unambiguous. Here class and culture, more than skin colour *per se*, explains much of the divergence of experiences.

So far the emphasis was on post-Emancipation migration for educational purposes. This at first involved basically the upper- and middle-classes of the lighter-skinned population, in the twentieth century also blacks of middle class origins. According to pre-1960 written records and to statements by representatives of this group interviewed thirty or more years *post hoc*, Dutch society in the first half of this century only seldom confronted them with overt racism. Dutch reactions were rather characterized by a sometimes shocking ignorance and by 'benevolent curiosity'.

Looking back, it is not hard to explain this. The majority of these immigrants came from classes with a culture quite familiar to Dutch civilization. Their image of the metropolis might have been slightly rosy, but not altogether unrealistic. They were prepared and equipped to make a further conformation to metropolitan society. For the Dutch it probably wasn't too difficult to come to terms with these immigrants. Cynically, one could say: skin colour didn't matter much as long as their conduct lived up to Dutch standards. Apart from these students, retiring officials and the vacationing Surinamese elite too would find themselves in this relatively easy position - leaving aside the possible psychological uneasiness connected to remaining a visible 'stranger'.

As the twentieth century proceeded, however, some working class blacks too began to settle in the Netherlands. Once again, this involved small numbers. The total population of Surinamers in the Netherlands was estimated at 3,000 in 1946.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, the little evidence I found of overt racial discrimination invariably affected these lower-class immigrants.¹⁸ An explanation is obvious. These immigrants were hardly familiar with Dutch culture, and even trying to do so might not be able to meet its standards. Moreover, they would be perceived as intruders on a scarce market for jobs, houses, relationships. Under these circumstances, racial features could become a label. Next, this label might be used to equate race with intrusive and unacceptable behavior. Still, it was not skin colour *per se* that provoked incidents: it was class and culture.

It is therefore understandable that whatever disillusion and discontent the 'Paradise of Orange' brought among Surinamers was least likely to arise among the student group.¹⁹ In more general terms, we may conclude that disillusion was prevalent only for a minority. The few coming over really hoping to find a 'Paradise of Orange' certainly would have to adjust to reality. Still, this reality was not too hard to handle, at least if one could come to terms with being

expatriate. It was only from the 1960s onwards that Dutch attitudes toward Surinamers began to change for the worse. Incidental migration from the Dutch Caribbean turned into an exodus and was even outnumbered by Mediterranean immigration.²⁰ Many Dutch have problems facing the reality of this transition to a multi-cultural and multi-racial society, as many immigrants, Surinamers included, have to experience to their dismay.

A Nationalist Precursor: Anton de Kom (1898-1945)

In many ways, the emigration of Surinamers to the Netherlands has been of more significance to the sending country than to its former metropolis. The loss of an intellectual elite, later also of a large cross-section of its population, has confronted Suriname with a dramatic loss of its human resources. This process was only aggravated as more Surinamers were in a position to visit Holland, either to come back 'enriched' with Dutch education or paraphernalia, or simply to stay. For the sending country, this amounted to a vicious circle.

Yet the impact of migration was certainly not negative on all accounts. One important positive aspect of the European sojourn of Surinamers could be a broadening of social horizons which were rather narrowly defined in the country of origin. Paradoxically, a residence in the former metropolis, even if characterized by intensive and amical relations with Dutchmen, would stimulate many a Surinamer to reevaluate the colonial nexus and to engage in nationalist endeavours that would have seemed unthinkable at home.

As indicated above, in the pre-World War Two years, most West Indians arriving in the Netherlands came from the 'Dutchified' Creole elites. Their high opinion of Dutch culture and privileged status within the colony, quite separated from the unassimilated lower classes, made them ardent supporters of Dutchification rather than propagators of any sort of anti-Dutch nationalism. Unlike the Indonesian elites, the Surinamese elites hardly shared a distinct local culture; theirs was predominantly Dutch in orientation.

Small wonder, then, that the first radical nationalist in the Netherlands was of black lower-class origins. Anton de Kom (1898-1945) came from Suriname to the metropolis in 1920. After four years of voluntary military service he became a bookkeeper in The Hague. In 1931 he lost his job; his former employer advanced a reorganization and De Kom's political activities as motives for his dismissal. De Kom was indeed involved in leftist organizations and in close contact with the nationalist *Perhimpunan Indonesia* (Indonesian Association),

led by radical anticolonial Indonesian students such as Mohammad Hatta. His political work included the publication of short articles in socialist and communist papers. In addition, he occasionally delivered political speeches, even over the radio. Suriname was always his topic; he was working on poetry and a history of the country as well.

In 1929 he applied in vain for a job in Curacao's oil industry. In 1930, the Dutch government refused to subsidize his remigration to Suriname because of his revolutionary reputation. Finally in December 1932, De Kom, his Dutch wife and their children boarded a ship to Suriname. The colonial authorities thought the arrival of this reputed communist agitator ('Soviet Creole') to be alarming, and from the day of his embarkation hindered his activities in many ways, even though no legal pretext was applicable. Two days after the arrival of the De Kom family, the periodical 'Suriname' commented, "Presently popular risings will ensue. We cannot call this tactful."²¹

This proved to be justified criticism. De Kom, determined to pass on to the Surinamers "all the hope and courage encompassed in this one powerful word which I learned abroad: organization",²² started a sort of advice bureau in Paramaribo. Though an Afro-Surinamer himself, he mainly attracted countrymen of British-Indian and Javanese descent. The more the authorities tried to isolate De Kom and to hinder the Surinamers' attempts to get in touch with him, the greater the crowd coming to see him. Among the Asians he seems to have acquired almost messianic dimensions; he was called a 'King', a 'second Allah' and a 'son of Gandhi'.²³

The events of the next few days resulted in the most serious social unrest interbellum Suriname had experienced.²⁴ De Kom's activities, the crowd's movements and the local authorities' tactless reactions greatly enhanced the tensions in a crisis-struck Suriname, which had already seen riots in 1931. De Kom was arrested. Two people were killed and several wounded in street riots that for a few days rocked Paramaribo. The authorities blamed De Kom, stating that he had come to Suriname with the instruction of provoking revolutionary communist disorder.²⁵ The De Kom family was shipped back to the Netherlands without further ado on the 10th of May. Not without reason, the Governor of Suriname wrote to the Dutch Minister of Colonial Affairs: 'By his departure to the Netherlands we got rid of a person in my opinion dangerous to this society, who in the Netherlands will not provoke danger, at least not that much'.²⁶

Back in the Netherlands, De Kom was hailed in demonstrations organized by the Dutch Communist Party. He stated that he would continue his political activities, even though he had been commanded to keep a low profile. In the following years, he was involved in various communist-backed organizations and propagated for immediate independence of all Dutch colonies.

Perhaps most important was the publication, in 1934, of his book *Wij slaven van Suriname* (We slaves of Suriname), rightly translated in German (1935) and Spanish (1981), whereas an English edition is overdue since long. This book was the first to rephrase the history of Suriname in an explicitly anti-colonialist tone. In fact, the Dutch authorities successfully put De Kom's publisher under pressure to omit some of the fiercest, virtually Leninist, attacks on Dutch colonialism and capitalism.²⁷ Even though stirring and passionate rather than a thorough scholarly study, this book is a mile-stone in Surinamese historiography, and indeed in Caribbean history writing: it was published well in advance of admittedly more erudite but equally anti-colonialist books such as C.L.R. James' *Black Jacobins* (1938) or Eric Williams' *Capitalism and slavery* (1944).

After 1933, Anton de Kom never set foot on Surinamese soil. During the ^Nazi occupation he joined the Dutch Resistance, was arrested and died on 24 April 1945 in the concentration camp Neuengamme. Posthumously he was awarded a Dutch resistance decoration in 1982. Today he is a symbol for Surinamese nationalists; the University of Suriname bears his name.

A 'Negro Worker': Otto Huiswoud (1893-1961)

Another notable nationalist Surinamer, though today virtually forgotten among his countrymen, was Otto Huiswoud, also Huisewood, Housewold, and Huiswode, Hoiswood and alias Ch. Woodsen, and J. Billings. He was born in 1893 of mixed, primarily Afro-Surinamese ancestry. In 1912 he moved to the United States where he made a living as a tradesman in tropical produce. He became involved in communist and black organizations, and was in 1922 the only Negro among the 94 founders of the Communist Party of America (C.P.U.S.A.). Hooker (1967) also mentions Huiswoud's participation in the communist faction of Marcus Garvey's African Blood Brotherhood.²⁸

In 1922, Huiswoud represented the C.P.U.S.A. at the fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow; he reputedly discussed the situation of the American blacks with an ailing Lenin. In America he became a member of the Executive Committee of the C.P. and head of Negro Work. In 1928 he was nominated alternate member of the Executive of Comintern, whereafter he gained a considerable reputation as communist organizer in the Caribbean. Under charges of agitation he was banned from Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana.

Huiswoud's career brought him back to Europe, where he was educated at Moscow's Lenin School in 1931-1932. He succeeded George Padmore as editor of **The Negro Worker**, the monthly of the communist International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. Padmore had broken with Moscow because he thought communist objectives were unrightly prevailing over Negro work.

The Negro Worker was published in Hamburg until Hitler's takeover in 1933. Subsequently a move to Kopenhagen, next to Paris, was necessary. In Europe too, Huiswoud and his Guyanese wife H.A. Huiswoud-Dumont encountered various problems with the authorities; in 1934, for example, they were ousted from Belgium. In 1935 and probably also earlier, they lived in the Netherlands. Hardly a thing is known on this period. According to the Dutch Intelligence Service, Huiswoud was in contact with Anton de Kom.²⁹ Though there can be no certainty about this matter, it is probable that either De Kom or Huiswoud, and perhaps both, were behind the publication in 1935 of a short-lived periodical published by an organization of Surinamers working in the Netherlands. The tone of this periodical was clearly communist-inspired. It claimed to be published by an 'organization of Surinamese laborers working in the Netherlands'. In fact, there were no more than a few dozen individual Surinamese laborers in the metropolis. The same organization circulated pamphlets calling for a boycott of fascist Italy because of Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia.³⁰

Huiswoud had moved to Paris in 1936, where he edited **The Negro Worker**. In 1938 he left for the U. S. and hence for Suriname in 1941. There, he was detained by the authorities, who had arrested him along with some other nationalists and a majority of Germans and national-socialists. During his detention, Huiswoud understandably smoothed over his pre-War communist affiliations.³¹ He was released in 1942.

In 1947 Otto Huiswoud and his wife returned to the Netherlands. While working in the postal services, Huiswoud became an active member and finally president of the organization **Ons Suriname** (Our Suriname). I have not found indications that Huiswoud resumed his participation in international communism. There is no doubt that he had a strong influence on **Ons Suriname**. In 1978,

seventeen years after his death, the organization's periodical *Famiri* honoured Huiswoud as the pace-maker responsible for transforming *Ons Suriname* from a social club to a union seeing to the interests of Surinamers in the Netherlands.³²

The Independence Issue after 1945

During the German occupation of Holland, the exiled Dutch queen Wilhelmina had declared that after the war a change in the relations with the colonies would be implemented. In a radio speech of 7 December 1942, the queen spoke of a kingdom 'in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Suriname and Curaçao will participate together, whereas each for itself will see to its own, internal affairs in independence and learning on its own strength, but with the will to support each other'.³³ The Indonesian nationalists did not feel this to be sufficient. In 1945, they proclaimed Indonesia's independence, an independence which was only constitutionally acknowledged by the Netherlands in 1949, after heavy fighting and under strong international pressure.

Both in the West Indies and among West Indians in the Netherlands, the question was now raised what changes should be implemented for Suriname and the Antilles. Some Surinamers in the Netherlands, notably the novelist Lou Lichtveld (pseud. Albert Helman), spoke out clearly for the Indonesian nationalists - still, hardly a voice cried out for immediate independence of the West Indian colonies. During the next ten years, discussions and legislation centered on a redefinition of the kingdom, resulting in the declaration of the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in December 1954. Hence, the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles were autonomous partners in the Kingdom, with the Netherlands only keeping dominance in defence and international affairs. Both in the countries concerned and abroad, the Statute was observed to be a significant improvement for the former colonies. A complete decolonization with full independence, however, was not implied in the Statute.

The deliberations preceding the declaration of the Statute were not without difficulties and discords. Still, the outcome was hailed almost unanimously among the partners. The Surinamese Parliament (*in statu nascendi*), for instance, approved the Statute without casting a vote 'because of the beautiful moment of its acceptance'. There was some opposition among a group of Surinamese nationalists in the Netherlands. These nationalists were leading figures in *Ons Suriname* as well as in the connected cultural organization *Wie*

Eegie Sanie (Our Own Things) and the Amsterdam branch of the **Surinaamse Studenten Vereniging** (Surinamese Students Organization).

Ons Suriname was an organization for Surinamers in the Netherlands with its roots in the interbellum years. Formally a politically neutral organization, the debates over decolonization had provoked a schism with the more conservative members withdrawing to form the **Surinaams Verbond** (Surinamese Association) in 1952. **Ons Suriname** became the locus of nationalism, dutifully spied on by the Dutch Intelligence out of concern for its supposedly communist leadership. In its periodical *De Koerier*, co-edited by Otto Huiswoud, the Statute was characterized as a fake reform and as colonial demagoguery: '[it is] clear that one does not hear the voice of the Surinamese people here, but that the system under which Suriname lives now for almost 300 years has been formulated again.'³⁴

Still, the militant nationalism of **Ons Suriname** did not find much support, at least not in the leading political parties of Suriname.³⁵ Only in the 1960s would this nationalism find an articulation in Surinamese politics through the **Partij Nationalistische Republiek** (PNR). In fact, the PNR leadership had its origins among the very Surinamese nationalist students of the 1950s. The PNR however never before 1969 met the ballot. The absence of a strong political nationalism may be explained partially by reference to the general satisfaction with the effectiveness of the 1954-Statute and to a disbelief among West Indian politicians about the viability of their countries as independent states.

Another factor at stake was the fact that up to the 1960s, those coming to the Netherlands (a group out of which many leading politicians were to be recruited) generally did not encounter any animosity - more often the contrary. As V. S. Naipaul observed somewhat hyperbolically in 1960: 'Nearly every educated person has been to Holland, and the affection for Holland is genuine. There is none of the racial resentment which the British West Indian brings back from England'.³⁶ Apparently, at the time a prolonged residence in the Netherlands in most cases led to further Dutchification rather than to resentment and the will to break away.

Wie Eegie Sanie

Perhaps more influential among the Surinamese in the Netherlands than any sort of political nationalism was the cultural nationalism propagated by **Wie Eegie Sanie**. This organization, founded by young Surinamese students and headed by PNR leader Eddy Bruma, aimed at giving Suriname a culture of its own. Its objectives were thus formulated: '**Wie Eegie Sanie** strives to conserve and ennoble the things that belong to the Surinamese People, because we know that a people out of touch with its own values is a people adrift.'³⁷

Obviously, with a people as highly segmented as the Surinamese population, not many elements of the country's culture were shared by all ethnic groups. One objective however was an obvious spearhead: a reevaluation of **Sranan**, the 'lingua franca' of all Surinamers, the 'negro-English' or 'taki-taki' despised by colonial rule and suppressed in the schools with their Dutch curricula.

For Eddy Bruma, this was nothing new. In Paramaribo he had lived in the house of the lone champion of **Sranan**, J.G.A. 'Papa' Koenders, whose journal **Foetoeboi** ("Servant") had defiantly propagated the respectability of Afro-Surinamese (Creole) culture from 1946 onwards.³⁸ In fact, Bruma himself as a youngster had shortly been detained by the colonial authorities in Suriname during the war under suspicion of being anti-Dutch. Once in the Netherlands, studying law at the protestant ('to get to know my enemies better')³⁹ Free University of Amsterdam, he started organizing Surinamese students for this cultural nationalism, which he perceived as a prerequisite for political nationalism. **Wie Eegie Sanie**, the Amsterdam branch of the **Surinaamse Studenten Vereniging** and **Ons Suriname** were soon interconnected by double and triple memberships and organizational functions. The same Surinamese, along with an occasional Antillean, were publishing **De Koerier** and **De Wesfindier** not exactly revolutionary periodicals, but clear demonstrations of a new approach to topics such as colonialism and Dutchification.

For the first time, Surinamese students were engaged in nationalist activities. Voorhoeve and Van Renselaar (1962) provided a compelling explanation for the unprecedented emergence of cultural nationalism among the young Creole students. Educated in a tradition that took the superiority of European and especially Dutch culture for granted, they discovered on their arrival in the Netherlands that even a complete adaptation would not make them white Dutchmen. What is more, Dutch students were not so much interested in their command of European culture as in their own contribution, in a proof of a distinct Surinamese culture. A 'collapse of their adaptation-ideal' followed suit.

'What happened, then, was that they began in the Netherlands to appreciate all kinds of cultural values which they had discarded in Surinam as inferior. Thus, it seems to us that only with the confrontation with Europe did this group become conscious of being culturally, too, a separate group, and that this was the beginning of Surinam cultural nationalism'.⁴⁰

Another novelty was the close association between students and working class immigrants. This could hardly have happened before the war. In the post-war Surinamese student generation, for the first time black middle-class instead of lighter-skinned upper-class students were prevailing. The social cleavage between the former and the Creole working-class immigrants proved easier to overcome in the metropolis than in Suriname itself. The meetings of **Wie Eegie Sanie** and **Ons Suriname**, often followed by social gatherings and outright Caribbean parties, made Creoles more familiar with 'our own things'; it may also have made them feel more at home by providing a bit of **Sranan** (Suriname) in a country which, after all, only a few will have considered to be their own.

The political significance of the outspoken nationalism of **Wie Eegie Sanie**, **Ons Suriname** and the **Surinaamse Studenten Vereniging** seems to have been disproportionate to its active members. Small wonder both the Dutch security agency and Surinamese government circles attacked the movement. Its leaders were accused of being communists, an accusation with dangerous implications in these Cold War years. It is unlikely that communism was indeed at stake, a few possible exceptions like Otto Huiswoud apart. Young Surinamers studying here on a government scholarship nevertheless may have felt obliged not to become too closely involved with the nationalists. After all, back home a radical reputation might very well hinder the finding of a good job.

Even though their active membership might have been limited, the nationalist organizations of the 1950s did spark a new sense of national consciousness which would grow over the 1960s and become one of the prime factors in the making of independence in 1975.

Surinamese Nationalism Reconsidered

It is evident that the emergence of Surinamese nationalism, let alone social turmoil within the country, cannot be explained by reference to the ideological development of a limited number of political leaders only. Neither would the metropolitan sojourn of such protagonists provide a sufficient explanation for their political stance. It was undoubtedly the social situation in

the colony itself which produced recurring social unrest all through the period discussed here. Yet it is a fact that whenever social unrest found a political articulation, former expatriates were involved. Obviously, being expatriate implied taking a measure of distance to the colonial situation, as well as possibilities to compare societies and to affiliate with political movements. I will briefly discuss these links.

In the pre-World War Two years, West Indian nationalism and anti colonialism were championed by two important figures : Anton de Kom and Otto Huiswoud. Both of Surinamese origins, they left their country at an early age. It was indeed abroad that they became involved in politics. De Kom, though perhaps never a formal member of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPH), did find many political friends in communist ranks. In fact, the CPH was the only Dutch party unequivocally supporting full independence of the Dutch colonies. More over, it was the first party ever to have a non-Dutch, i.e., Indonesian nationalist, as a member of Parliament.⁴¹ Otherwise De Kom's affiliations were not exclusively with the CPH but with several non-aligned left-wing institutions and persons as well. In contrast, he did speak out several times against the more influential social democratic party.⁴²

In view of his predominantly communist affiliations, it is not inconceivable that De Kom's frustrated attempts to move to Suriname or Curaçao, as well as his actual repatriation in December 1932, avowedly to visit his dying mother, were connected to the Comintern's policy of revolutionizing the colonies of capitalist countries. There is however no reason to suppose he subordinated his zeal for an independent Suriname to Stalinist party discipline.

The figure of Otto Huiswoud is more elusive, especially during his post-World War Two years in the Netherlands. As a founder and member of the C.P.U.S.A. and high official in Comintern organization, his loyalty seems to have been to international communism, rather than to Suriname as such. Before the War, he made a political career in the U.S.A., the Caribbean and Europe - but in the 1912-1942 years he did not set foot again in his native country, and only shortly in the Netherlands. His post-War years in the Netherlands remain enigmatic to a degree. No doubt, the political radicalization of Ons Suriname owed a great deal to Huiswoud. Yet whether his role was still connected to international communism , as some have claimed, is not clear.

De Kom and Huiswoud both got involved in politics abroad;⁴³ both only returned to Suriname for a short time; both dedicated part of their lives to striving for Suriname's independence. The *Wie Eegie Sanie* generation showed some similarities and differences with its pre-War predecessors. As to differences,

it may be pointed out that some of this generation, notably Eddy Bruma, certainly did not have to go abroad to start criticizing the colonial nexus. Many of this generation, furthermore, did indeed repatriate and consequently had opportunities to actually engage in politics in the 1960s. Further dissimilarities are the initial emphasis of the 1950s nationalists on cultural as opposed to political nationalism, their clearly more moderate political ideals and affiliations, and finally their middle as against working class origins and social position.

Recalling the Voorhoeve and Van Renselaar interpretation - a collapsing adaptation ideal leading to cultural nationalism - we do however find a degree of similarity as well. Many of the 1950s activists only became cultural nationalists during their residence in the Netherlands. In Suriname, objection to Dutch culture was simply 'not done' among the middle-classes, and whatever popular social unrest arose hardly had anti-colonial significance. It was precisely in the metropolis that topics such as colonialism and the relevance of Dutch culture for a West Indian society could easily be discussed. In the metropolis, the young Surinamers were far away from an often suffocating social control at home. Also, they may have been stimulated by the Indonesian victory over Dutch colonialism and the fact that Dutch public opinion was slowly overcoming the concept of self-evident colonialism as well. Thus the Kingdom's policy of stimulating West Indians to come and study in the Netherlands certainly nurtured the very nationalism that eventually rendered the Statute obsolete in the perception of leading Surinamese politicians.

Another intriguing question is whether the segmentation of the population so characteristic in the Dutch West Indies was overcome among the Surinamers in the metropolis. The answer to this question is not totally negative, but much less so affirmative.

Breakthroughs were relatively easy to establish when the West Indians in the Netherlands were only a tiny minority. Thus, among the Surinamers both black and lighter-skinned Creoles mingled much more freely than in their own country. Even the occasional Surinamer of British-Indian origins seems to have been adopted easily as just another **Kondreman** (Surinamer). When however the group of expatriates began to grow, the stubborn segmentation made its re-entry. Thus, one of the leading nationalists recalled the Surinamers stepping out of the radicalizing **Ons Suriname** to form a politically neutral **Surinaams Verbond** not only as a group of disillusioned reactionaries but also as 'a club of older, sociable, and (perhaps too) light-skinned Surinamers'.⁴⁴ The existing cleavage between Afro-Surinamese Creoles and those of East Indian origins did not really manifest itself in the Netherlands until the late 1960s. Cynically, one may conclude this was mostly a function of the underrepresentation of the latter. In the 1960s and

1970s, with the expatriate community representing the Surinamese population in a more balanced way, both social life and organizations became ever more segmented, just like in Suriname.

Looking back, Dutch West Indian nationalism was no isolated phenomenon. Huiswoud, and to a degree De Kom as well, cannot be understood without the context of both the interbellum activities of Comintern and the serious social unrest all over the Caribbean in the 1930s. The nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s, less radical and more influential, obviously was part and parcel of the general decolonization process characterizing world history after the War. I will conclude this contribution with some observations on the post-War results of Surinamese nationalism.

Among Surinamers in the Netherlands, a cultural nationalism took shape that indeed has deeply influenced Surinamese culture. Especially the re-valuation of Suriname's history and of **Sranan** may be mentioned here. The serious weakness of this nationalism however was its Afro-Surinamese character. Creole in leadership and appeal, it did not break through the lines of segmentation. The heroic history of the Surinamese people was time and again reduced to slave resistance, 'We Surinamers' often only meant the Afro-Surinamese Creole **Sranan**, originated in the years of slavery, was advanced as the real language of the Surinamers. Thus, it was foreseeable that the Surinamers of Asiatic origins would not feel this nationalism to be their own. **Wie Eegie Sanie** was indeed crucial for the emancipation of the Afro-Surinamese culture, but it did not reach beyond that.

Over the 1960s, political nationalism gained momentum, both in **Ons Suriname** and in Suriname itself. Former ex-patriates were particularly active here, especially in Eddy Bruma's **Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek (PNR)** which was operating along the lines propagated by organizations such as **Ons Suriname**. The PNR defined its aims in terms of anti-colonialism and a mixture of rather vaguely defined aims, such as 'the ennoblement of country and people'.⁴⁵ According to former participants, the PNR, like **Wie Eegie Sanie**, never lost its image of being a party for Surinamers of African descent only.⁴⁶

In fact, at a time that the PNR feverishly advocated independence for Suriname, the central problem in Surinamese politics was not the independence issue but rather ethnicity. Exactly by playing the card of ethnicity, however, Bruma's PNR finally secured its triumph. In the 1960s the existence of a well-spoken minority of radical Creole nationalists had urged the moderate Creole parties at least to render lip-service to the independence issue. By doing so, the latter hoped to avoid the image of being hesitant and traditionalist, while

at the same time impeding Bruma to win the vote of a presumably impatient Creole electorate.

This policy was pursued with success in the 1960s, but things changed in the 1970s. The period of inter-ethnic political cooperation having come to an end, ethnicity became the central issue once again. For the 1973 elections a combination of Creole parties managed to defeat the Hindustani VHP. Within the winning combination, Bruma's PNR for the first time had a pivotal position. Having made an indispensable contribution to the combination's victory, the PNR used its strong bargaining position to secure the goal it has striven for since its establishment in 1961: independence. The achievement of independence in 1975, designated as 'The triumph of Eddy Bruma,'⁴⁷ was indeed the victory of a specific tradition of Creole radical nationalism which was first organized in the 1950s in the metropolis.⁴⁸

Almost fifteen years of independence have demonstrated that Dutch influence on Surinamese economics and politics has not dwindled since 1975. Neither has the metropolitan sojourn ceased to be of significance. The military coup of 1980 started as a conflict over the establishment of a trade-union of Non-Commissioned Officers. The rebellious NCO's simply demanded the same rights they had learned to consider normal during their military training in the Dutch army.

As the military got a firmer hold on Surinamese society, a new wave of immigration followed suit. Again, the Netherlands was considered the obvious place to go. Over the past years, the expatriate Surinamese community became an outspoken pressure group. The community's influence on Dutch policy towards Suriname is clear. Irony has it that once again - and somewhat to the dismay of the republic's authorities - metropolitan Surinamers are thus of prime importance for the future of this Caribbean nation on Latin American shores.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented at the workshop on 'The History of Blacks in Europe', held at the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, Leiden, 10-12 July, 1986.

1. Figures of various Dutch governmental institutions, summarized in Oostindie, "Caribbean Migration", p.63. Net migration was already rising in the 1960s, from a low 383 in 1960 to 4,370 in 1969. The pattern of the 1970s showed less constancy, with a growth in 1970-1975 (5,558 to 36,537), next a sharp decline in 1976 (621) followed by a new upswing (to 16,705 in 1980). After 1988, free migration was no longer allowed. The figure of 1981 was only 1,088, yet increased again to 3,768 by 1985. Net migration from Suriname has probably only increased since. Much of this migration however is illegal and therefore difficult to calculate.
2. This article is mainly based on Oostindie, "Kondreman". Wherever possible I refer to this book rather than to the original archival or oral sources.
3. Oostindie, "Kondreman," 10, 21-26.
4. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Societeit van Suriname, Journalen van de Gouverneurs. See table in Oostindie, "Kondreman," 7.
5. Maduro, "Nos a bai," particularly pages 140-149.
6. See Maduro, "Nos a bai," 153-164. Also Oostindie, "Kondreman," 13-17.
7. In France, West Indian immigration was quarantined (1777), i.e., practically forbidden.
8. A placard of 1773 restricting the facilities to let Surinamese slaves accompany their masters to the Netherlands was enforced exactly at the time when the Surinamese plantation economy was enmeshed in a deep economic crash.

Surprisingly, the coming of servants, cq. slaves from Dutch East India had been restricted and at times even forbidden from the early seventeenth century onwards (Poeze et. al., *In het land*, 7-8).

9. See Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 94; *Geschiedenis van een Neger*, passim. An elaborate discussion of Dutch Enlightenment literary perceptions of blacks may be found in Paasman, *Reinhart*.
10. My translation from a quotation in Eekhof, "Capitein," 20.
11. Capitein argued, in a "Dissertatio politico-theologica" (1742), that slavery was perfectly reconcilable with the Christian faith.
12. Until mid-twentieth century, the Netherlands Antilles were usually referred to as 'Curaçao and dependencies'. The other five islands were indeed of very limited economic and demographic importance at the time. For Antillean students and cultural orientation, see Hoetink, "Dutch Caribbean," and Maduro, "Nos a bai," 165-217.
13. Sedoc-Dahlberg, *Surinaamse studenten*, 72.
14. Van Lier, *Frontier society*, 279.
15. According to Sedoc-Dahlberg (*Surinaamse studenten*, 81), of the 131 students of the 1946-51 generation, 90 were Afro-Surinamers. Three population groups were clearly overrepresented: the Chinese (18), Dutch (5) and Jewish (7). There was a dramatic underrepresentation of British-Indians (7) and Javanese (4); their share of the latter in Suriname's total population in 1950 was 34.7%, and 19.6% respectively.
16. Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 106.
17. Sedoc-Dahlberg, *Surinaamse Studenten*, 82.
18. I have treated this in more detail in *Oostindie*, "Kondreman," 89-99 and *Oostindie*, "Caribbean Migration," 58-62.
19. An illustration of this is an article in a Dutch weekly, *De Spiegel* (13 December 1952). A group of young Surinamese nationalists studying in the Netherlands (including Eddy Bruma) were interviewed about their nationalist ideals, about Dutch colonialism and Dutch society. However strongly they opposed colonialism, they stated not to have experienced any racial discrimination.

20. In 1983, the total "autochthonous population of the Netherlands was estimated to be 537,000. Of this population, 190,000 were Surinamers and 43,000 Antilleans, whereas the majority came from the Meditteranean". Oostindie, "Caribbean migration," 66.
21. *Suriname*, 6 January 1933. My translation.
22. De Kom , *Wij slaven*, 164. My translation.
23. *Suriname*, 3 February 1933. My translation.
24. See Van Lier, *Frontier Society*, 368-374.
25. *Suriname*, 16 May and 13 June 1933.
26. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ministerie van Kolonien, Geheim Archief D 17, 1933. The Dutch authorities had used the same policy of banishment with Indonesian nationalists in 1913, 1922, 1923 and 1927-8 (Poeze et al., *In het land*, 91, 174, 186, 212).
27. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ministerie van Kolonien, Geheim Archief, O 33, 1933. On De Kom, see "A.de Kom," passim; Hira, *Van Priary*, 296-16; and Oostindie, "Kondreman," 66-76.
28. Hooker, *Black revolutionary*, 25.
29. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Gouverneur van Suriname, Kabinet Geheim, 58.
30. The periodical, in Dutch, beared the title of **Surinamers in the Netherlands. For a joint struggle against oppression and racism.**
31. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Gouverneur van Suriname, Kabinet Geheim, 608.
32. *Famiri*, Vol. 10, 1978.
33. My translation from Poeze et al., *In het land*, 324.
34. *De Koerier*, February 1955.
35. Post-war Surinamese politics are elaborately discussed in Dew, *Difficult flowering*.

36. Naipaul, *Middle passage*, 164.
37. *De Koerier*, December 1955.
38. In Suriname, 'Creole' is used for all Surinamers of (partial) African descent, in contrast to Asians, Amerindians, and Europeans. On Koenders, see Voorhoeve and Lichtveld, *Creole Drum*, 135-63.
39. *Haagse Post*, 29 November 1975.
40. Voorhoeve and Van Renselaar, *Messianism*, 214.
41. One of the leaders of the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*, Roestam Effendi, was elected in 1933 (Poeze et al., *In het land*, 253-257).
42. E.g., addressing a communist meeting on 5 August 1933. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ministerie van Kolonien, Geheim Archief, Q 27, 1933.
43. There is an interesting parallel here with leading labor leaders of the 1930s. Apart from De Kom, the most influential organizers in Suriname were Doedel, Liesdek and De Sanders. Of these, Doedel and Liesdek served their apprenticeship in labor unionism in the Curaçaoan oil industry, whereas De Sanders had his first unionist experiences in British-Guiana.
44. *Waaldijk, Ons Suriname*, 4. My translation.
45. *Opmars*, 8.
46. *Vrij Nederland*, 22 November 1975.
47. *Haagse Post*, 29 November 1975.

48. According to opposition figures, on the eve of independence 80% of the Javanese Surinamers, 99,9% of the East Indian Surinamers and 50% of the Creoles spoke out against independence (Dew , *Difficult Flowering*, 182). Several of the Hindustani politicians had studied in the Netherlands; never had they joined the Creole-dominated anti-Dutch organizations.

The conflict itself was not at all new. In 1961, in a reaction to the Creole Prime Minister Pengel's declaration 'I am Surinamer [...] and I want to be Surinamer with all sweets and bitters [of life]', the Hindustani leader Lachman reacted with the simple words 'Lachman wants to be a Dutchman' (my translation from Meel, *Statuut*, 47). Over the next decades, Lachman would repeat this standpoint whereas Pengel was under pressure to talk more radical language.

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CHAPTER TEN

A RELUCTANT EMBRACE: SURINAME'S IDLE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

PETER MEEL

Introduction

With regard to Suriname's post-war history one may state that resistance and rebellion certainly were important strategies adopted by political parties towards the Netherlands. At first, opposition against the mother colony was cautious and peaceful. Spokesmen of anti-Dutch sentiments were mostly of middle-class origin, and inspired by current ideas on autonomy and home-rule. Most of their desires were effectuated when in 1954 the *Statuut* for the Kingdom of the Netherlands was proclaimed, a constitution promoting Suriname from a colony to an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In the late 1950s and 1960s the most notorious opponents of the dependent status of Suriname turned out to be more radical. Not only did they discuss the need to decolonize, but they also introduced concepts like imperialism, nationalism and revolution and thus added a leftist ideology to an already slumbering wish to cut ties with the Netherlands. Since they were rather outspoken in their protests against the Dutch they often conflicted with the legal authorities.

A prominent Surinamese nationalist, the poet Robin Raveles, confessed in his autobiography:

We had the intention to build a new society. One in which no exploitation of laborer and farmer by a small group of money--owners would occur. A nation that would be independent. Not only politically, but also culturally and economically. We would not allow our country to continue to be an appendage of Europe. We wanted to identify with our own people. We would no longer let the ideals of the young be focussed on the mother country. The word "revolution" now had a meaning for us. We would have to trade the old colonial standards on which society floated - capitalism, imperialism - for a new idea. An idea corresponding with the thoughts of our people. We would have to brainwash lots of people, penetrated by colonialism from their birth. We would make enemies. We knew that it would be a long struggle. This we also realized. Because we knew now that it would not be simple to conquer a system of dogmas already possessing the minds of the people for three centuries.¹

These staccato sentences were written in 1969, when developments towards sovereignty started to be taken seriously in Suriname and the Netherlands. On November 25, 1975, Suriname indeed became an independent republic, for arduous nationalists an event that seemed to justify their years-long political struggle. However, enthusiasm over what they considered a triumph did not last long. What happened in Suriname after 1975 only rarely coincided with the lofty notions they had held in store for their country. Instead of producing a drive towards progress, independence generated a process of stagnation, instability and lethargy. Alternative nationalistic experiments in the first half of the 1980s proved also to be fruitless. Anno 1989, the young republic suffers from a great many crises and an increased dependency on the major powers of the western hemisphere.

Why did Suriname fail to realize the ideal of political, cultural and economic independence? In the following chapter I will expound some reflections on Suriname's struggle with the first two types of independence, which may be regarded as essential to decolonization processes. For reasons of clarity I discuss both types separately, although I realize that they have a lot in common, and often, even coincide.

With respect to terminology, resistance and rebellion will be interpreted as verbal, written or physical protest against a status quo considered unjust, inhumane or outdated. The theme will be viewed in the light of independence

only, Suriname's desire to come to political and cultural maturity, reach an autonomous status and cut off dependency relations. No attention will be paid to resistance and rebellion directed at issues having no connection with the 'outside world' such as the friction between Amerindians and Maroons through the ages, trade-unions fighting for social equality or the attempted counter coup d'états following the military take-over of 1980. Those forms of protest belong to Suriname's internal affairs and have less bearing on the country's position as a nation or state.

As has been illustrated by the Raveles quotation, I have the intention to write this essay mainly from a Surinamese point of view. In that respect this contribution may be regarded as complementary to an earlier publication on a similar topic.² There is another difference between both publications though. Whereas the earlier article contains primarily factual information, this essay focusses on analysis rather than description.

Political Independence: Divide and Rule Institutionalized

Resistance and rebellion have been consistent themes in Surinamese history. If one goes back in time, attempting to trace the earliest manifestations of these phenomena, one encounters the Amerindian struggle against the Dutch beginning in the late 17th century. The fight for freedom of these 'first guerrillas of Surinam',³ however, was without much perspective since their weapons and techniques proved to be inferior compared to those of their enemies. Also, because of tribal discord and susceptibility to foreign diseases, the Amerindians were exterminated, enslaved or put to flight into the interior.⁴

The Dutch, regarding themselves the rightful possessors of Suriname, found out that conquering a territory was different from administering one. From the 1680s, when a constitution-like octroy was put into effect, the planter elite experienced difficulties with the Governor of Suriname, the highest legal authority in the colony. Assembled in a so-called Policy Council - enjoying a consultative voice only - they frequently protested against his decisions which they viewed too closely connected with Dutch commerce and political life. Apart from compensating for their lack of power, their attacks on the Governor's policy were primarily meant to safeguard their own economic interests. Many a time, the planters - with the help of associates in the Netherlands - managed to blacken the Governor's reputation in such a way that the battle-weary victim chose to resign.⁵ If the planters resistance has to be defined in terms of nationalism, it should be characterized as highly exclusive and adversive to political and social reforms.

Far more imaginative, as well as heroic, were the escapes, uprisings and wars started by the slave population. People belonging to this segment of society had been transported forcibly from Africa since the late 17th century or were descendants of individuals who had left their homeland as such. In their capacity as slaves they worked on the sugar, coffee, cotton and cacao plantations; their life being permeated by mental and physical distress. Those unwilling to accept the hardship and cruelties plotted against their masters and often successfully regained their freedom. In the woods - at a safe distance from the city of Paramaribo and their vengeful employers - they built villages, raised families and cultivated crops. In order to maintain their independent status these Maroons fought wars with the plantation owners, who were anxious to break their power, punish them and put them back into slavery. In the 18th century, the colonial authorities were forced to conclude several peace-treaties with the rebels. Up to the present day, the Maroons - representing 15 percent of the Surinamese population - have maintained their independence, although it has been put under pressure by the offensive operations of the National Army of Suriname since 1986.⁶

In the late 19th and early 20th century, resistance and rebellion were common features of the life of Hindustanis and Javanese in Suriname. On the initiative of the colonial government these immigrants had replaced the slaves as laborers following emancipation and thus inherited much of the misery and suffering that seemed synonymous with plantation life. The 'new system of slavery' they were subjected to they met chiefly with 'passive resistance': namely obstruction, sabotage, pretended illness and suicide. In this context a major object of protest was the *poenale sanctie* (penal sanction), a legal clause practically degrading the contract-laborer to a position of population without legal rights. Insurgencies - earlier initiated by the slave-population - occurred only on a modest scale within the Asian labor-force. They did take place but failed to produce mythical leaders, memorable battles, not to speak of autonomous communities. The 'Asian' resistance in Suriname until World War II is known to be less spectacular and far-reaching than its 'African' equivalent.⁷

It is not coincidental that the resistance and rebellion, in the years preceding 1930, were ethnically determined. If one considers colonial politics in Suriname one cannot deny that this type of opposition was inevitable. Except for the Amerindians, all other racial groups were essentially non-Surinamese and therefore able or forced to hold on to their specific traditions. Breman rightly described Suriname as an 'immigrant's society'.⁸

The artificial composition of the population was further emphasized by the geographical and labor division to which all groups were subjected. From the

end of the 19th century, the colonial authorities in this way hampered society from developing more homogeneous structures by the distribution of people over districts and jobs in Suriname. Amerindians and Maroons earned their living in the interior - presently the districts of Marowijne, Brokopondo and Sipilawini - with fishing, trade and subsistence farming. Hindustanis - after the expiration of their labor contract - became important entrepreneurs in the agricultural and commercial sectors. They were concentrated in the districts of Nickerie, Saramacca and Suriname. The Javanese - having finished their indentured labor period - continued working as small peasants and resided principally in the district of Commewijne. The white settlers lived as planters or civil servants in and around Paramaribo, whereas the Creoles worked as farmers in the districts of Coronie and Para, in the industrial sector in the districts of Para and Marowijne, and in government jobs in Paramaribo.⁹

In the case of the white settlers one has to take into account that this segment of society numbered less than 2 percent of the entire population. Until the turn of the century members of parliament were mainly selected from this influential in-crowd. The views and opinions of the elite were primarily Dutch in orientation, although some cherished a sense of affection for Suriname and maintained friendly relations with educated Creoles. Politically the white settlers favoured their own interests rather than those of their fellow country-men. In general, they benefitted from a continuation of the status quo and therefore resented proposals that paved the way for substantial changes. Their resistance was no longer directed at the Governor exclusively, since their power had increased with the introduction of parliament in 1866. Actually, relations between both parties were reversed. When important issues were at stake, members of parliament and the Governor usually co-operated to withstand Creole aspirations for power. However, from the beginning of the 20th century, the white settlers' political importance quickly started to decline.

Creoles - in Suriname descendants of manumitted slaves and from slaves emancipated in 1863 - and Maroons clearly derived much of their identity from Africa. As far as religion, kinship and language are concerned they shared enough features to become a segment of their own in Suriname. Although this segment is culturally referred to as Creole, it is questionable whether both groups should be categorized under one label in all cases. Socially and - more important for this paragraph - politically, differences between Creoles and Maroons have loomed large. Whereas most Creoles have traditionally lived in Paramaribo, the process of urbanization for Maroons did not start before the 1960s. This disparity had important consequences for the further emancipation of both groups. In fact it caused the long-term isolation and neglect of the Maroons in Surinamese society.

Representatives of the Creole group were the first to climb the social ladder obtaining white-collar jobs. For this reason, Creoles working as civil servants, journalists and teachers became relatively influential. Although their status could not match that of the white elite, they were in a rather comfortable position. After all, they did not have to be afraid of competition from representatives of other ethnic groups. Gradually they started to catch up with the white inner circle. Thanks to a growing level of education and prosperity the number of Creoles fit for politics increased. During the interbellum period a majority in parliament consisted of (predominantly light-colored) Creoles.

Not surprisingly, this new elite did not revert to its African roots, but turned to an adaption of the heritage the Dutch had left behind. Not only had this western orientation been basic to the subject matter in the schools they had attended, it also allowed middle-class Creoles to distinguish themselves well from the majority of the Surinamese population. The divide-and-rule strategy initiated by the colonial oppressors was thus institutionalized by part of the oppressed themselves. Understandably the mass of the population did not notice this cosmetic change of the guard.¹⁰

In the early 1930s - when the world economic crisis led to large-scale unemployment and poverty - the colonial authorities in Suriname adopted a strict austerity policy. They paid little attention to the needs of the common people and suppressed unions in an attempt to prevent the mobilization of the masses. It was also in those years that Anton de Kom - a working-class leader of charismatic stature - was expelled from Suriname. This was a consequence of the fact that De Kom not only spoke out against the socio-economic policy of the government, but also stated that time was ripe to quit relations with the Netherlands. His position may thus said to have been anti-colonial as well as anti-imperialistic.

Even more important, however, is that De Kom was probably the first Surinamer in politics acting as a Surinamer. Instead of defending the interests of a special group (one may think of the Creoles to which he himself belonged), his aim was to overcome racial opposition and to supply the workers' resistance a leftist ideology. Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, he displayed a sense of nationalism that would affect the thinking of several generations to come.

Many questions regarding De Kom remain unsolved. It is hard to characterize the exact political stand of "Adek," as his name was commonly abbreviated. Up to the present day, disciples, critics and other pundits argue about the theoretical foundations of his work, of *Wij slaven van Suriname* in particular. But whatever label is stuck on De Kom, as an anti-imperialist and

nationalist he may be said to have been a rather isolated figure, operating ahead of his time and generation.¹¹

Anti-colonialism got a hold on the Creole middle-class in the 1940s. A few reasons can be put forward to explain this position. There is in the first place the economic prosperity Suriname enjoyed during World War II as a consequence of the export of huge quantities of bauxite to the U.S.A. The feeling of self-confidence this produced was enhanced by the acquaintance with decolonization concepts developed in the U.S.A. and U.K., the authoritarian policy of the then Governor of Suriname and the proposals of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands towards political reforms. After 1945, those reforms were effectuated. Through the *Statuut* for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Suriname in 1954 obtained an autonomous status.

During the negotiations with The Hague the Creole elite - the most prominent among them organized in the *Unie Suriname* - played their cards gently and with care. They aspired to an autonomous status for Suriname and in that respect certainly defied Dutch colonialism. At the same time they held on to the conviction that as politicians they could not allow themselves to be surpassed by any rival ethnic group. They viewed themselves as the legitimate successors of the Dutch and therefore mobilized to keep their privileged position. Representatives of the dark-colored Creoles, Hindustanis and Javanese obviously did not agree with this point of view. They advocated the introduction of universal suffrage in Suriname. With the support of the Dutch government they had their way in 1948. As a consequence of the 1949 elections many of them were elected to parliament. From that moment the power of the Creole elite gradually declined. By 1958, their position in Surinamese politics was reduced to that of an insignificant pressure-group.

Prior to the 1949 elections, the formation of political parties was put into effect. Due to the prevailing ethnic, geographical and labor division the structure of the new organizations also reflected the colonial past. The main characteristic of all parties apparently was their racial basis. A political party was not founded on a program, faith, or ideology, but on ethnicity. For more than 40 years three political organizations have been playing a leading role in Surinamese Politics: the *Nationale Partij Suriname* (NPS), the *Vooruitstrevende Hervormings Partij* (VHP) and the *Kaum Tani Persantuan Indonesia* (KTPI), championing the interests of Creoles, Hindustanis and Javanese respectively. Since the welfare of the racial group is the focal point of each party, nepotism, patronage and corruption have been widely practiced and frequently obstructed a sound and balanced government policy. In Suriname most politicians believe national interests to be subservient to ethnic interests.¹²

This lack of commitment to Surinamese nationhood irritated those Surinamers studying in the Netherlands. In the academic circles in which they were active they discovered philosophies which opened their eyes to the state of affairs in their home country. Studying and analyzing decolonization theories, they started to regard the policy of their government to be objectionable. It became clear to them that Suriname deserved a free and independent status without the interference of whatever state or nation. This conviction was encouraged by the treatment they met with in the Netherlands. As a rule the Dutch did not approach Surinamers as fellow-countrymen. This was quite remarkable since Surinamers had a high command of the Dutch language and could debate Dutch culture excellently. Instead they were regarded as foreigners and expected to have a culture of their own. Consequently this induced Surinamers in the Netherlands to search for their own identity and translate their apparent separation into political and cultural concepts.¹³

In this context three organizations should be mentioned as driving forces behind the expanding Surinamese nationalism: **Ons Suriname**, **Wie Eegie Sanie** (Our Own Interests) and the Amsterdam department of the **Surinaamse Studenten Vereniging**. **Ons Suriname** in particular opposed Dutch attempts to maintain power in Indonesia, protested vehemently against the proclamation of the **Statuut**, freely discussed problems of decolonization, color and race, and expressed its sympathy with liberation organizations resisting European presence in Africa and Asia. The uncompromising stand of the nationalists and their habit to draw inspiration from marxist and socialist sources roused the suspicion of the Dutch authorities. Consequently members of the Surinamese students organizations in the Netherlands were annoyingly troubled by agents of the internal intelligence Service, experiences that only further increased their hostility towards Dutch rule in Suriname.¹⁴

Within the NPS several representatives in fact agreed with the criticism of the Surinamese students, but their voice was mostly silenced by the conservative wing of the party. Only in 1958 - when the NPS had been 'taken over' by more progressive - dark-colored deputies of whom some had been studying in the Netherlands - Suriname's dependent position started to become an issue in party and government discussions. From that year the NPS developed a policy towards the Netherlands which can be described best as national. In government and parliament NPS-ers explored the extreme borders of autonomy; however, they never really dared to defy the **Statuut** in operation.

This attitude slightly altered in the beginning of the 1960's, when the Surinamese nationalists started to spread their wings more pointedly. In 1961, the **Nationale Beweging Suriname** (NBS-Surinamese National Movement) - closely

affiliated to the Surinamese section of **Wie Eegie Sanie**- changed its name into **Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek** (PNR-National Republic Party). The PNR can be described as Suriname's first political party devoted to the cause of nationalism and independence. From its program one may conclude that the PNR strongly condemned colonialism and imperialism, and that it seriously advocated a handing over of sovereignty to Suriname in the shortest term possible. Moreover, in the view of the party the gap between rich and poor in Suriname should be narrowed, foreign capital be kept out and efforts be united to improve the creation of one people and one nation. This last ideal was well expressed in Robin Raveles' **Wan Bon** (One tree), a poem that by now has become a kind of substitute national anthem:

One tree
so many leaves
one tree

One river
so many creeks
all flow to one sea

One head
so many thoughts
thoughts including one good one

One god
so many ways to worship him
but one father

One Suriname
so many kinds of hair
so many colors of skin
so many languages
one people¹⁵

Advantageous to the PNR was that it consisted of a small, close and disciplined group of youngsters offering a philosophy attractive to people with will-power, ideals and ambition. The PNR's incontestable leader was Eddy Bruma, a lawyer who had been the architect of **Wie Eegie Sanie** and whose range of ideas was inspired by such diverging ideologies as national-socialism, marxism-leninism and negritude. His opinions appealed especially to the age-category on the edge of becoming entitled to vote and to those who had been disappointed by the maneuver of the established parties. Since the PNR severely

rejected ethnicity as a major basis of political organization, people who subscribed to this principle were in fact automatically drawn into the arms of nationalism.

Generally speaking, people backing nationalism in Suriname usually were relatively well-educated, showed a keen interest in ideology rather than in populism, felt committed to society rather than to sheer power, and considered the promotion of Suriname to be essential in reevaluating the country's image among its own population. The building of an independent republic was regarded the ultimate duty of every Surinamer. PNR-supporters therefore abhorred the emigration of Surinamers to the Netherlands. Those who left their home country with the purpose of never going back again were considered traitors exposing themselves to the mercy of the colonial oppressor.¹⁶

The cultivation of a persistent loyalty to Suriname not only resisted Dutch neo-colonialism, but also meant a breach with longstanding political traditions. The NPS - courting about the same electorate as the PNR - realized this and adopted a policy with the object to minimize the nationalists' influence. By tradition, divide-and-rule proved to be a valuable strategy. On the one hand the Creole party followed a policy of confrontation, disqualifying PNR-members as radicals, communists and similar oversimplifications. On the other hand the NPS practiced the 'if you can't beat them join them' strategy, incorporating part of the nationalistic ideas into their own program. However, the NPS in this respect was forced to take a moderate stand since their partner in several government coalitions - the East Indian VHP - strongly opposed modifications of Dutch-Surinamese relations. Nevertheless, the political slyness of leader Jopie Pengel in particular helped NPS-members to remain victorious in competition with PNR-candidates.

For a number of reasons the PNR never enjoyed wide support. In the first place, the party materially could not offer anything attractive. Meetings of the PNR were characterized by serious speeches on high brow topics often presented in a vocabulary beyond the comprehension of workers and farmers. Festivities enlivening such gatherings - common among the established parties - were taboo in the eyes of the PNR-frontmen who regarded these as distinctive of an improper populism. Since the PNR did not obtain a government seat until 1973, it also could not profit from the benefits of patronage for the party lacked the means to distribute permits, plots of land or civil service jobs among potential supporters. Although nationalists met this handicap by openly denouncing patronage as an electoral strategy, they at the same time underestimated the advantages it produced for parties having less scruples in applying it.

Ideologically the PNR fell short in explaining its true intentions. Its nationalism was generally felt to be of a mystifying nature. Bruma distinguished an 'emotional nationalism' and a 'philosophical nationalism', the latter being a rationalization of the first. In his opinion the philosophical nationalist was supposed to 'open up' the primitive emotional nationalism and lift it to a higher stage of development through education. In this phase nationalism meant 'the ennoblement of nation and people'. Philosophical nationalism would have to turn Suriname into a nation whereupon the nation could constitute itself into an independent state.¹⁷ This philosophy, posing questions rather than answering them, did not fit into the frame of reference of the electorate. Used to traditional symbols and straightforward promises the population considered Bruma's nationalism too abstract and theoretical to be of interest. Besides, the NPS-accusation that the PNR relied on secular, if not marxist, dogmas frightened off many people. Whether this charge was true or not, in Suriname - where religion and a western type of democracy are highly valued - ideas related to communism are almost instinctively felt to be threatening and dangerous.

Furthermore, the PNR was bothered by its inability to create a multi-ethnic following. It is true that the party worked hard to supply political education to representatives of all racial groups. In this context De Kom's *Wij slaven van Suriname* served as a kind of bible. But the ethnic origin of the supporters of nationalism mainly reflected the racial background of its leaders. Contrary to its philosophy the PNR thus received the image of a Creole party, a stigma which was further enhanced by the party's preference to discuss black history and culture (see paragraph on cultural independence). As a result, the mass nationalism the PNR favoured remained limited to an elite nationalism affirming the deeply-rooted power of ethnicity in Surinamese politics.

The PNR was important though for it undoubtedly helped to pave the road for independence. It was during the first (and only) term of administration of the party that the Dutch handed over sovereignty to Suriname. But that the PNR was an 'action party' rather than a 'program party' was illustrated by the fact that following independence the nationalists' feastsdays were over. The main goal being attained, an appalling lack of coherence followed. This was chiefly caused by the absence of strategies to be used for the practical implementation of independence. This feature the PNR shared with the NPS, the VHP and the KTPI and thus made the party no longer outstanding in the defense of national interests.

In 1975, political ties with the Netherlands were formally cut off, but politicians in Suriname did not seem to have any notion of its consequences. Political and social life continued almost on the same footing and relations with

the former colonizer remained close, in economics in particular. The exodus of Surinamers to the Netherlands made the country an 'emigrants' society'.¹⁸ The military coup of 1980 brought little change in this situation. Between 1981 and 1984, two minor nationalistic parties filled the political vacuum which had come about. The **Revolutionaire Volks Partij** (RVP-Revolutionary Peoples' Party) as well as the **Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie** (PALU-Union of Progressive Farmers and Laborers) adopted a strong anti-Dutch and anti-U.S. policy, condemning neo-colonialism and favouring co-operation with other Third World regimes. RVP-members in this respect preferred closer links with Cuba, Grenada and Nicaragua, whereas the PALU invested energy in establishing stronger ties with Brazil and Venezuela.

However, both parties were even less successful than the PNR in engaging the electorate in their political aspirations. Their apparent lack of support was due to the fact that their nationalism was too radical. Efforts to modify Suriname into a peoples' republic did not make much sense to the common man. He had never asked for such drastic reforms, with the result that he did not feel involved in their attempted implementation. More than PNR-spokesmen, RVP- and PALU-representatives expressed themselves in academic phrases which were considered awkward and distant by most Surinamers. In the beginning of their reign the Surinamese government developed a doctrine called **Surinamisme**, but since politicians failed to make clear what this concept was really about it disappeared as suddenly as it had been introduced. The same fate befell other 'revolutionary' theories and abstractions that, in the eyes of the electorate, had little relation with political or socio-economic reality. From time to time 'revolutionary' activities even contradicted the goals of the 'revolution', thus leaving the impression of inconsistent if not opportunistic acting. Moreover, RVP and PALU did not speak out against violent methods used by the military in order to maintain power. Sometimes they even defended or collaborated in eliminations of political opponents. Needless to say, this behaviour contributed to a ruthless image considered horrifying by the majority of the population.¹⁹

The political power of the Netherlands in the 1980s still proved to be immense. The Hague had responded to the systematic human rights violations in Suriname by suspending the development co-operation in 1982. A resumption of the co-operation was promised on the condition that democracy would be restored. This political pressure - in military and nationalistic circles regarded as blackmail - eventually was successful. In 1987, a semi-presidential system was introduced and following elections the established political parties regained their seats in parliament. The parliamentary system had been the object of zealous protest from the side of the military, RVP and PALU. They had openly detested

it as a set of Dutch rules once uncritically transplanted from the mother country to the colony and in that respect a non-Surinamese element. Society, however, judged otherwise. Parliamentary democracy, in their view, was a dignified institution being the end-product of constitutional developments that had started in the 17th century.

The resistance of RVP and PALU against the continuing Dutch influence in Suriname did not produce any lasting effect. The nationalism they tried to generate met with indifference, disinterest and rejection. This was small wonder since its foundations were weak, its presentation alien and its advocates associated with arms and uniforms. The 1987 elections and its aftermath clearly demonstrated the victory of ethnicity in Surinamese politics. Following a seven year interlude, the NPS, VHP and KTPI control the country's administration again. Two things have changed in the past 15 years though. The military has shown that Suriname no longer is the 'Switzerland of Latin America'. Too many times the myth of the peaceful oasis has been disturbed to let this conviction be unaffected. Secondly, the Hindustani segment of society has emancipated rapidly in the post-independence era. Helped by a relatively high birth-rate, this ethnic group has taken the lead now economically as well as politically at the expense of the Creoles.

Nevertheless, with respect to Dutch-Surinamese relations these developments are not of great importance. The attitude of the three major parties, being national rather than nationalistic, indicates that resistance against The Hague will not exceed the limits of modest rhetoric and civil decency. As long as the country's de jure independence will be respected by the Netherlands, it is not likely that Suriname's de facto dependence will be an issue. After all, economic interests are too big to dare diplomatic clashes very often.

Cultural Independence:
'You Can Hide Your Grandmother,
But You Cannot Prevent Her From Coughing'

Culture can be defined as the ways of expression meant to impart feelings and/or thoughts about oneself and/or environment. Naturally these ways are manifold and basic to a great number of disciplines. Under material culture one can list pottery, furniture, tools, jewelry and clothes. To spiritual culture belong music, art, language, literature, theater and dance. In order to avoid a too detailed examination of cultural developments in Suriname, I will restrict myself to a review of two disciplines: language and literature. The reason I select exactly these two cultural phenomena is that both disciplines fit best into the resistance

and rebellion concept of this essay. They can be commented upon rather thoroughly since in Suriname they are closely connected with politics, and lately are the object of significant changes.

Writing about Surinamese literature is venturing into a hornet's nest. Whatever direction one takes one will be clouded by stinging definition-problems. The main difficulty seems to be the specification of the words 'Surinamese literature'. Does the term include literature published on Suriname and Surinamers (a subject criterion); should it be interpreted as literature written and published in Suriname (a geographical criterion); is it identical to literature published in one of the Surinamese languages (a linguistic criterion); could it be literature addressing a Surinamese audience (a public criterion); does it refer to literature written from a Surinamese point of view (a position criterion) or must one regard it as literature produced by people of Surinamese descent (a nationalist criterion)? Since the topic of this study is to outline Suriname's quest for independence I choose to take the last definition as a premise.²⁰

A second problem - related to the first one - is how to identify a Surinamer. In discussing this issue one can apply the nationalist, linguistic and geographical criteria of the above section once again. Let us, however, examine all criteria possible. Does the term Surinamer refer strictly to nationality? If so, it excludes approximately one third of the country's population possessing Dutch or American citizenship. Is a Surinamer somebody making use of one of the Surinamese languages? Accepting this interpretation would mean that 'Surinamers' communicating in English or Spanish should be considered foreigners. Another possibility: is a Surinamer somebody born in and living in Suriname? Classifying people in this way would lead to the neglect of especially the younger generation of 'Surinamers' brought up and residing abroad. Finally, can a person be called a Surinamer when one of his parents or both of them are to be known as such? Although an affirmative answer to this question actually removes the problem of the preceding generation, this standard of judgment is probably the most defensible one. It defines a Surinamer in a rather wide sense, but at the same time prevents the unjust exclusion of a great number of people feeling themselves to belong to Suriname.

A third problem - less bothersome than the first two - touches upon the term 'literature'. In this context it seems to be important to take note of the following considerations. In the first place one should distinguish two types of literature: oral and written literature. Given the existence of an abundance of oral literature in Suriname it would be unfair to pay attention to written literature only. This is especially the case since in oral literature many critical statements are disguised, hidden and obfuscated. In the second place one may ask whether all kinds of literature must be taken into account in an essay centered on

independence. The answer is yes. If somebody wants to make a point of this topic he may do so via poetry, prose, essay, drama, historical analysis etc. All should therefore be taken seriously for review.

In Amerindian and Maroon communities oral literature has always been a popular phenomenon. Of the Amerindian oral literature not many studies are available. From those existing it appears that much of their literature has been lost, since this ethnic group has become smaller and highly acculturated to a western style of living. The Amerindian literature in fact consists of three main genres: the myth, the legend and the saga. As far as myths are concerned they usually deal with astral themes and motives connected with the creation of the world and the destruction of it through a flood.

From a political point of view, Amerindian legends and sagas are of greater interest. They often deal with memories of a golden age marked by harmony and the perfect cohabitation of man and nature. According to tradition, at a certain moment quarrels and dissension set in, broke up this concord and let man and nature disintegrate into factions and parties.

It is a tempting thought to situate this idealized epoch in pre-Columbian times. However, one should be careful not to jump to conclusions. The Amerindian sagas may reflect an historical reality, but they simultaneously contain a lot of wishful thinking. In that respect they bear features of what we now categorize as escape literature. Nevertheless, not necessarily referring to any concrete past, they can be interpreted as a form of protest. But whether the object of this protest is to be identified as colonialism or oppression will probably never be altogether clear.²¹

Handing down myths, legends and sagas traditionally is less well developed among the Surinamese Maroons. Unlike the Amerindians their literature comprises folktales, fables, folk-songs, *odos* and historical tales. A very famous figure acting in Maroon (and Creole) folklore and fables is **Anansi**, the trickster-spider uniting villainy and heroism to have his way. **Anansi** - of African descent and in the wake of slavery migrated to the Caribbean - is for all cunning. Notwithstanding the fact that he is punished frequently for his greed, impertinence and laziness, nothing can defeat him since he always manages to outwit his superiors. Through the ages, the adventures of **Anansi** have symbolized Caribbean societies with their good and bad characteristics. On the plantations, slaves used to tell such tales to caricature, ridicule and criticize themselves and their environment. In this way these tales have functioned as instruments of protest and resistance and have contributed to the creation of a common cultural identity. The **Anansi** stories are still being told. Although their outward features

are somewhat modernized, their intrigue and meaning have basically remained the same.

Odos or proverbs often summarize a fable in one or two sentences. Usually these phrases express conventional wisdom and comment upon abuses in society. A great number of them are strongly related to pre-emancipation times.

With respect to folk-songs there are many different forms and styles of which the **doe** should be mentioned here because of its display of social criticism and its manifestation of spiritual independence. In short a **doe** can be characterized as a song and dance drama with satirical intentions.

Finally, historical tales are sources of socio-political obstinacy as well. They unfold the glories and tragedies of the Maroons and their indefatigable struggle for freedom.²²

Prior to the middle of the 19th century, Suriname had been the focal-point of literary writers too. However, these were foreigners, very often visitors, planters and governors of Dutch origin. Their works reflected a diversity of genres, amongst them travel journals, occasional poetry, satire, pastoral verse, pamphlets and historical studies. Only a few of these writers took an abolitionist or otherwise progressive stand.

The first literary works which can be typified as Surinamese are those of Johannes King, a Maroon missionary who between 1862 and 1894 kept a diary which in fact contained a number of historical, religious, medical and visionary works. King elaborated on oral traditions and made use of **Sranan Tongo**, at that moment Suriname's colloquial language frowned upon by the colonial elite. In his books, King dwells extensively on themes like slavery, marronage and emancipation, and describes in detail his experiences with - what he regarded as - a people living in material and, above all, spiritual poverty.²³

In 1926 Albert Helman and in 1934 Anton de Kom published **Zuid-Zuid-West** and **Wij slaven van Suriname** respectively. Both books were written in Dutch, bore an autobiographical character and expressed a highly critical view of developments in Suriname. Helman's anger of the damage done to Suriname by the Dutch was wrapped in emotional, sometimes melodramatic words. Addressing the 'sunday-decent merchants' who in his opinion considered Suriname only as an entry on their yearly budget, he exclaimed in the epilogue of **Zuid-Zuid-West**:

Shall one tell you the truth about this country and about its poor children, when he does not possess the love that makes eyes to see? Without your love, without the love which is your duty - for all colonial property is voluntarily undertaking a duty - salvation will never be possible. For centuries thou art thieves, people say with permission. But be at least loving thieves and no villains. If you only knew, how beautiful this country is, how intimate life is there...²⁴

Helman's anti-colonialism was strongly linked with his personality and not rooted in any specific doctrine. In later years Helman in every respect remained an individualist with a not too well set antenna for politics. His elite education, and his headstrong and impatient character surely had to do with that. This aloofness - despite an amazing number of activities until today - undoubtedly contributed to the fact that **Zuid-Zuid-West** never received the wide acclaim **Wij slaven van Suriname** acquired after World War II. Whereas Helman was considered a loner and solo performer, De Kom's undisputed engagement made him a lively example for those willing to practice similar ideals. Moreover, his expulsion from Suriname and his premature death in a German concentration camp in 1945 supplied him the aureole of a martyr sacrificing his life for the good cause. Naturally this image appealed to an audience in search of ancestors of a blameless nationalistic stature. Anyhow, at the time of publication of their works Helman and De Kom represented a nationalism rather unique in Suriname and unsustained by any mass organization.

The little attention nationalism received was principally due to the Surinamese educational system. In fact this was an exact copy of the Dutch educational system with an emphasis on Christian principles, Dutch language and European standards. The colonial authorities expected teachers to obey their instructions conscientiously. Following 1877 - when a compulsory education law was introduced - one of their aims was the eradication of **Sranan Tongo**, originally the contact language between masters and slaves in Suriname but by and by the entire country's colloquial language. In the eyes of the government, speaking and thinking in **Sranan Tongo** prevented a good command of the Dutch language and thus obstructed the upward mobility of the population since higher jobs required a perfect understanding of Dutch language and culture.

Dutch being regarded as a prerequisite for social acceptance and esteem consequently meant a degradation of **Sranan Tongo**. Suriname's lingua franca in fact became 'a despised language, an obvious mark of low social status and lack of proper schooling'.²⁵ Under the colonial regime even anything connected with Creole life appeared in a bad light. In reaction to this policy a kind of

cultural schizophrenia started to take possession of the Creole part of the population. Officially - in politics in particular - they did their best to adjust to what seemed right in the eyes of their superiors. This meant that they spoke Dutch, were members of a protestant church and forced their children to go to school to reap the benefits of western civilization. In their private life they continued to communicate in **Sranan Tongo**, took part in ceremonies deemed heathen by the elite and covertly tried to preserve their ancestors' legacy. The sum of these two life-styles produced a Creole identity marked by disorientation and instability, apt to practice double standards but unfit for the cultivation of self-confidence.

Inspired by the works of King, Helman and De Kom in particular, the teacher J.G.A. Koenders started a one-man campaign against the disastrous effects of the government's educational policy. Between 1946 and 1956, he published a monthly paper called **Foetoe-boi** (Servant) which he used to attack Dutch domination over language and culture in Suriname. In order to offer a decisive counter-weight for this oppression Koenders promoted the revaluation of **Sranan Tongo**. Furthermore he provided information on politics and culture hoping to combat intimidation and ignorance which had victimized his countrymen for nearly one century. In his view Creoles had to find their own identity, an identity not inferior to that of the Dutch and too powerful to be extinguished. Regularly Koenders used a **Sranan** proverb to illustrate the undeniable presence of Creole culture: **Yu kan kibri granmama, ma yu no kan tapu kosokoso** (You can hide your grandmother, but you cannot prevent her from coughing).²⁶

Starting with Koenders one can speak of a movement propagating the necessity of cultural nationalism in Suriname. This initiative before had been backed by private persons only; now forces united in order to achieve real improvements. Frontman of the nationalistic movement was Eddy Bruma, who as a student of law had founded **Wie Eegie Sarne** in 1950 in Amsterdam. In the spirit of Koenders **Wie Eegie Sanie** - since the mid-1950s also active in Suriname - promoted the use of **Sranan Tongo** and the strengthening of Creole culture. People were incited to break with the normative colonial standards, go back to their roots and develop a pride in themselves. In the philosophy of Bruma, Surinamers were mature and respectable human beings, not because they resembled their oppressors but because they had a culture of their own, a culture too much neglected in the past.

Bruma believed that a 'cultural revolution' would have to precede economic and political independence. Without a careful psychological preparation a handing over of sovereignty to Suriname would be useless. As part of this preparation Bruma proposed **Sranan Tongo** to become Suriname's national

language. Since it was the only Surinamese language mastered by the majority of the population, and in his opinion the sole language created in Suriname, he felt it was the proper medium to replace Dutch. With this in mind Bruma and other members of **Wie Eegie Sanie** wrote poetry, prose and drama in **Sranan Tongo**. Also political and cultural debates were held in that language. Themes discussed at those meetings were mainly derived from pre-emancipation history. Slavery, slave-trade and marronage in particular drew attention and were widely commented upon. Nationalists thought about anti-colonialism in terms of an historical continuum. They felt the struggle for freedom in the 17th and 18th century by Maroon leaders like Baron, Boni and Joli Coeur to be a prefiguration of the anti-colonial struggle of De Kom two centuries later and of their own resistance against Dutch rule at that very moment. The heroism and romanticism connected with marronage and the indomitability of De Kom became important sources of inspiration and vital points of reference in the nationalistic ideology.

However, the multi-racial approach Bruma favored did not work. Since **Sranan Tongo** and Creole culture received a disproportionate attention, representatives of the non-Creole groups did not feel attracted to **Wie Eegie Sanie**. Although a fervent nationalist like Raveles stated, 'I am a Negro but I am a Surinamer first',²⁷ Hindustani and Javanese in particular associated nationalism with a Surinamese version of *négritude*. They admitted the usefulness of **Sranan Tongo** in daily life, but felt less comfortable with the thought that this 'slave language' would be proclaimed the official language in the near future. In their view the Dutch language would fulfill this function much better since it provided a homogeneity acceptable to everybody.

Hindustani and Javanese leaders also objected to the strong anti-Dutch sentiments aroused by nationalists. They did not agree to this *bakra-fobia*, especially since they held the opinion that it was better if the Dutch stayed in Suriname. Only under their protection, they argued, Hindustani and Javanese would be able to emancipate and become as a group the equal of the Creoles.

More complicated was the ideology of **Wie Eegie Sanie**. It was clear that it was directed at the stimulation of non-European behaviour and that it denounced the imitation of western habits by Surinamers. Nevertheless, many people were puzzled by the real aims of the movement. In their opinion there existed a lack of solid principles unsuccessfully covered by rhetoric like that of Raveles:

I want to be a hammer
 battering
 conservatism
 and colonialism
 in the name of progress
 and nationalism²⁸

It was, however, definitely in the climate created by **Wie Eegie Sanie** that in 1957 Trefossa published **Trotji**, the first printed collection of poems in **Sranan Tongo** and generally regarded as the acceptance of **Sranan Tongo** as a full language. Trefossa would serve as an outstanding example for poets like Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, Robin Raveles, Corly Verlooghen, Michael Slory, Shrinivasi and Edgar Cairo. All these authors in their own way would exhibit their commitment to Suriname and support attempts to get rid of a-national positions.

Surinamese literature in the 1960s was as characterized by optimism. There was a belief in change, unity and the power of words. Future prospects looked good and people were convinced that things would go better. Leo Ferrier's novel **Atman** flawlessly demonstrates the trust in an emerging national state personified by the friendship between a Creole, a Hindustani and a Javanese. Educated in the belief that the Netherlands is the standard of all things the three friends search for an identity of their own. Gradually they find out that assimilation - not so much biologically as spiritually - presents the way to the harmonious evolution of Suriname. This mental turnabout in Ferrier's opinion chiefly constitutes a metaphysical experience. In one of the key passages of his classic he lets an old Hindustani make the following recommendation:

'Search for love in all people. You will find it, for all people are and belong to that big One, which is. Be aware of the mortality of your body, which at the one moment is black and at the other light, your hair which can be curly but which can also lay down sleek. Your body living in poverty, which knows wealth and makes you look similar to all those who are inside you. Those who have to - become one inside you.'²⁹

From the end of the 1960s this literary positivism started to wane. Social unrest was spreading, unemployment growing and corruption becoming a routine part of subsequent administrations. In their works writers traded idealism for realism since they realized that many faults in society had a structural origin. In this respect ethnicity was regarded as a main obstacle to progress. The poet Shrinivasi wrote a poem thematically comparable to Raveles' **Wan Bon**, but in tone almost its opposite.

I would like to bind you
 to one people
 prevent it from remaining a fairy-tale
 for in speech we are Surinamers
 but in deed still negro,
 hindustani, javanese or chinese

could I change your skin
 cure your heart
 through one perfect prayer
 the such-and-such request

do not walk blindly through this land
 play with children of different blood
 speak the languages of all our people
 like you are eating the menu of the world

I would like to bind you
 to one people
 prevent it from remaining a fairy-tale³⁰

In criticizing ethnicity as well as poverty, corruption and strangling traditions one finds the same atmosphere of dejection in Bea Vianen's classic novel *Strafhok* (Penalty Box).

Around 1975, a second wave of nationalism flooded literature singing the praises of independence. However, its duration was short and soon made room for a literature of gloominess and despair. Migration started to become a prominent theme, especially in poetry.

A new opportunity to break with the past and make a clean sweep occurred in 1980, when the National Army staged a coup d'état. Bruma, the godfather of nationalism, formed the first cabinet following the military take-over, selecting Raveles as Minister of Culture. In the beginning writers ventilated a cautious optimism concerning the new order, but when censorship was introduced in July 1981 and five journalists were executed in cold blood in December 1982 enthusiasm for what was known by then as 'the revolution' was over. By way of reaction the unsteady literary front turned to publications with a predominantly introspective slant. Writers re-examined their identity as Surinamers, thinking over the old concepts of decolonization, liberation, and independence, and the function of art and literature.

Two other developments have recently changed the face of Surinamese literature. Responding to the general acceptance of *Sranan Tongo*, in the 1970s authors started to publish in *Sarnami* (Hindustani) and Surinamese-Javanese. Usually they combined this activity with a thorough exploration of Hindustani and Javanese history and culture. On the one hand these developments can be interpreted as additions to the already emancipated Creole culture. From the point of view of independence they might thus be welcomed as a diversification and enrichment of the Surinamese national culture. However, since most of the *Sarnami* and Surinamese-Javanese literature is of a conservative nature and meant to keep up cultural traditions, it seems justified to understand this literature principally as a counter-weight to Creole culture. Works published in both languages thus cross national interests in favour of group interests and contribute to a further segmentation of society.³¹

Secondly, many Surinamese writers have chosen to reside in the Netherlands rather than in Suriname. Obviously this is primarily a matter of intellectual climate. In the Netherlands more favourable conditions exist for authors as far as publishers, distributors and reading public are concerned. Intellectually they dispose of a better soundboard thanks to influential mass media and the absence of demotivating regulations like censorship. On the other hand a Surinamese writer working in the Netherlands is troubled by feelings of disunity and alienation, and has to make considerable concessions. To give one example: he is almost forced to publish in Dutch since his potential audience is most familiar with that language. In penetrating the heart of this ambivalence the following provocative statement of Astrid Roemer may be revealing:

To Suriname I am married, The Netherlands are my lover, I have a homosexual relationship with Africa and I tend to be adulterous towards all other countries.³²

Summarizing one can state that the Surinamese language and literature have undergone important transformations since World War II. The emancipation of *Sranan Tongo* in the 1950s and 1960s was a clear expression of a growing sense of nationalism. In many works writers explicitly posed questions regarding the identity of the Surinamese people and favoured the development of a nation state. Compared to the situation prior to 1970 eurocentrism as a theme has completely disappeared in Surinamese literature.

But although this points at a progressive stand towards independence, there are a few circumstances demonstrating that the colonial past still plays a predominant role. In the first place this can be derived from the choice of language. To a large extent literary works are still written in Dutch, Suriname's official language and as such the ex-colonizer's means of communication. Apart from a number of practical reasons this is mainly due to the reluctant embrace still keeping Suriname and the Netherlands together. In the second place one has to take into consideration the emergence of **Sarnami** and Surinamese-Javanese and the simultaneous emergence of history and culture connected with both languages. These developments should be perceived chiefly as efforts to strengthen group identity and to catch-up with the Creoles. Ethnicity not only has a firm foothold in Surinamese politics but in Surinamese culture as well.³³

Conclusion

Following 1945, ethnicity still controlled politics and culture in Suriname. This supremacy not only determined the country's domestic government but also influenced the process of decolonization in which it was involved. A consequence of these racial politics was that Surinamese nationalism remained immature. Due to a persistent extraparliamentary opposition some results were shown but generally nationalism suffered from an appalling lack of support. The established political parties in particular were to blame for this. In fact they deliberately prevented the **Wan Bon** ideal to come off since they viewed it incompatible with the interests of their respective groups. To them divide-and-rule served as the best strategy in gaining and maintaining political power.

Prior to 1980, the Surinamese government refused to foster political and cultural independence. In fact ministers as well as civil servants showed a consistent neglect for ideological issues like these. After the military take-over the government attempted to impose nationalism by force, but this strategy failed to have any impact. At the present moment the situation is almost identical to the political climate before the coup d'état. The government seems to be occupied too much by other problems to arrive at a sound nationalistic policy.

Yet, the introduction of such a policy is necessary. As long as political leaders are not willing to seriously promote nationalism it is to be expected that **Mama Sranan** will continue to be a dependency of **Bakrakondre**. If the established parties refrain from making efforts to transform the mentality of their supporters, neo-colonialism will remain the determinant of Suriname's future. Or

to put it more quaintly: everybody seems to hear grandmother coughing but still nobody is willing to help her out of the closet.

NOTES

1. Dobru 1969:55-56; Dobru is Raveles' literary pseudonym.
2. Meel 1990.
3. Kloos 1975:23.
4. Buve 1975; Hira 1982:29-47; Kloos 1971:5, 1975:20-24; Whitehead 1988:141, 167, 181, 187.
5. The most revealing sources on this topic are provided by Van der Meiden (1986).
6. See De Beet and Price 1982; Hoogbergen 1978, 1984 and 1985; Price 1976 and 1983a.
7. Tinker 1974; Meel 1985:130-132.
8. Breman 1976:249.
9. Heilbron 1988:64-65; Jap A Joe 1988:49-50.
10. These developments are described well in Dew 1978:32-39 and Van Lier 1977:191-210.
11. Hira 1982:296-316; De Kom 1981; Van Lier 1977:278-282; Oostindie 1986:66-76; Van Wijnen, 1989.
12. Dew 1978:49-102.

13. Voorhoeve and Van Renselaar 1962:214.
14. Oostindie 1986:77-99.
15. Bruma 1960; Dobru 1969:73-76, 1982:7. An excellent introduction to Raveles' political and literary activities is Van Kempen 1988.
16. Jansen van Galen 1975; Oostindie 1988:69; Van Westerloo 1975.
17. Bruma 1960:8-11, 24.
16. Breman 1976:249.
19. Menke 1988:24-25, 27; Surinamese nationalism in general is discussed by Boedhoe (1983).
20. See also Van Kempen 1987:23-30.
21. Helman 1977:82-115; Koelewijn and Riviere 1987.
22. Helman 1977:82-115; Price 1983b; Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975; 15-115; Lichtveld and Voorhoeve 1980:287-317.
23. King 1973; Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975:116-133; Lichtveld and Voorhoeve 1980:99-129, 308-317.
24. Helman 1926:117-118.
25. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975:vii.
26. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975:10-12, 135-163.
27. Dobru 1982:23.
28. Dobru 1982:10.
29. Ferrier 1968:172.
30. Shrinivasi 1974:64.
31. Surveys of post-war developments in Surinamese literature are provided by Pos 1977, Cairo 1984 and Van Kempen 1987.

32. Roemer 1982:37.
33. Van Lier 1982: 25; Van Kempen 1987:63; Chin and Buddingh 1987:158-165.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISSONANCE IN DISCOURSE; THE POLITICS OF AFRO-SURINAMESE CULTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Afro-American culture - in a Suriname-based variety - has reached the Netherlands only recently. The seventies witnessed an influx of migrants from Suriname, a former colony that obtained its political independence in 1975. Fear of the new republic's future and rising unemployment made 10 percent of the entire population flee before this date (Cross and Entzinger 1988, 13), and many have followed since. The refugees no longer were recruited from middle-class or elite groups only; a sizeable proportion were lower-class, semi- or unskilled, a section of the population that had been the proverbial mainstay of 'traditional', 'folk' or *winti* culture. In The Netherlands, government policy aimed at integration tried to forestall a concentration of migrant groups in ghettos. Nevertheless, the Suriname 'black' or Creole population flocked to the big cities, primarily Amsterdam. There, a sizeable number settled in Bijlmermeer (De Klerk and Van Amersfoort 1988, 158-159), a newly-built neighborhood which, like New York's Harlem, had been designed for prosperous autochtons. Soon, television shows boasted recordings of exotic rituals in a rather humdrum setting; showing respectable black gentlemen changing white shirts and neckties for costumes traditionally associated with witchdoctors back in the bush. Yet, they seemed perfectly serious about it. The audience was puzzled but intrigued.

A Suriname Creole Subculture

In the large blocks of apartment buildings that dominate the Bijlmermeer, high density levels of a Suriname Creole population have created conditions favorable to the preservation of subcultural life-styles. Apart from the many well-documented characteristics of lower-class culture the new residents show a marked attachment to an array of traditional institutions: kinship and both orthodox and popular religious allegiances.

The language, *Sranan Tongo*, is the first element to shield group life from unwelcome intrusions, and so is the concept of time. Informality, availability to personal contacts and chance meetings are of great value to all Surinamese but more decisively so to those participating in this subculture. The distaste for scheduled programs, written notices, fixed dates and appointments is immense and forms part of an attitude that balks at all restraints imposed by social superiors. Elusiveness about names, dates, addresses and plans is part of the subcultural code. Only very personal contact will guarantee that one has got reliable information. This preoccupation with contacts in a personal network goes far to explain that endeavors to move on into wider circles are rarely successful.

Lack of participation in the institutions of the wider society, a trait which Lewis (1969, 47-59) has marked out as a first characteristic of a subculture, would hold for a great number of the Bijlmermeer Creoles. Nevertheless, social isolation is only partial. Many have established links with social services, health care agencies and educational facilities, but their long-term life orientations are centered around kin group and network, home country and social success as defined in these circles. Often, it is hard to tell who do and who do not belong to the subculture. Many hover near the borderline, now reaching outwards for contacts, and then taking refuge behind its screens when the need arises. The hard core seems to be small, not more than a fragment of the total Surinamese population in Bijlmermeer. This fragment is conspicuous, though, and makes itself visible by its ethnic activity.

There is one notable exception to the rule of non-involvement: participation in the church of the Moravian Brethren or E.B.G. (*Evangelische Broedergemeente* or *Herrnhutters*). This congregation has a firm footing among common people, and a great majority of the heads of households, male or female, are quite outspoken as to their allegiance. In the Netherlands, many Roman Catholics among the Creoles will participate in activities of the Moravian church because of its ethnic, Surinamese character. This does not imply that there are many active church-goers in the Bijlmermeer subculture, but in private rituals Christian and, specifically, Moravian elements loom large, as we will see below.

Although membership in a subculture is, by definition, partly involuntary, there is, at the same time, an element of choice involved. Some fall back into supportive networks when they find successful integration beyond reach. For others, particularly the elderly people who never migrated to make a new start, the entertaining of networks is a worthy aim in life. They re-create a whole ethnic entourage of food, clothing, music, parties, and rituals which tends to enhance their community position. As has been argued elsewhere (Van Wetering 1987), subcultural activities are like markets where self-created stocks in social capital are traded, and where those who rank lower in the social hierarchy perform services which are of use to the upwardly mobile. The elaboration of 'traditional' culture, the investments in time, money and energy will pay off in due time, as these tend to create an ethnic focus.

As Barth (1969, 36) has pointed out, overt ethnicity and boundary maintenance will not lose their significance as long as group members are dependent for security on the voluntary and spontaneous support of their own community. This would undoubtedly hold for the Surinamese migrants who shelter many relatives and other guests who would like to stay in the country but lack a proper passport. The politics of ethnicity are reinforced by economic considerations. The involvement in lucrative but illegal activities by many of the younger members of the Creole group contributes to the retreat into traditional and quasi-traditional forms of religion and kinship. Unable to realize hopes of financial betterment in accepted ways, many of the chronically unemployed have turned to opportunities opened up, for instance, by the rapidly expanding traffic in drugs (Buiks 1983). This has had some unexpected consequences. Ethnic solidarity requires the in-group to put up stoically with a rise in the level of violence and a concomitant weakening of norms that used to regulate group life in the home country. To cope with these threats all conventional forces - kinship, religion and 'culture' in its full variety - are called upon to bolster the minimum requirements of social order. Some of the black money is laundered by sponsoring 'traditional' rituals, which, proverbially, both legitimize action and unify the group (Van Wetering 1988).

Apart from these specifics, there are some general factors. For quite some time, the Creole group has been affected by processes of erosion and dispersal by both horizontal and vertical mobility. This is not a recent development; labor migration has been characteristic of the Caribbean for a long time. The Creoles seem to have reacted by mustering all forces available to counteract tendencies to fission: by fostering ties of kinship, religion and other forms of 'traditional' culture. Unlike ethnic politics on a macro-level (Dew 1978), the informal, cultural aspects have not been the object of systematic study in Suriname. For a model we should look elsewhere.

In a superb and stimulating monograph on Sierra Leone Creoles, Cohen (1981) has argued that an array of cultural means are expedient to preserve and guarantee to the group its elite status, and that a challenge to this status will evoke an intensification of the ethnic response. The Creoles take great pains to make the group stick together and to overcome status differences within their ranks. The secrecy which shrouds all ethnic activity is attributed by Cohen to a need for mystification; any elite will uphold a universalistic ideology, but depends on particularistic forms of organization.

This type of analysis would also hold promise for Surinamese Creole culture. Suriname Creoles, though not an elite group in a proper sense, were the first to fill the positions left by the colonial rulers in the home country. The initial headstart has been challenged, primarily by Asian or East Indian immigrants, and the Creoles seem to have confronted the facts of ethnic rivalry and internal rifts in ways similar to those of their Sierra Leone namesakes. Also, the element of secrecy surrounding all ethnic activity is very striking. In their new surroundings, the Netherlands, the tradition seems to be perpetuated, and, as will be argued below, there is little incentive to let these strategies fall into disuse.

So far, all forces seem to favor ethnicity. In Cohen's argument, all relevant factors work in one direction: the underpinning of group interest. Though the heuristic value of this approach is basic to anthropology and can hardly be overestimated, there also is scope for some doubts. Must we assume that the upkeep of an elite status is the dominant moving factor here, that this is a necessary condition? In fact, a more plain hypothesis could be that ethnic rivalry is a sufficient cause. Secrecy as a quality of ethnic politics might also be related to another rather simple fact: the inherent difficulties in maintaining the unity and solidarity of the group.

In the case of the Suriname Creoles, the demands made on both solidarity and supportive ideologies are great. Given the fact that there is not one specific institution or idea system that unites all group members, a wide array of cultural means are employed to this end. The bridging of the diversity in strategies and ideas is a gigantic task which requires great gifts of coordination and diplomacy. In the Netherlands, this seems to be no less true than in the home country. In a way, Suriname Creole ethnicity hardly seems to amount to more than a listing of partial interests and a discreet silence over all that might lead to disruption. Secrecy, singled out by Cohen as the key to Creole culture, is overdetermined, apparently. Apart from the contradiction implicit in the position of the group - its aspirations to national leadership and a concomitant rallying of the group on the one hand, and the need to disguise such strivings behind an ideology of common interests on the other - there is a difficulty in uniting the divergencies in outlook and interests of group members.

These difficulties show most clearly in Bijlmermeer controversies over *winti*. On the one hand, there is a marked endeavor to stress the religious element in ethnic identity. This is in line with a general tendency in the United States and the Caribbean to bring the Afro-American experience into the limelight and to search for 'roots'. In Suriname, the Creoles have been active in promoting the Creole language *Sranan Tongo* and the cultural heritage under the convenient label of *winti* (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld). This has been well in line with emancipatory strivings of the lower classes, for whom *winti* has been a most natural expression of their identity. In the Netherlands, incentives were found to continue the ethnic tradition. The organizational and intellectual difficulties inherent in effectuation of these policies are not to be underestimated, though. A lack of coordination and direction in ritual practice has been noted in Paramaribo (Brana-Shute 1979). In a way, these difficulties go far to explain that the cultural dynamic of the ethnic offensive has lost some of its impact. This, at any rate, can be observed in Bijlmermeer.

The Politics of Winti Culture in Bijlmermeer

In a way, conditions for ethnic politics have not been unfavorable in the Netherlands. The host country has been a plural society for more than a century, and politics has been involved in maintaining a balance between diverse religious and other ideological groups. Ethnic minorities were a novelty, but fitted well into an existing pattern of cultural pluralism or *verzuiling* (pillarization). Particularly after the economic recession of the seventies had set in and hard issues such as participation in the labor market had proved hard to tackle, national policies, varying from the start, gravitated towards cultural matters. Also, political parties had realized that migrant groups had come to stay and thus were part of an electorate worth winning over.

Mobilization followed traditional lines. Surinamese Creoles, grateful for socialist support for their country's political independence, massively voted for Labor. The Surinamese East Indians, hardly less numerous, had meanwhile turned to the Christian Democrats. The two largest Surinamese immigrant groups had struck alliances with the largest national parties.

The Christian Democratic coalition in particular, owing its existence and growth to the emancipatory strivings of minority groups, stressed religion as a determinant of culture. For Moslems, a minority among the Surinamese migrants but numerous among Moroccan and Turkish migrant laborers, they greeted fellow-monotheists. "Basically," Prime Minister Lubbers said at a meeting of the

Turkish Islam Federation in 1985, "We are united by a belief in one God, we ought to respect each others' persuasion and create facilities to express our identities" (N.R.C.Handelsblad 18-II-1985). In Bijlmermeer, where a sizeable congregation of Moslems, mostly Surinamse East Indians, had settled, a mosque was built. Interesting about this is the fact that the City Council of Amsterdam had allocated funds for this project, Fl.250.000 (US\$125,000) to be precise. This is more striking, as we realize that Amsterdam's municipal politics are dominated by left-wing parties, wary of ecclesiastical interference. Dutch politics are based on a principle of a strict separation of church and state. The argument put forward for this remarkable decision was brought in line with progressive views: the position of the migrants, second-class citizens and discriminated against, should be bolstered by means of their own democratically-expressed common will and choosing. If religion has been singled out as the focus of their culture, if mosques serve as a refuge and a point of reference for the unsettled, these aspects of culture deserve to be subsidized. Cultural manifestations have been accepted as worthy objects of government support, so why should an exception be made for religious expressions if these form an integral part of culture? The point was well taken by the other groups. The Hindus, for instance, adherents of a well-recognized world religion like Moslems and Christians, doubled their efforts to establish a religious centre in Bijlmermeer. Whether monotheistic or not, they have achieved this aim after many deliberations and controversies.

For the Suriname Creoles, this posed graver problems. They are mainly Christians and the E.B.G. is only one among many churches. Thus, to focus on official religion would not bring them additional advantages. Also, their main political ally, the Labor Party, had been linked to socialist agnosticism for too long to support religious causes. Nevertheless, like the other ethnic groups, they volunteered the idea that religion is not a separate segment of culture but forms an integral part of their way of life. The protagonists of this view have not been the spokesmen of the churches but of the welfare agencies. These are government-sponsored organizations that represent the migrant groups and promote their interests. Through these agencies some funds were channelled to religious organizations. 'Integration by keeping tradition alive' (**Integratie met behoud van eigen cultuur**) has become a well-known slogan.

Thus conditions on the macro-level, were not unfavorable. Nevertheless, problems arose, both of an organizational and ideological nature. In particular, this is true of *winti*. In Suriname, the law forbidding 'idolatry' had been repealed in 1971, but for many citizens of the young republic *winti* still smacked of disreputable matters. An active policy on the part of the government had brought some changes. In Paramaribo, an Institute of Culture Studies had been founded, which aimed at spreading an interest in and appreciation of Afro-

Surinamese culture. But, this is not tantamount to sponsoring religious organizations or manifestations. Nor did such measures have the effect that *winti* became respectable.

In Bijlmermeer, action was taken to lift the taboo on *winti*. The driving force was brought into play by social case workers, mostly active in youth clubs or health agencies. They advocated the view that the life of migrants from Suriname had been beset with a great number of difficulties aggravated by psychosomatic problems. The institutions for social case work had been hardly prepared to meet the new demands made on them by migrants, they argued, so special agencies or facilities should be created to deal with the new situation. Youth workers hoped to keep kids off the streets and out of mischief by assembling them in centers where they could play traditional musical instruments and so bolster their cultural identities. These types of activities fitted very well into the existing pattern, and amounted to an extension of some clubs for specific ethnic categories.

Also, action was taken to found a *winti* center, where the aspirations of the common Creole man and woman could be realized and claims of equality in religious matters would be established. In the Netherlands, rumors had it that rituals on a big scale, real *winti pré*, were organized on summer evenings in the open air. This was to copy the real thing in the home country and so had to be staged in remote areas of town. The need for rituals was obviously there, the observers noted, and in winter such things were hardly possible out of doors, they concluded, so a center was badly needed. The aim was realized indeed, but did not seem to be much of a success. Few people turned up when *winti* nights were announced: hardly any believers but mostly journalists, anthropology students and other inquisitive people.

Most initiatives were taken in the field of health care. Measures taken to break down barriers to conventional medical services were judged inadequate, so new ideas were proposed. In some cases, a reliance on traditional healers was advocated, as only those familiar with the cultural background of the patients should be able to properly diagnose the complaints. Also, only a native speaker of *Sranan Tongo* would be fully able to assess the client's needs and problems and prescribe the proper remedies. In some cases, the latter might include a trip back to the home country to perform healing rituals. Some social case workers fully agreed to sponsor some of these trips. Hospitals in the big cities have established regular relationships with ritual experts who help out in cases of emergency. On the political platform, the idea took form in the demand to take up *winti* in the national health services. However, as the bill to incorporate a

number of alternative medical systems was not passed by parliament, the project stood little chance of succeeding.

So far, all this hardly comes as a surprise. A welfare state invites its residents to such initiatives. Those who stand to benefit by these activities will avail themselves of the opportunities. A growing number of young Surinamese intellectuals wanted a job in the expanding sector of social services and succeeded. Like other social case workers, they had an interest in disseminating the idea that a large category of people was in need of help (Koot and Uniken Venema 1985). Those who used to be called backwards, idolatrous or simply, anti-social, now figured as disadvantaged or downtrodden.

In the policies of the Creole welfare organizations, however, *winti* has never been more than a minor issue. When taken up, this mainly was intended as an act of patronage to the followers. The middle class and intelligentsia mostly focused on hard issues in the fields of labor, housing and education. Moreover, they bundled their forces to counteract racism and discrimination. This is a discourse they share with an internationally-oriented public, in which migrants from the Caribbean have taken the lead for a long time. The lower classes of the Creole group will hardly take part in this; their discourse is an entirely different one. In fact, I hold that the intellectual gap between middle and lower class within the Creole group is far wider than between the middle classes of both migrants and Dutch autochtons. As stated above, I suppose that this gap and the difficulty in bridging it is at the root of much Creole ethnicity and secrecy in ethnic politics. Another consequence seems to be that *winti* adepts continue their practices much as they used to do, in relative isolation.

Ambivalence

The Creole Surinamese population of Bijlmermeer is heterogeneous and a majority, particularly those who belong to the skilled and the middle class, are highly ambivalent about *winti*. To openly profess one's allegiance to *winti* is simply "not done" among respectable Creole citizens. Although it is common knowledge that 'everyone', even those high up in the social hierarchy, will turn to a ritual expert in *afkodré* (idolatry) whenever the need arises, this is not publicly discussed. Secrecy is part of a cultural code.

Only a few Creole intellectuals who have been familiar with their cultural heritage and acknowledge their appreciation are willing to give their views and defend *kulturu* as traditional culture is occasionally referred to now, particularly

by the young - against critics from outside. This means they have to cope with a problem in translation. They have to explain in terms, derived from the 'rational' code of the dominant group, the middle class and elite. They have to find grounds for beliefs that mostly have only a symbolic meaning to themselves. So, they have recourse to arguments derived from medical materialism, the value of herbal lore, or the therapeutic value for those who lack the advantages of schooling. In a discussion with an anthropologist, they can not resist the temptation to show that they realize what *winti* or *afkodré* 'really' is about. They will tell for instance that when they were kids, they saw the offerings placed in the streets; the eggs, the drinks, the sweets put there for the demons. The elders warned them never to touch these things, on pain of a dire consequence. But of course they heeded not the wise words, tasted of the gifts, and lo, nothing happened to them. Despite the attempt made to defend the old creed, they show that they rejoice in a triumph of 'reason', a logic that altogether misses the point of view of the adepts, their forms of belief and scepticism. In this simplified discussion, there is no place for the notion that a religion can be followed with a wink. The elders may well have identified with the greedy youngsters and enjoyed their trespasses, which have a part in 'the system'. The connection with the experience of the true believer is lost.

This ambivalence often finds expression in humor. Traditional religion, preferably its practices of black magic, has a place in amateur theatre-plays, highly popular in Bijlmermeer. The director of the company writes his own script, as a rule. The plot invariably is about the sex war: two women vying for the favors of one 'macho', an unreliable ritual expert or *bonuman* who is after money; the stuff the plays are made of is taken from life. The people that come to enjoy themselves will exchange their relaxed mood for an anxious one as soon as these things happen to them. And before long, they will, as the players and the public realize. Many balance on a narrow strip between 'western rationality' and 'idolatry' or 'superstition'. Discussions about *winti* are fraught with misunderstandings, and many refrain from going into this field at all, saying that they really do not know anything about it. To an amazing extent, this is true. To the upwardly mobile among the preceding generations, *winti* was anathema. Children who grew up in well-to-do Creole families were strictly prohibited from speaking *Sranan Tongo* at home or in school. Yet, they have realized that the adults often were up to something about *winti* in secret, and now many of the new generation who grew up and live in the Netherlands are fascinated by the mysteries of home country and the past. Books about *winti* are eagerly studied, and elderly people find their memories in great demand.

Home rituals

There is only one exception to the rule of general embarrassment and this applies to the veneration of the soul, the **akra** or **jeje**. Though this is an essential part of the traditional belief system (Wooding 1973), many Creoles feel that this is not '**winti**'; it is not **hebi** (heavy), or charged with negative associations. To take care of one's soul is a sacred duty to all and its rituals are rated as **oso sani** (home rituals), a part of private life where Christian and non-Christian elements are mixed to the adepts' delight.

The carrying-over of religious practice from the public to the private sphere has given Creole religion its specific character. The move has had great advantages on an individual and a collective level. It has freed them, as Christian believers, from unwelcome control by churchly authorities, while maintaining overt allegiance and church membership. The benefits of belonging were guaranteed, whereas dependance on large-scale organizations has been greatly reduced. Also, this type of religiosity provided a link between elite, middle and lower classes. Particularly in a modern urban society with its prevalent individualism, the home, kin group and personal networks are the relevant social framework. Private rituals, performed on occasions like birthdays and crises in the life of individuals and their closest relations, often bring together kinsmen whose stations in life have got them far apart.

This has been true of Paramaribo, or the coastal society of Suriname in general, as far as I can see. It is no less true of Bijlmermeer and the Netherlands. Home rituals could easily be transferred to a new habitat and have greatly contributed to the survival of an ethnic group. Home rituals loom much larger than the large-scale rituals or **winti pré** that keep turning up in discussions.

Although the cult of the individual soul has not been neglected in **winti** studies, its implications and social relevance have been underestimated. As a rule, **winti** religion has been analysed as the cult of a kin group. This view owes much to Wooding's (1981) authoritative study of the Para Creoles. There, a co-resident group of kinsmen honors the pantheons of deities as a collective. Each deity could be expected to take possession of one of the relatives, so the community would remain sure of access to all powers. In fact, ritual interdependence has been vital to keep the group together.

In the present diaspora, it proves increasingly difficult to bring a ritual community or a kin group together. The individual migrant has a need to carry a whole pantheon along within his or her soul. Theologically speaking, this is quite feasible in Afro-Surinamese religion. In embryonic form, this has been true

in Suriname, and also in the Netherlands where it is quite 'normal' that each individual serves as a medium to more than one of the divine powers at the same time. The soul (**akra**) was thought of as containing a number of guiding spirits or gods, called **djodjo** (Wooding 1973, 125), which are identical to the gods of the pantheons. Each adept entertains some of the gods, at least three representative deities of the major pantheons. That is, each person, male or female, has a dominant **Aisa**, or earth deity, mostly regarded as female. In addition, each harbors one of the respected male deities, either African (**Kromanti**) or Amerindian (**Ingi**), and one of the less trusted lesser gods, that can not be missed in the totality of creation. In many Surinamese homes in the Netherlands, a sanctuary to the tutelary spirits is found, often in a small room.

The old religious ideal - to be in harmony with all powers inherent in the soul - has not lost its hold. Whoever has reached this state is 'strong' and impervious to attacks by black magic. Private rituals are performed with this aim in mind, and also, because it is expected that one will do well materially only when one is on good terms with the gods. The sign that one has reached this blessed state is given in dreams; when the gods manifest themselves clearly and bring lucid messages, this is proof of their favor. The interpretation of dreams is one of the most important methods of divination. This is hardly surprising in an fragmented group that can not readily gather for communal rituals. Whoever has dreams that contain messages for others in his or her network can lay a claim to a position of informal leadership.

For people with great worries this blessed state often is not within easy reach, though. Many report more nightmares than beautiful dreams. This is interpreted as a sign that demons are interfering, perhaps evil beings sent by a witch (**wisiman**). But benign deities may also assume a demonic guise, so it is often hard to tell what is the matter. It may be wise to look for expert help from someone who has a reputation as a seer (**lukuman**). This person may be the same as a ritual expert or healer (**bonuman**). Heads of households, who feel responsible for the well-being of their nearest, often read signs in their dreams that there is **notu**, a state of emergency in a supernatural sense, and that the time is ripe for ritual treatment.

Demons manifest themselves in many guises, both traditional and new types. Below, a case will be presented in which a 'new' demon is ritually deactivated. A clarifying remark is perhaps in place here. Creoles, as many other people from the non-western world, often regard demons - and gods, for that matter - as powers intruding from the outside (Stephen 1983, 23; Wooding 1984, 122,138). Social case workers, particularly those confronted with clients who attribute misfortune and disorders to such evil beings, regard complaints about

demons as a lack of psychological sophistication. "Suriname Creoles are inclined to the externalization of their problems and projection of their own aggression to others," it is said. The externalization, highly characteristic of this world-view, should not be taken at its face value, though. This 'construction of reality' probably has some advantages in a therapeutic setting where healer and patient are kinsmen or otherwise closely related. In this context, externalization is almost indispensable as a polite form. A traditional healer does not have the edge of bureaucratic or other forms of power over the patient. Treatment will be successful only if the client is willing to acknowledge the diagnosis made. So, invariably, a power or person from beyond the trusted circle is singled out for blame. In indirect ways, by obliging the client to appease the evil, it is brought home that, after all, he or she has committed an offense or neglected a duty.

Locally in Bijlmermeer, and also on a national level, efforts have been made to bring the 'modern' and 'traditional' world views together, but the results have not been impressive. On the part of the educated, there is a very real difficulty in 'translation', as has been indicated above. Moreover, their arguments, hard to follow and mostly irrelevant to the staunch believers, evoke a deep distrust in their ranks. This is a cause for their refusal to back up the attempts by welfare workers to promote the 'cause' of *winti* and 'discuss' religious matters in public. Such a discussion, of course, is basic to modern democratic decision-making. If a bureaucracy has to decide whether to subsidize traditional healing systems or not, they want to know, to put it simply, how to tell the impostors from the trustworthy ones among the *bonuman*. So the healers are invited to step out into the open and show their credentials, a move none of them is prepared to make. For the impostors, quite numerous indeed, this would plainly be unwise. But the 'real' experts have no interest in exposing themselves either. This would imply that they would risk their reputation among a potential clientele. Within the charmed circle of the subculture, suspicion is always rife that one is at peril to be exploited or 'used' by someone else. The middle classes and all who entertain relations with them, from which material gain is to be expected, are immediately placed beyond the pale and denied any claim to real supernatural power. It is the *winti* alone who are credited with granting the power of healing, never this bad and faithless human world. Mediators between the two worlds of middle class and respectable society on the one hand, and the subculture of the lower class on the other, invariably meet defeat by the loss of a following. Any person with aspirations to the position of a healer should avoid the limelight. To give lectures, talks, or interviews would immediately give rise to doubts as to one's 'real' knowledge of the sacred. This is, of course, part of lower-class power politics. The fear to lose control over their representatives, who are 'bought' by the establishment, predominates over other considerations.

When looking for a healer or ritual expert, those who belong to the Bijlmermeer subculture choose from their own ranks. They will often prefer a relative, but in case there is no suitable kinsman or -woman at hand, they will turn to the trusted persons in the neighborhood who have built a reputation of never entertaining compromising relationships with the outside world and whose powers are thus untainted.

The case which follows now supports and illustrates the general argument. Firstly, we will notice how wide the gap is between the 'discourse' of the Bijlmermeer subculture about social problems and disadvantages, and that of the social case workers entrusted with the task of promoting these clients' interests. The 'problem' singled out here for ritual treatment is that of education, a matter usually dealt with in other ways. This underpins the general idea that a preoccupation with 'the forces of the dark' is not linked to a general orientation of 'backwardness'. On the contrary, we see here how a senior woman, beyond any interest in participating in the world beyond the boundaries of the subculture, attempts to better the chances of a very young granddaughter to gain entry into this modern world by ritual means. She acts as a responsible head of a household and family, states her 'definition of the situation' in a code that is well-understood by the other members of the subculture. She enlists the help of another woman in the apartment building, who has a reputation as a healer. Worthy of note is the mixture of Christian and non-Christian beliefs, characteristic of the private religious lives of Creoles. As we will see, the ritual is not without its psychological subtleties; the idiom may be 'different' at first glance, but the problem of decoding the message of the spirit world is not hard. Also, the ritual seems not to have missed its effects. The reader may be interested to know that afterwards, little Cynthia has done rather well in school.

Confession at the "Bear's boat"

The ethnographer's presence at the ritual was a pure coincidence; as a rule outsiders are not invited to private rituals. I happened to call at Ma Milie's door; she is a member of the Creole women's club I had joined (as an older and influential woman she is often addressed and referred to as 'Ma', mother). As a club, we had been invited to a birthday party of a woman whose address I did not know. I found Ma Milie just ready to leave. Fully convinced that all Creoles want a maximum number of guests at their birthday parties I confidently said, "Well then, I join you, let us go at once." But she looked hesitantly at me and said: "I do not know the exact number of the house and I have to call on someone else first, here in the flat." I felt her reserve but said: "In fact, that is where I want

to pop in also, as I want to invite the old lady there for my birthday party." She started visibly, looked at me inquisitively and said: "Well then, come along."

In the living room a company had gathered, among whom I recognized a number of ladies, fellow-residents in the apartment-building and adepts of *winti*. The old lady I wanted to see just walked out of the kitchen into the room. I greeted her and wanted to deliver my invitation, but she stopped me and told me to sit down. One of the younger women present whom I did not know nudged another and softly asked: "What about her here, at this very moment?" Ma Milie overheard her and said: "You never know what will come out of it." By giving meaning to a coincidence, she placed my presence in a mystical perspective and the implicit criticism subsided for the moment. Ma Dina, the old lady and head of the household, took a seat next to the kitchen door and her six year-old granddaughter Cynthia sat on her lap. Someone solicitously put a rag on the floor, just to protect the floor covering. In the meantime, Ma Milie unpacked her shopping-bag that contained ritual paraphernalia; apparently she had come as a therapist. Only then did I get the reason for her reluctance to take me here, but, as a matter of fact, I was only glad that things had gone this way. She went round the circle with a small bottle, from which she dripped some fluid into each visitor's palms. "Rub it into your neck, too," she called out to me as I had not yet done so on my own accord. Perhaps she also indirectly admonished other laggards, or snobbish young relatives diffident of *winti*. This is a regular opening of any ritual. It is a libation in disguise, less conspicuous than a spilling of liquids on the soil. Also, it is a consecration of the person: the soul is carried into an atmosphere of sacredness and guiding spirits, hidden vital energies are called upon to be present. In fact, it was not the type of toilet water commonly used for the purpose, the 'florida water' sold in every Chinese shop in Suriname and Bijlmermeer. It was stronger and there was a hidden bitter smell in it. Afterwards I realized that probably the demons had been called, too. Then we were all invited to stand up and the Lord's Prayer was said. Ma Milie asked Cynthia whether she knew it by heart. She did not, she answered. "You ought to," Ma Milie said sternly, "For everyone knows it." Then Ma Milie ordered someone in the kitchen to fill a calabash with water and she started a libation on the floor, on the rag by Ma Dina's feet. She prayed to Ma Dina's soul while spilling a few drops as she spoke:

A grandmother is more than a mother; at times she will notice things that will escape even a mother. First of all I pray to God, then to her *jeje* and all spirits guiding her. The girl does not do well in school. She is cheeky and will not do as the teacher tells her. She ought to pay attention in class. Mother Earth, I sprinkle

cool water. I call upon your help, because she will come to nothing without learning things.

Then Cynthia's other grandmother, her father's mother who also lives in Bijlmermeer, was requested to come, libate and say a prayer on Cynthia's behalf. Thus Ma Milie called upon all persons present, according to age, relation and position. The young women were aunts. A man was called from the kitchen who was holding a baby there and feeding it with a bottle. He also offered his good wishes. I was invited too. Then the bag was repacked. Everything had been on display on the table, next to the drinks. A bar of chocolate was attractively sticking out of a heap of sweets. Everything which is harmful to children's teeth and health is particularly suited to feed demons. There were also cigars. All participants were strengthened with a glass of gin or whiskey.

Then we went out of doors. Again I overheard some nervous remarks among the aunts about what I should do in the company. But Ma Milie repeated: "You never know what will come out of it." We carried a plastic bag with some 5 kilo-packs of sugar, a few bottles of champagne, and a copper bucket with a red piece of cloth attached to it. We went out by the back staircase. Apparently we were to go about our business unobserved, and without having to greet and talk to all and sundry in the hall. We went by dark and wet paths through the bushes; the public gardens had been designed to appear highly 'natural' and not conventionally suburban. It was November and dark at an early hour. We arrived at the meadow along the canal that forms a pond there, and made our way to a ramshackle jetty, designed for fishermen. The young aunts had great trouble getting there on their high heels, and loudly warned each other of dog shit which we could not see in the dark anyway. They seemed to be less confident in the outcome of our ritual endeavors than the elder participants. Ma Milie went in front; sweets were thrown into the water, a pot of honey and syrup was emptied. The next-of-kin were very close to her, and for me, at the rear, the words she spoke were not audible. By the splash I heard they took some water in the bucket. Later I was asked to carry it, so I was promoted to the rank of ritual assistant for the time being.

Between the apartment buildings is an open space and a children's playground with a climbing-rack in the form of a boat. The "bear's boat" it is commonly called, after a popular t.v. program for the young. As is common knowledge among anthropologists, demons have their abode in conspicuous features of the landscape; rivers, rocks, waterfalls or high trees. In the local set-up, the bear's boat is such an object that is well-suited to be graced with meaning. There, Cynthia had to offer a libation. So she did and emptied a bottle of champagne there. And also, she had to 'speak': "I have to do my best in school, I have to obey the Lord Jesus and the teacher," she was instructed to say. And she

obliged, adding: "OK, Miss piggly-wiggly" (literally comparing her female school teacher to a cow).

Ma Milie started to pick leaves and branches from shrubs on the wayside, as we walked on past the apartment building where Cynthia had been born and where her grandmother lived. All this was pointed out to me, but we did not stop there. We went to a dark place, a tunnel under the main road. This was the spot Ma Dina had had a dream about, some time ago. They still had not done anything about it, yet it had contained a warning not to be overlooked. Now that Cynthia was in danger of being dropped back a grade to kindergarten, the others thought it wise to take ritual action, as Ma Dina had proposed to do earlier.

Ma Dina had dreamed that Cynthia had met a frightful apparition, a white demon, on this spot. It had been a *bakra*, a white Dutchman or, probably, woman. Cynthia corroborated this when we arrived there: "I have been here with two other kids, and the thing that gave me the creeps was there"; she pointed out the positions of herself and the being. Her second grandmother now took her to the water and washed her head with cold water taken from the canal. She proudly showed how wet her head was. The girl had accepted the 'definition of the situation' given by her grandmother. The 'evil', the bad experience she had allegedly gone through, was relived, or the evil she had met with in class had got a form, according to accepted standards of psychotherapy. She obviously was very proud of being the heroine of such a cosmic drama.

After this we returned home quickly and entered by the front door this time. The herbs Ma Milie had gathered were mixed with other ones and put in a copper basin. Some of the canal water was added but also florida water; the mixture smelled sweet. Hot water was added from the tap to make it comfortable to be washed with. Now that the 'evil' had been brought back to the place where it had come from, there was one thing left to be done: to strengthen and confirm good intentions for the future.

Apart from some minor innovations and additions from a new environment, nothing much seems to change in ritual practice. 'Traditional' beliefs are readily adapted to new circumstances. Creole women are great psychologists and symbolists, resourceful and circumspect in their way of tackling day-to-day problems. Little Cynthia was both admonished and bribed to behave and not to spoil her chances of success. The world of gods and demons is well-suited to express hopes and fears, and can be readily shared by different generations. By re-creating a fairy-tale world, where demons figure and mask the young pupil's own recalcitrance, the grandmother could take in the obstreperous girl.

When looked at from this angle, it seems as if nothing changes in *winti* at all. This is, as a matter of fact, far from the truth. As has been discussed above, several forces impinge on the believers. On the one hand, a process of erosion is going on; many Creoles rise in the social hierarchy and turn their backs on things of the past. Others rationalize the contents of belief beyond recognition. On the other hand, there are forces which bolster a tradition. Thus, it may seem that the more things change, the more they remain the same. This, in turn, has its repercussions on a public view of the matter, and may underpin a conviction that there is, after all, some 'unbroken cultural tradition'.

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