and black – is interested, but wants it to be settled quickly, in view of the many other projects in multicultural society; yet another part of the (mainly black) public is mistrustful, fearing that white dominance is taking over by trying to ‘whiten’ black initiatives along the procedural way.

As a consequence of these developments, much time is devoted to formal discussions and procedural questions in settings which are far removed from ‘the public’, and too little time and energy is spent on communicating with that ‘public’. The result is that the (opinion-)leaders in the process sometimes feel obliged to express firm statements, otherwise images of radicalism or conservatism are ascribed to them by others, in order to keep in touch with ‘the people’. Consequently, schisms within the movement at large, and misunderstandings between the ‘generals’ and the ‘troops’ are an immanent danger and threaten the common goals and continuation of the process.

Despite all this, the realization of the static element of the monument, i.e. a memorial statue, has come into sight. But even in respect to this, a lot of issues still need to be solved. For example, whose monument is it going to be and what should it be an expression of? Such questions, when related to the dynamic element of the monument, i.e. the institute, create double the amount of discord. Will the institute, and the processes and debates it is going to initiate and stimulate, be primarily aimed at empowering the Afro-communities in the Netherlands, or will it be aimed at society at large? What kind of history will it be ‘promoting’?

These and other related questions have to be answered or at least debated upon in an early phase, because they have already turned up today and they are fundamental to the dynamic monument. Terminology seems to reflect a clash of discourses in this respect. For example, in one discourse a deliberate choice is made to use phrases such as ‘trauma’ and ‘deteraumatization’, ‘black holocaust’, ‘reparation of history’ and ‘Afrocentrism’ in order to be able to fight for the future. In another discourse the use of such phrases is absolutely ‘not done’, they are avoided at all costs and even talk of ‘victims’ or ‘guilt’ are considered to block the way to a more harmonious or open minded future.

It will be of crucial importance to understand why people are part of one discourse or the other, and why they experience and represent history, the present, and the road to the future the way they do. Without efforts towards an understanding and a respect for others, combined with a critical look at oneself, it will be difficult to erect a real monument.
An Unusual Parallel: Jews and Africans in Suriname in the 18th and 19th Centuries

- Alex van Stipriaan

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the rise of entirely new social fabrics in the Americas was to earn this continent the title of the New World. One of these societies was that of Suriname. As will become clear, the degree to which this was an integrated society, especially in the early period, is a matter of debate. In Suriname, as elsewhere in the Americas, it was not long after the first Europeans had arrived that the sparse native population of Carib and Arawak peoples were forced, though not without resistance, into the margins of the new society. Immigrants from overseas began to populate the territory, which had until then no history of geographical unity. Suriname’s raison d’être was the string of extensive plantations that were built and operated with African slaves. These produced mainly sugar, coffee and later also cotton and cacao for the European market. British colonists had laid the foundation for this plantation system between 1650 and 1667, after which the colony was acquired by the Dutch. With a short interval of British rule during the Napoleonic War in Europe, Suriname was to remain a colony of the Netherlands until 1975.1

Yet the colony was not especially Dutch in character. Besides practically the entire labour force being of West African stock, for many years most planters2 had little or no Dutch background at all. Among the plantation owners, (Portuguese) Jews formed the largest group; in fact, of all the various ‘nationalities’, they had been in Suriname the longest, having first arrived in the first British period. Later, they were joined by a large group of planters of Huguenot extraction, followed by a mixture of Germans, Swiss, Hungarians and Italians. Indeed, the British element did not disappear from the colony either; in the early nineteenth century they formed a significant contingent.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Jewish population of Suriname comprised around one hundred families and fifty single persons, mostly of Portu-

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1 This article was translated by Sammy Herman.
2 Although at times anachronistic, the term ‘Netherlands’ is employed throughout this article for the sake of convenience.
3 Ironically, the term planter refers to those who never actually planted anything themselves, the plantation owners.
5 Margaret Lionnet, ‘Zegen en omrede: De positie van de joden in Suriname in de achttiende eeuw’, in Skript 142 (1992), p. 76; the total free population in Suriname grew in the final quarter of the eighteenth century from around 2,500 to 5,000 and continued to grow in the nineteenth century to around 16,300 at the time of the abolition of slavery in 1863 – see Alex van Stipriaan, Surinaams contras: voornam en verleent in een Caraïbische plantagekoloni, 1750-1863. (Leiden 1993) p. 314.
6 In 1788, Paramaribo had 1,119 houses, large and small, of which 219 were owned by Jews – 127 belonging to Portuguese Jews, 86 to Ashkenazi Jews and 6 houses maintained by both communities to shelter the Jewish poor; see David Nassy, Geschiedenis der Kolonie van Suriname, Behelzende dezelfde opkomst, voorwerp, burgerlijke en staatkundige gesteldheid, tegenwoordigen staat van koophandel, en eene volledige en nauwkeurige beschrijving van het land, de zeden en gebruiken der inwoningen; Geheud op nieuw samengesteld door een gezelschap van geleerde officieren aanduien. (Amsterdam 1774 [Original 1791; revised translation of Estat Historique sur la Colonie de Suriname, 1788; published in English as ‘Historical essay on the Colony of Suriname’]) Vol. II, p. 14.

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Table 1
Jewish population in relation to total Suriname population, 1666–1817

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Free population of whom Jews</th>
<th>non-Whites</th>
<th>SLAVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 1666</td>
<td>c. 1,000</td>
<td>c. 150</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c. 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1690</td>
<td>c. 1,550</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>3,790</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>3,167</td>
<td>1,279</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These were mainly Brazilian planters who, when the Dutch were driven out of Brazil, found themselves under threat for their religion from the returning Portuguese Inquisition. They came to Suriname either directly from Brazil, through Europe, or through Cayenne (later French Guiana, then still Dutch).

Contraband Trade by Carvão's Jews with countries of Iralatry, 1660–1800

guese-Jewish origin1 but some – far fewer, although fast increasing in number – with a German background. They owned at least one third of the 100-120 plantations then in operation.2 Most lived in an entirely Jewish village in the savannah area south of Paramaribo, known appropriately as Judensavanne. In the course of the eighteenth century the two groups of Jews increased to some 1,400 persons, a number that remained reasonably constant in the subsequent century.3 By then, however, little was left of Judensavanne; most Jews lived in Paramaribo.4
Table 2
Composition of Jewish population of Suriname 1788–1817

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Portuguese Jews total in 'Parbo</th>
<th>German Jews total in 'Parbo</th>
<th>coloured Jews</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Jews began settling in Suriname they managed to acquire a number of unusual rights, which the Dutch authorities were subsequently to confirm. Among these was the right to practice their religion according to their own rituals, including marriage. Questions of inheritance and minor civil cases (to a fine of 10,000 pounds sugar) remained under internal Jewish control. Moreover, it was agreed that the colonial government would enforce decisions of the Jewish courts regarding Jews who flouted the authority of the Jewish institutions, or who incited unrest in the community – which could lead to banishment from the colony. Jews were also excused service in civic and military functions, although the latter exemption depended on the ability to provide a substitute and there being no current hostilities. The only privilege that ever led to public unrest, and which was eventually rescinded in 1718, was permission to work on Sundays – that is, to trade and to open shops.

The degree of religious tolerance in Suriname surprised many, especially the tolerance of Jews. For example, the German J.D. Kunitz, who worked as plantation manager in Suriname for at least twenty-five years in the latter half of the eighteenth century, noted that ‘Was die Toleranz betrifft, so wird sie nicht leicht irgendein in einem solchen Umfange ausgeübt; und man fragt hier nicht, ob jemand Protestant, Catholik, Reformirter oder Jude sey, wenn er nur ein rechtschaffener Mann ist, dann ist ’s schon genug.’ Indeed, Jews were equally surprised by this tolerance, as David Nassy commented, ‘Perhaps there is nowhere in the entire world where religious tolerance is so widespread, and so carefully nurtured, as in Suriname. Never is there the least religious discord; everyone worships their god in their own way; everyone does what they think best and appropriate for the salvation of their soul. We could not close this subject, without mentioning the director of one French plantation who told a fellow countryman from Lyon, [...] that he had once eaten in Suriname in a house in which the family included heathens, Jews, Roman Catholics, schismatic Greeks and Calvinists. They sat, he added, at table together quite happily and satisfied, living for the rest in perfect harmony.’ In a note, he added: ‘The truth of the above should not be doubted. An honourable Jew of considerable erudition and sound judgment was the owner of a Black woman; she bore him several children, who were raised in the Dutch Reformed religion. He subsequently married the eldest of his daughters to a Roman Catholic widower, a worthy man, but unfortunately the father of a son by his first marriage who was born in Russia and was raised in the doctrines of the Greek Church, so that the father was a Jew, the mother a heathen, the husband a Roman Catholic, his wife a Calvinist, and his child a schismatic Greek. When the husband died, the woman remarried with an English Presbyterian.’ Apart from revealing something of the religious tolerance, this is also an excellent illustration of the social integration that was beginning to take effect in Nassy’s day and which is discussed below.

Despite the general tolerance, there was one point (besides the irritation felt about the exemption from Sunday observance) that regularly raised the anger of non-Jewish planters: this was the loyalty of the Jewish population to the governor, the protector of their privileges. In the course of the eighteenth century this was a frequent cause of friction in the continuous power struggle between the principal (non-Jewish) planters and the governors appointed by the Dutch government. When elections were held for vacant seats on the Court of Police, delegates of the (Portuguese) Jewish community appealed to the governor for advice on who to vote for: and that advice was promptly followed. This led to considerable anti-Jewish sentiment, especially when the governor’s policies or the governor himself had incurred the wrath of sections of the planter community. This came to a head in the so-called cabale against Governor Mauricius (1742-1751). He was eventually (honourably) discharged. One of the demands of the opposition was that in future Jews be barred from taking part in elections to the Court of Police ‘in no other Christian Power is it permitted or accepted for Jews to influence government affairs, let alone to nominate Councillors and Judges.’ The Dutch authorities did not accept that view.


9 Robert Cohen even suggests that in this context ‘[legally, Surinamese Jews formed perhaps the most privileged Jewish community in the world’ (Cohen, op. cit., [1991] p. 1). The Portuguese Jewish community in Suriname, the Kabal Kados (Holy Community), founded in 1661/2, was named Berachab Ve Shalom (Blessing and Peace) and was a daughter community of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam. The administration was in the hands of the Senhores do Mahamid (Gentlemen of the Community); see R. Bijlsma, ‘David De Is. C. Nassy, author of the Essai historique sur Suriname’, in Robert Cohen (ed.), op. cit., p. 68 ff.; Lioranons, op. cit., p. 67.

10 In the mid-eighteenth century the average sugar plantation produced almost 100,000 pounds, Van Stipriaen, op. cit., p. 36.


12 J.C. Kunitz, Suriname und seine Bewohner... (Erfurt 1805) p. 59.

13 The life of the celebrated writer of this eighteenth-century history of Jewish Suriname is discussed in detail in Bijlsma, op. cit.

14 In fact, Roman Catholics only obtained the right to build their own church in 1785, exactly one hundred years after the first synagogue had been built in Jodensavanne; Nassy, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 18-19.

15 The Hof van Politie; known in the nineteenth century as the Politieke of Koloniale Raad.


17 This affair is discussed extensively in G.W. van der Meiden, Betuwse bestuur; Een eeuw strijd om de macht in Suriname, 1653-1753 (Amsterdam 1987).
than struggling timber estates. And that in a period in which the total export production of the territory’s plantations actually doubled. A characteristic example is described by a plantation director around 1790: ‘A certain Jew, Van Seca [Da Fonseca, AvS], was my supplier [of seed, AvS]; he lived between Joode Savanne, and Post Gelderland; he had once been a man of property, and [had] had a timber estate, but now that all his slaves have run away to join the Bush Negroes, he has become old and poor, together with his housewife and his delightful daughter he now works a small plot of land for his own subsistence.’

In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century, the crisis had reached most of the non-Jewish planters as well as the soil exhaustion continued and the debts to creditors in the Netherlands mounted. In the end, most of the plantations devolved to these overseas creditors and in the course of time more and more were abandoned.

From the mid-seventeenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, around a total of 215,000 slaves were imported to Suriname, all from an area between today’s Senegal and Angola. These slaves worked on the seven hundred plantations that were established in Suriname over the centuries and most of which were eventually closed down. Suriname’s plantation economy reached its zenith in the second half of the eighteenth century. In around 1770 there were some 110 sugar and 295 coffee plantations in operation and the colony had a population of some 60,000 slaves, 3,000 free persons, mainly Whites, as well as a further 1,500 soldiers. From that period, the colony entered a gradual economic decline. This is not the place to describe that process in detail. I have shown elsewhere that the development was far more complex than a simple rise and decline.

Under pressure from the British, the import of African slaves was finally abandoned in 1827 and some forty years later, in 1863, slavery itself was abolished, as Britain and France had already done some 15 to 30 years previously. In the Netherlands, years went by as the debate dragged on about the level of compensation to be paid to the owners of the 36,000 slaves who, due to the chronic death-rate, were all that remained in 1863 and who were eventually to be freed. By then there were only around 160 plantations producing for the European market.

One other characteristic circumstance in Suriname deserves mention which in fact distinguished it from most of the other Caribbean plantation economies, namely the constant struggle of the plantations against inundation by water. Most of the plantations in Suriname were situated in the low, swampy coastal plain. Although it was relatively fertile country, it was also subject to constant flooding. The best, and typically Dutch solution, was to lay out each plantation as a polder, or reclaimed land. This meant building dykes around the plantation and digging a complex system of drainage trenches (loostreinen) in and around the site. Moreover, a network of transport canals was required for carrying produce on the sugar plantations – which were generally far larger than the coffee plantations. In general, this meant that even the smallest plantation required several kilometres of waterway, dug in the

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1 Joden savanne. Upstream on the east bank of the Suriname river. (From Surinamische Almanak voor het jaar 1833, Amsterdam 1832. Photo: L. Heijstek).

In the course of the eighteenth century Jews appear in various public functions, although never above the rank of clerk or notary. Even so, Jews became increasingly dependent on the urban economy in Paramaribo as their plantations declined and the lack of opportunity in Jodensavanne increased.

The Jews, who had been among the first colonists in Suriname, were also the first to experience the general decline of the plantation economy. Their estates, which were among the oldest in Suriname, were mainly found along the upper reaches of the Suriname river, and to a lesser extent along the Commewijne river. There the more sandy soils were exhausted faster than the heavy clay soils of the lower reaches of the rivers that had come under cultivation at a far later date. Moreover, the Jewish planters were among the first to run up debts with Dutch creditors to an extent that was obviously beyond any ability to repay. Meanwhile, because they were located near the jungle, the so-called Jewish plantations formed an attractive target for attacks by runaway slaves, the notorious Maroons. The result was that of the 115 (sugar) plantations owned by Jews in 1730, by the end of the century there were no more than 46 left, two-thirds of which had become little more

heavy clay and regularly maintained. Planters who failed to take these measures sooner or later found their land flooded and their crops spoiled.

As with every other job on the plantation, it was slaves who dug the trenches—in fact life on the plantations was to a large extent dominated by the incessant struggle against the water. In the Netherlands that struggle came to symbolize freedom and independence; in Suriname it typified the burdens of slavery. The economic decline of Suriname after the late eighteenth century has often been discussed. Much less attention has been paid to various social changes that took place in the nineteenth century and which are crucial elements in a proper understanding of how this plantation colony developed. Two of these changes are examined here with reference to the two earliest immigrant groups—the Jews and the Africans—and the remarkable parallels between these ethnic populations.

From the beginning, there was close contact in Suriname between Jews and Africans. Jews were slave owners, and like non-Jewish slave owners in Suriname, or anywhere else in the Americas, Jewish men had sexual relations with their female slaves—varying from brutal rape to respectful concubinage. The children that resulted in these circumstances were sometimes recognized by their fathers and freed. In that case they were raised in the Jewish religion. Yet even if they were free, they could never be true members of the Jewish community, either the Portuguese or the Ashkenazi. Free or not, Coloured people, or Mulattoes as they were known, remained second-class citizens for Whites, for Jews and non-Jews alike. Which is why this group of Coloured Jews was refused permission to found their own community and establish their own synagogue in the second half of the eighteenth century, when their numbers had risen from a few dozen to around a hundred (Table 2).

Of the 401 concerns—i.e. not only the plantations producing for export, but also the timber estates and the estates where food was produced for the local population—Nassy counted on Lavaux's map of 1735, he found 115 owned by Jewish planters (93 on the Suriname river and 22 on the Upper Commewijne and region) "mainly sugar plantations, without a penny of debt, because at that time there was no way of obtaining credit from Holland. Furthermore, their lifestyle was extremely simple and regulated; ostentation and luxury were unknown; and nowhere could one find plantations adorned with proud or useless buildings. Cleanliness, ease of life and a certain extravaganza at table on festivals in the Saramacca, were their only luxury and indulgence; yet, these holidays would be barely over before each returned to their plantation, and personally saw to the tasks that had to be done, and this was apparently also the lifestyle of certain Christian planters of this period."

2 A runaway slave (detail). (From P.J. Benoit, Voyage à Surinam, Brussels 1839. Photo I. Heijstek.)

The leaders of the two established Jewish communities could not sanction the new congregation since this would have entailed recognition of the equal status of the Mulattoes and would in their opinion have violated the principle of Jewish identity.

In the literature and in Afro-Surinamese oral tradition, Jews are pictured as being the severest and cruelest of the slave owners. In fact, as R.A.J. van Lier rightly points out, there are no historical sources to show that Jewish planters were any crueler than non-Jewish planters. "There are even occasional remarks to the effect that slaves were contented under a Jewish master. But it may be that Jews created the impression in the 19th century of being cruel, tyrannical slave owners as they were at that time one of the few groups of original colonists which, more than any other group, had unconsciously preserved the customs of the past of a slave colony both through a certain familiarity with their slaves and through severity of punishment. Moreover, a number of Jews were active opponents of [slave] Emancipation. This aroused a hostile attitude towards them on the part of the common people and the protagonists of Emancipation." But that is putting the cart before the horse.
Slaves run away and emancipate\textsuperscript{25}

Two issues have been largely ignored in the historiography of Suriname. Yet they are far from insignificant and both relate to the Maroon phenomenon. Marronage was the act of desertion of a slave, escaping from the plantation into the inhospitable swamp and jungle that surrounded the cultivated land. There these runaways formed independent communities and guerilla bands that preyed on the plantation colony, robbing it to its very foundations on occasion.\textsuperscript{31} In the eighteenth century, some two hundred slaves a year would manage to escape and remain free. In the course of time these scattered groups of runaways came to form six separate, more or less self-sufficient peoples living a lifestyle reminiscent of that of West Africa. This heroic and anthropologically intriguing history has been the focus of academic research for more than fifty years.\textsuperscript{32}

However, no one has as yet investigated the motivation for slaves to desert, or the possible changes in escape patterns. Why did only a proportion of the slaves run away and why, in the nineteenth century, did relatively more slaves leave only temporarily.

Clearly, the choice between escaping into the jungle and remaining on the plantation was a complex one. A comparison between two episodes serves to illustrate the influences which affected this difficult decision. The plantations concerned were large sugar plantations on Cottica river, La Paix and Groot Marseille, in the early 1770s.

It seems that the slaves on both plantations were in contact with the Boni, a community of Maroons in the woods and swamps of northeast Suriname. The Boni had been involved in a guerilla war with the planters and the colonial army for some years. Secret contacts were maintained with the slaves on the plantations, and these would sometimes be warned about attacks in advance. For example, in 1772 the slaves on La Paix supported a Boni attack, and it was only the unexpected presence of an army patrol in the area that prevented more than half from escaping into the jungle with the raiders. The slaves in the neighbouring Groot Marseille plantation were also in contact with the Boni, but when this estate was attacked in 1773 they defended themselves vigorously, eventually forcing the raiders to retreat. The reaction of the slaves on this plantation was in complete contrast to that of the slaves on La Paix the year before.

The difference in attitude between the slaves of these two adjacent plantations offers certain clues to the motives slaves had for escaping, or remaining. For example, there were important differences between these two plantations. La Paix was heavily in debt, while Marseille was not. One owner was in deep financial trouble, and unable to buy new slaves, while the other had sufficient capital to increase the number of slaves by half in the same period. As a result, in 1772, a field slave on La Paix would have had to work half as much again as a slave on the neighbouring plantation. Moreover, the amount of digging and maintenance in the water systems, in this case the lengthwise transport canals only, would have increased by a third, while on the neighbouring plantation the addition of new slaves would have resulted in a drop in the average workload. And it was this job that was the most strenuous of all. Anthropologists have found evidence in the oral history of some Maroon groups, preserved to this day, that the heavy work of digging trenches is considered to have been the principal motive for a slave to run away from a plantation.

\begin{table}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>La Paix</th>
<th>1773</th>
<th>Groot Marseille</th>
<th>1770</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>production acreage per field slave</td>
<td>1.40 ha.</td>
<td>1.93 (+ 38%)</td>
<td>0.88 ha.</td>
<td>1.22 (+ 38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport canal per field slave</td>
<td>76 m.</td>
<td>98 (+ 29%)</td>
<td>77 m.</td>
<td>71 (- 8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food acreage per slave</td>
<td>0.15 ha.</td>
<td>0.11 (- 27%)</td>
<td>0.10 ha.</td>
<td>0.19 (+ 95%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
\end{table}

Finally, in the same period on La Paix the area where food crops for the slaves were planted was reduced by a quarter to make savings, while on Groot Marseille it was actually doubled. In short, the slaves on La Paix had reached the limits of endurance. The prospect of steadily worsening labour and subsistence conditions had become unbearable and led the slaves to choose the equally insecure, but free existence as Maroons. That this was the main motive appears from a report of the siege of the main Boni encampment, Buku, where a number of runaways complained that the owner of La Paix always made them work into the night, but that they, as they said, were also human, and that it was impossible to keep a Negro there for any length of time.\textsuperscript{34} Of course this does not mean that the slaves on Groot Marseille led a life of luxury. On the contrary. But apparently, the relatively light

\textsuperscript{25} This paragraph is largely a summary of Alex van Stipriaan, 'Het dilemma van plantage slaves: weglopen of blijven?' in Oto, Tijdschrift voor Surinaamsche Taalkunde, Letterkunde, Cultuur en Geschiedenis 112 (1992), p. 122-141.

\textsuperscript{31} See for example, Wim Hoogerbergen's The Boni Maroon wars in Suriname (Leiden 1990).

\textsuperscript{32} For example, J. Melville and Frances S. Flecker, Rebels, destiny. Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana (New York 1934); Silvia W. de Groot, From isolation towards integration; The Surinamese Maroons and their descendants (1845-1863) (The Hague 1963); Richard Price, First time; The historical vision of an Afro-American people (Baltimore/London 1983); H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen and W. van Wetering, The great father and the danger, Religious cults, material forces, and collective fantasies in the world of the Surinamese Maroons (Dordrecht 1988).


\textsuperscript{34} ARA Oud Archief Suriname, Hof van Politie, 86; published in Chris de Bee, De eerste Boni-oorlog, 1763-1778 (Utrecht Centrum voor Caribische Studies, Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, Bronnen voor de Studie van Bosnegersamenlevingen 9, 1984), p. 157.
workload and the better food situation provided greater security and tipped the balance when deciding whether to stay or choose the uncertain and harsh existence of a Maroon.

Slaves continued to escape in the nineteenth century, but in different ways and with different objectives than before. Most of the runaways in this period – and there were many more than in the previous century – were not planning to leave for ever, they were leaving temporarily. Why this was the case is illustrated by developments on Vrouwenvlucht plantation at Hoer Helena Creek around 1840. In the course of a decade a fifth of all the 129 adult slaves left at least once. These were not just the field slaves, they included the privileged ‘elite’ slaves who worked as supervisors, artisans or domestic servants. Only three of the runaways never returned, the rest were traced and recaptured within short periods, or they came back voluntarily. Finding the runaways was not particularly difficult: most appear to have been recaptured on the so-called provision grounds where the slaves grew their own food, or in slave homes within a radius of no more than one or two kilometres of Vrouwenvlucht.

Most incorrigible of all was Adam, an ordinary field slave. In this ten-year period he ran away at least eight times for shorter or longer periods, only to be recaptured each time on the same plantation, Vriendsbeleid en Oudersorg, in the adjoining area. Each time he was punished with a number of lashes of the whip and/or a lengthy term of incarceration in irons. Yet these illicit excursions only came to an end when he died in 1843, from a so-called mucous seizure. It seems clear that the other plantation held some special attraction. What it was is not revealed in the sources, but numerous analogous cases on other plantations suggest that Adam probably had a relative on Vriendsbeleid en Oudersorg, perhaps a wife, and even children.

While this would naturally have been a reason for many slaves to have left the plantation for a short period, it was not what motivated the majority of runaways. This becomes clear when the role of the white plantation staff in these cases is examined. On Vrouwenvlucht there was always one director and one white officer. These managers sometimes stayed for years on the same plantation, and would often build up a modus vivendi with the slaves on a give-and-take basis. Sometimes, however, their appointments were short-lived. In fact, it seems that most escapes took place in periods in which directors and white officers were being replaced in particularly quick succession. Apparently, the slaves were showing by running away that they had had enough of having to adapt every few months to new managers, with different rules and demands and with far less knowledge about their plantation than they had themselves. Despite risking severe punishment after recapture, for the slaves this sort of marronage was the best way they had of protesting against a director, a way of showing that they wanted to be taken seriously. Usually it was no more than one or two slaves who ran away together, but the complete chaos that

this caused, particularly in a period of change, led to considerable disturbance in production on the plantation, and that was what it was all about. Which is why concessions were sometimes made to the slaves, just to keep the peace. This kind of situation occurred regularly on almost every plantation, particularly in the nineteenth century.

At the same time, dozens of instances are recorded of actual conflicts between slaves and white supervisors in which the slaves left the plantation en masse and remained in the jungle until their demands had been met, or until the army intervened. One such incident occurred on Vrouwenvlucht: in 1849 all the slaves withdrew, they refused to carry out their tasks and resisted violently when attempts were made to force them back to work. It was only when the army was called in that the resistance was broken by a detachment of soldiers. Six slaves were identified as ringleaders and sentenced to between 60 and 90 lashes on the back, while the main instigator, Willem, was given ten months forced labour, in irons, at Fort Nieuw Amsterdam near Paramaribo.

The cause of the ’strike’ at Vrouwenvlucht was a phenomenon that led to dozens of similar protests in the nineteenth century, namely the owner’s decision to abandon the plantation and to transfer the slaves to another, more profitable estate. In
other protests, slaves might consider certain acquired rights to have been violated, that the director was guilty of cruelty. Remarkably, these mass walk-outs were often successful. Planned transfers of slaves were sometimes called off and often, a director who had incurred the wrath of his slaves would be fired. At Vrouwenflij although the proposed transfer to Dijkveld plantation was not abandoned, it was postponed for two years.

A remarkable aspect of these confrontations is the support that the slaves in creasingly received from the colonial authorities as the nineteenth century progressed; not that the government had suddenly become a friend of the slaves – it was simply a growing perception that compromising with the slaves would be far more conducive to peace and public order than the use of rough violence. Even more so when the neighbouring territories of British and French Guyana abolished slavery in 1834 and 1848 respectively. So for most slaves on the Surinamese plantations marronage was not so much a way of escaping slavery, as an effective means with which to hollow out the system from the inside.

This remarkable transformation was the result of two processes: the increasing creolization and the improvement of conditions. In the mid-eighteenth century three-quarters of the slave population had been born in Africa and no more than a quarter were natives of Suriname. Toward the end of the century this began to change and by the mid-nineteenth century the proportions were reversed. The majority of the population was by now second or third generation Surinamese. The slaves had naturally developed tight-knit communities, they lived surrounded by relatives and had built up deep-rooted social, cultural and religious institutions. As a result, not only did the slaves have closer ties with each other, they also developed a bond with the place they lived, their plantation. This formation of a new culture and roots is known as creolization.

Meanwhile, trends such as the high death rate and the emancipation movements in the adjacent countries lead planters and colonial officials to look differently at the conditions in which slaves lived. Stricter rules were introduced regarding the treatment of slaves and improvement of their material circumstances. Moreover, slave wages were given more scope to use their own initiative, especially for food production: with small-scale cultivation and livestock farming in their increasing amount of free time. Gradually, these agricultural activities grew in importance, and before long they had become self-sufficient. And when slaves began to trade in their own products they entered the colonial money economy. Naturally, this also means that they were increasingly tied to the plantations on which they lived. At the same time however, the free population grew increasingly dependent on the services, products and willingness to work of the existing slave population, since, from the 1820s, British pressure had brought a halt to the supply of new slaves. Slaves were conscious of this White dependence and used every opportunity to gain space and rights for themselves. In the course of these struggles, the slavery system was hollowed out from inside, just as marronage changed in form and content.

In the eighteenth century, marronage was often a desperate attempt by mainly African slaves to escape from the plantations forever and to attack the system from the outside. This step was generally considered, although difficult choice and was usually only taken when a critical level of endurance had been passed. In the nineteenth century, runaways were still slaves, but now they were Surinamese, with increasingly independent lives, taking part in society on their own terms. Paradoxically, they used withdrawing from the plantation as a way of ensuring that they could stay and build their lives there. This led to a further undermining of the slavery system, a process that was legally enshrined in 1863 with the final abolition of slavery.

**Jewish emancipation**

A remarkable parallel exists between the two earliest immigrant groups in Suriname, the slaves and the Jews. From the very start, both groups lived in isolation, although of course in rather different circumstances. Slaves had only duties, and no rights, for example. Indeed, until the nineteenth century, they were not considered persons under the law; they were treated as a form of property. This was not the case for Jews. On the contrary, from the first they had their own rights and privileges and lived almost exclusively in their own, separate community in Jodensavanne. They rarely took part in life outside, remaining for a considerable period uninvolved in the colony’s administrative and judicial apparatus. Indeed, among the first generations of Portuguese Jews, a significant number spoke only Portuguese. As a result, they lived in self-elected isolation from the rest of the non-slave society.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, an increasing number of Jews were forced by the economic malaise to move to Paramaribo. All kinds of new opportunities were available here, particularly since many bankrupt plantation-
owners had left and the new owners were based in the Netherlands. Anyone with sufficient capital could buy up a bankrupt plantation, enter trade, take up a position as administrator or director of plantations, or try making a career in the junior civil service. These alternatives allowed members of the Jewish community to flourish and prosper in the nineteenth century. In fact the community was never entirely reduced to poverty, and indeed, not all the impoverished Jews were bankrupt planters. Some planters had managed to avoid getting into debt by not accepting credit from Dutch financiers, while some of the poorer Jews were new immigrants who came to the colony to try their luck, but who arrived penniless. The historian, J. Wolbers noted a century later that, 'Among the new arrivals were many Jews from Germany and less cultivated Jews from Poland who were in dire straits; to prevent the colony being flooded by impoverished immigrants, the States [General; AvS], passed a Resolution, that only Jews with enough capital to become plantation owners were permitted to settle in Suriname.'

R. Cohen has attributed this development to the policy of the Jewish community in Amsterdam where the problem of poverty was solved by consciously sending impoverished Jews to Suriname. In fact, Suriname became, in his words, a 'dumping ground'.

At the same time, there were also several successful Jewish immigrants, and not just from the Netherlands. For example, when the British took over Suriname between 1799 and 1816, they settled a considerable number of British colonists in the territory, some of whom were Jews. One appears to have been a certain Levy Bixby, who established a flourishing trading company in Paramaribo and died in 1858 the owner of at least five plantations.

The result of these developments was the gradual erosion of the self-elected isolation of the Jews as a group. R. Cohen describes this nicely when he notes that, 'the move from a village upon a symbolic hill to a city upon a river was more than a geographic dislocation and a switch from plantation economy to commerce. Within the multifaceted, busy city it was difficult to maintain the sense of uniqueness and separation. The encounter with enlightenment culture and its enthusiastic adoption were only part of an inevitable process of integration into Surinamese urban society.'

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4 Neve Shalom synagogue in Paramaribo. (Courtesy Willy Lindwer).

The Jews of Suriname began to perceive themselves as individuals rather than as part of a special, cohesive community.

Suriname’s Jews became increasingly integrated in the colonial society, several becoming powerful figures in the territory. Which was only logical since, unlike the bulk of the fortune-hunters among the planters – who deserted the colony as quickly as possible after going bankrupt (or after making their fortune) – the core of the Jewish community had over the generations become a permanent, almost creolized population group. And as with that other permanent factor, the slaves, creolization and integration meant that the group had increasingly to be taken into account. Moreover, while the Jewish interest in plantations was now considerably reduced, those Jewish plantation-owners who remained had become a highly significant factor, since most of the other owners were absentee estate-holders not resident in Suriname, who had their property managed by local administrators.

So it was no coincidence that the increasing integration of slaves and Jews received judicial recognition at roughly the same time. In 1827 slaves acquired legal status as persons when they were transferred from commercial to civil law; and in

38 J. Wolbers, Geschiedenis van Suriname (Amsterdam 1861), p. 173.
39 Between 1771 and 1795 a total of 332 Jewish immigrants arrived in Suriname, of whom 171 Ashkenazim and 159 Sephardim. Of these, 283 came from the Netherlands, all except 7 from Amsterdam, 42 from the Caribbean and 7 from North America (Cohen, op. cit., [1991] p. 17). In the same period, a similar number of Jews actually left Suriname, namely 311, half going to Amsterdam, a quarter elsewhere in the Caribbean and a quarter to North America (Cohen, op. cit., [1991] p. 24-27). Discussing Jewish migration to Suriname, Cohen notes that 'the colony had first been attractive for the rights and privileges it offered and later because it maintained them. Now, increasing poverty and the failure of charitable institutions made Suriname into a dumping ground for the Jewish poor of Amsterdam.' (Cohen, op. cit., [1991] p. 15-18). Some needy Jews were even given money, like Isaac Montesinos, who received one hundred guilders from the Sephardi community in Amsterdam on condition he stayed away for at least fifteen years. Cohen refers in this context to 'forced migration' (Cohen, op. cit., [1991] p. 15-18).
40 ARA Suriname Overheerde Boedels en Wezen 1828-1876, 926.
42 Most plantations, burdened by mountains of debt, had by the end of the eighteenth century fallen into the hands of their creditors in the Netherlands.
1825 Jews gained equality with non-Jews before the law, with only the ban on marriage between Christians and Jews remaining in (formal) force. This represented the end of their separate privileges, but it simplified civil law and, even more significantly, it removed the barriers to a career in the colonial system. It signalled the start of a new prosperity for the Jews of Suriname and a greater social integration than ever before.

Two examples serve to illustrate this development. In 1828 a civic register of births, marriages and deaths was introduced in Suriname. The first marriage to be recorded was that of Mozes Bueno de Mesquita, ‘young man’, 53 years old, ‘of the Portuguese Jewish Community’ and Johanna Cornelia Westmaas, ‘young daughter’, 50 years old, ‘of the Dutch Reformed community, both born and resident here.’ At the registration they submitted a resolution from the governor ‘giving the appearers dispensation from the law concerning the ban on marriages between Christians and Jews.’ At the same time, they registered their five children as their legal heirs.45

A second illustration of the changing status of Suriname’s Jews in the nineteenth century is the career of Salomon de la Parra. He came from a family that had owned sugar plantations in Suriname since the early eighteenth century.46 By the early nineteenth century there were still three De la Parra’s who owned plantations. Yet the appearance is deceptive: of the eight concerns, only two were producing goods for export, the other six were producing timber. Moreover, they only had a limited number of slaves.47 Nevertheless, Salomon de la Parra and his brother managed in this period to build on the basis of the property the De la Parras had owned for generations, and to create a more solid foundation for his plantation business. He was so successful that in the 1820s he was Suriname’s biggest planter. By then he owned, mainly in partnership with his brother Samuel Haim de la Parra, five sugar plantations, four coffee and/or cotton plantations and two timber estates.48 He ad

46 According to De Lafayette’s map of 1772 the plantations Abocheranza and Wayamoe were owned by D. de la Parra, Aluca was owned by W.S. de la Parra, Florentia by the widow De la Parra and Onobo by A. de la Parra.
47 In around 1811, S. de la Parra owned Caramawapibo (timber, 20 slaves) and Reinsberg (timber, 65 slaves); M. de la Parra owned the coffee plantations Concordia (37 slaves) and Egmund (73 slaves) and the timber estate Onobo (13 slaves); Jos. de la Parra owned the timber estates La Diligence (69 slaves), Florentia (14 slaves) and Windsor Forest (11 slaves), while his son owned Sarah’s Hoop (5 slaves); source: Public record Office, London, Colonial Office 278, 15; Treasury 75, 14. The average export production plantation of the period had around 100 slaves; see Van Stipriaan (1993) 128-141.
48 In 1824 S. and S.H. de la Parra were joint owners of sugar plantations Laarwijk, Concordia, Crawsaso and Rutenburg, the coffee and/or cotton plantations Anna’s Rust, Onderneeming, Bleyenhoo & Bleyenrust, and Humdoff, and the timber estates Reinsberg and Nimmerrust. All three were administrated by S. de la Parra. He actually owned the sugar plantation Guineesch Vriendschaps and administered Neuswater and De Drie Gebroeders (sugar), Rosse Els Crop (coffee) and the timber estates La Diligence and Voorgrond. In addition, S.H. de la Parra was sole owner of the timber estates Courcabo and Onobo. Some of these plantations had been in the De la Parra family for more than a century, but most are likely to have been acquired by Salomon and his brother in the nineteenth century. Samuel Haim died in the early 1830s, Salomon in 1855. A year later his plantation, Guineesch Vriendschaps, was sold for f 30,000, which indicates something of ministered all these estates together with another five of which he was not the owner. De la Parra therefore managed no less than sixteen plantations, of which twelve were producing for export. In fact, the timber trade must have been lucrative too: towards the end of the 1820s he spent a total of 135,500 Suriname guilders49 buying the timber estates Hanover, Overtoom, Vreeland and Indigoevel, all on Para Creek originally started as sugar plantations.50 These were sizeable concerns with a joint acreage of thousands of hectares and around three hundred slaves.

At first, Salomon de la Parra’s increasing economic position was not reflected in either social status or administrative power. In a critical survey of the main plantation administrators drawn up by a contemporary in 1824 comments are given beside all the names, such as ‘capable’, ‘solid’, or ‘not worth recommendation’; the comment beside De la Parra’s name is a simple ‘is a Jew’, which apparently said all that was needed.51 For years, his highest rank in the colonial hierarchy was that of captain in the civic guard. It was only in 1836 that his economic power was translated into political terms – as had always been the case with non-Jewish planters – and he became the first Jew to be appointed to the highest colonial administrative organ, the Colonial Council.52

In 1826, Salomon de la Parra’s daughter Gratia53 (b. 1824) married a promising young man, a Jew from Amsterdam called Egbert (or Elias) van Emden (1799-1864), who had arrived in 1818.54 She died not long after the birth of their son and a year later Van Emden remarried to Abigael de la Parra, daughter of Joseph de la Parra and Ribca de Mordequay de la Parra, with whom he had a further six children. Van Emden enjoyed a successful career in the colony, where his relations with the De la Parra’s would certainly not have hampered his progress. Like his father-in-law, he became a major planter/administrator and a person of considerable political influence. In the 1850s he was the joint owner of one of the most productive sugar plantations in Suriname and manager of eleven other plantations on which a total of at least 1,650 slaves were working.55 He lived in a house on Paramaribo’s prestigious Waterkant, where he kept a domestic staff of forty slaves.56 In the 1820s he already held an appointment to the government secretariat and the civic guard; in the course of the following decade he gained a position in the judiciary and came to exercise influence over the running of the colony. This reached its height under the size of his fortune (the director of comparable plantation would, for example, have earned 1,500 – 2,000 guilders a year in that period); source: Almanak 1824 ff; ARA Suriname Onbeheerde Boekjes 128-141, Wezen 1828-1876, 22-24. This sum is equal to around 45,000 Dutch guilders of that period.
54 Gemeente-archief Amsterdam, Particulier Archief 605, 544.
55 Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, Archief G.P.C., Breugel.
56 Suurinaamsche Almanak 1836 ff.
57 Salomon was married to Rachel de David Raphael de Meza.
58 Almost all the information about Egbert van Emden and his family has been made available by R.C.B. Jansen of Amsterdam, for which I am especially grateful. Van Emden came from a family of (money) brokers, his father was an estate agent.
59 Suurinaamsche Almanaks of the 1850s.
60 Wijkboeken (district books) of Paramaribo 1840.
Governor Schimpi (1855–1859). Indeed, according to his contemporary, the historian and critic J. Wolbers [th]e influence of Van Emden on Schimpi was practically limitless; not only were his relatives and friends preferred in profitable appointments; Schimpi consulted him in everything and did hardly anything without first asking Van Emden’s opinion.\footnote{Wolbers, op. cit., p. 749.} One of the cases in which Van Emden became especially involved was the abolition question, the emancipation of the slaves. He was not violently opposed to abolition, as the descriptions suggest – for example, in Wolbers\footnote{Wolbers describes Van Emden as follows: ‘undeniably a capable person; yet that capability was employed to promote his own interests and those of the reactionary party [i.e. the opponents of emancipation of the slaves] and therefore not to promote the welfare of the colony’, Wolbers, op. cit., p. 749. Wolbers was a fervent supporter of the abolition of slavery, which gives his history of Suriname a certain bias.} – but felt that it should not be implemented too hastily, since the plantations would otherwise lose their workforce; moreover, he felt that owners should receive proper compensation for their losses. He seems also to have supported the notion that the slaves needed to be ‘civilized’, being one of the few planters to build a church for his slaves, on De Drie Gebroeders plantation. And one of his opponents, Attorney-General Gefken, a former secretary of the abolitionist society (Maatschappij tot Afschaffing der Slavernij), described him as ‘a man who treats his slaves exceptionally well’.\footnote{Letter from Gefken to Groen van Prinsterer, 31/05/1858.} Reason perhaps why Van Emden was frequently annoyed by what he saw as the blinkered attitudes of those who argued for immediate emancipation.\footnote{He was joint-author of a brochure intended as a reply to the so-called Tank Circular (1848), in which a missionary of the Evangelical Brethren who had recently arrived in Suriname described slavery in all its horror. He was also the author of a petition – signed by many of the planters – to the minister of colonial affairs (1852) which stated that the emancipation of the slaves should be accompanied by reasonable compensation for the owners.} That he could be a difficult person to get on with is clear from the sketch included in a report to the minister of colonial affairs in which it is noted that ‘it was almost impossible to keep Van Emden in a good mood. He has been spoilt by praise and promises.’\footnote{ARA Ministerie van Koloniën; Verslag van vice-admiraal Rijk aan Minister van Koloniën Baud, 15/11/1844.}

Whether what enabled Van Emden to rise to such eminence and influence in Suriname’s colonial society was that he had renounced his Jewish faith in 1846 and become a Christian is hard to tell. It was probably not this, since he continued to be known as the ‘former Jew’.\footnote{Wolbers, op. cit., p. 749.} It seems more probable that it was his economic powerhouse and his formidable knowledge of the colony that made his advance possible. This is evidenced in the foreword by the former governor Van Sypesteyn to his Beschrijving van Suriname,\footnote{Wolbers, op. cit., p. 749.} who made use of the colonial archives for his study ‘and the rich treasure of books about the colony owned by Mr van Emden’, whom he thanked specifically.

During his own lifetime, and certainly after his death, a number of Van Em-

den’s children enjoyed careers that illustrate the definitive social emancipation of the Jews of Suriname. His eldest son married the daughter of the colony’s principal plantation-administrator, J. Zaal\footnote{In the 1840s Zaal managed no fewer than 52 plantations with almost 5,500 slaves, as well as being the joint owner of a plantation (Surinaamsche Almanak 1843).} and served for twenty years as government secretary. Two other sons followed a career in the judiciary and sat on the Colonial Council and its successor, the Colonial States (as chairman), while a fourth was eventually appointed district commissioner.\footnote{Surinaamsche Almanak, 1850–1900.} In the 1860s, people in Suriname spoke of the rule of the Van Emden family. Together with De La Parra they formed the vanguard of Jewish emancipation and integration, forcing a way into the highest echelons of society in nineteenth-century Suriname.

In short, the two groups that, after the native population, had lived in Suriname the longest both went through a process in the nineteenth century of integration and emancipation in society at large. The difference was that for the Afro-Surinamese the level at which the Jews were able to achieve these changes was only to come within their reach a century later.