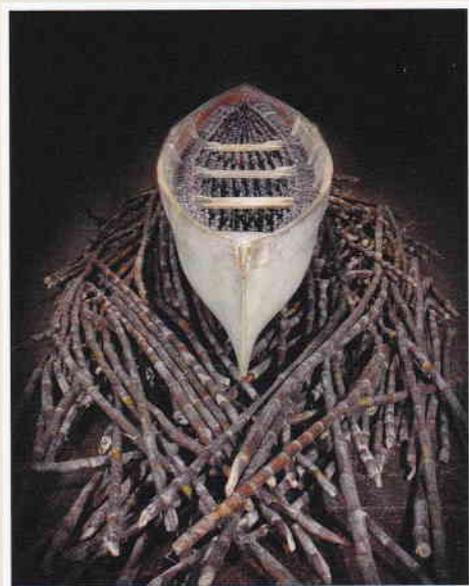
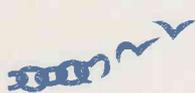
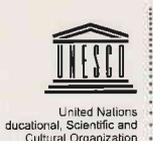


# Slavery, Resistance and Abolitions A Pluralist Perspective

Ali MOUSSA IYE, Nelly SCHMIDT, Paul E. LOVEJOY, Eds



A Contribution to  
the International Decade for People of African Descent  
2015–2024



The Slave Route:  
Resistance, Liberty, Heritage



# Contents

Foreword vii

TOYIN FALOLA, *Africa and Slavery in a Global Context* 1

ALAIN ANSELIN, *Work, Power and Society in Pharaonic Egypt* 45

ABDI M. KUSOW, *Slavery and the Slave Trade Within and Across the Red Sea Region: A Preliminary Conceptual Framework* 59

ABUBAKAR BABAJO SANI, *Slavery, Ecology and Commerce: A Study of Slave Estates and Trans-Saharan Trade in Katsina Emirate c. 1804–1903* 81

ABDULAZIZ Y. LODHI, *Slavery and the Slave Trade in East Africa* 91

JESÚS GUANCHE, *The Trans-American and Caribbean Slave Trade: A Broad Field to Explore* 109

QUINCE DUNCAN, *From Freedom to Survival to Dreaming Freedom: The Saga of Afro-Descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean* 123

ORUNO D. LARA, *UN Speech: The Haitian Revolution and the Rights Secured by the Descendants of the Victims of the Slave Trade, Slavery and the Colonial System in the Caribbean-Americas* 159

DOUDOU DIENE, *Cultural Resistance to Slavery: The Creation of Maroon Culture* 189

MICHELE A. JOHNSON, *In Slavery and Freedom: Domestic Service in the Caribbean* 197

ALEX VAN STIPRIAAN, *Suriname Maroons: A History of Intrusions into their Territories* 215

- MARÍA ELISA VELÁZQUEZ, Africans and Afro-Descendants in Mexico and Central America: Overview and Challenges for Studies of their Past and Present 225
- RINA CÁCERES, 'The African Diaspora in Frontier Lands': The Case of Spanish Central America during the Colonial Period 251
- ANA FREGA, Afro-Descendants and the Founding Story of the Nation: Monuments and Commemorative Dates 265
- VIJAYA TEELOCK AND JAYSHREE MUNGUR-MEDHI, Slavery in Mauritius: Between History and Memory 299
- SHIHAN DE SILVA JAYASURIYA, African Roots of South Asians 311
- NELLY SCHMIDT, Abolishing Slavery: A History and a Process As Yet Incomplete 325
- PAUL E. LOVEJOY, African Contributions to Science, Technology and Development 351
- MILTON GURAN, The Memory of Slavery and the Representation of Self in the Construction of the Social Identity of the Agudàs in Benin 385
- JOEL QUIRK, Combating 'Modern Slavery' in Rhetoric and Practice 405
- RICHARD BENJAMIN, The International Slavery Museum: A Gateway to Memory, Identity and Action 425
- HILARY McDONALD BECKLES, Issues in the Movement for Reparatory Justice for the Crimes of African Chattel Enslavement 439
- REX NETTLEFORD, UN Speech: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: The Psychic Inheritance 447

# Suriname Maroons

## A History of Intrusions into their Territories

*Alex van Stipriaan*

### BIOGRAPHY

Alex van Stipriaan Luïscius is Professor of Caribbean History at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Since the 1980s he has been working particularly on slavery and its aftermath in Suriname, as well as on heritage in the Dutch Caribbean islands. He has also published on diverse aspects of Afro-cultures, Caribbean art, Maroons, the search for African roots, and on traces and legacies of slavery in the Netherlands. He has also curated museum exhibitions on, among other topics, slavery, Maroons and race relations.

### ABSTRACT

Maroonage has been an important aspect of the history of slavery in Suriname. Maroons liberated themselves and conquered a more or less autonomous place beyond the borders of colonial society. At the same time, they remained dependent on that society for their subsistence. This made them enter the colonial money economy, although they stayed in relative isolation. When it turned out that their territories held enormously rich natural resources, a process of intrusion was started by colonial society to appropriate these riches. This has not stopped in postcolonial times. As a result, Maroons have found themselves constantly split between wanting to earn money to buy goods and prosperity, while in doing so, contributing to the destruction of the lifestyle they created during and after slavery.

From the very first moment that Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas, they made successful attempts to escape slavery and start a new life far from colonial centres. This process did not stop until the last days before the abolition of slavery. In Suriname, the process began with the first English plantations that were built there from 1650 and continued, increasingly, after the takeover by the Dutch in 1667 until the Emancipation on 1 July 1863.

Essentially, there were two types of maroonage: so-called *petit marronage* (small-scale maroonage) and *grand marronage* (large-scale maroonage). The first refers to the individuals and small groups who absconded from the yoke of slavery without the direct intention of settling deep into the interior of the colony. This

was often a temporary action, sometimes even a form of strike (van Stipriaan 1995), which often ended in a forced or voluntary return to the plantation or the slave master. It could be an impulsive, desperation action, but also a well-thought-out plan. Sometimes the refugees stayed away for only a few days; in other cases they stayed at the edges of the colonised area for years. Despite the fact that the flight was temporary, the *petit marronage* made clear that the power of the enslaver was limited and that it would never succeed in enslaving the Africans completely. The colonial authorities and the slave owners considered the *petit marronage* as a kind of business risk. Admittedly, it was difficult and it cost money, but up until the nineteenth century, it was hardly considered a threat. That changed when it gradually became clear that *petit marronage* was undermining the system from the inside out and had become an effective strike weapon of what in the meantime was actually becoming an enslaved (proto-) peasantry (see van Stipriaan 1995).

*Grand marronage* was the process whereby groups of refugees gathered in the unexplored, non-colonised forests of the interior of the colony to set up independent communities and to attack the colony from there. These actions focused on the liberation of – sometimes literally – brothers and sisters who still lived in slavery, and also on obtaining people and means to maintain the group, varying from tools, seeds and weapons to women.

It is truly remarkable that the Maroons undertook so many actions against the colonisers, because these actions always provoked a military response and resulted in long-term pursuit campaigns aimed at their extermination. The Maroons thus led a fairly hunted existence. In addition, they had to survive in an environment that was initially unknown to them, against which they had to protect themselves, although they were sometimes helped by the original inhabitants of the territory, the Indigenous, or Native Surinamese. This double threat to Maroons obviously stimulated strong forms of social organisation, kinship and religious systems, which developed from a very early stage.

Colonial society experienced *grand marronage* as very threatening. It was a daily challenge to the slave system on which the entire colonial existence was based, and the costs in money and human lives were huge. Moreover, for the enslaved the mere existence of Maroon villages formed living proof that there was an alternative to slavery, however slight this might be. Because of the locations of the Maroons in swampy or densely wooded areas, and also because of the wooden palisades – protective walls and pitfalls behind which they were entrenched – it was difficult for the colonial armies to pursue and fight the Maroons. And this was complicated even more by their inability to deal with the guerrilla tactics used by the Maroons.

Initially, it was predominantly men who fled slavery. Women had less opportunity to escape because of the care they had to provide for the children and usually

also for the elderly. Men often did not always live with them and were more mobile. Therefore, there was always a great shortage of women among the Maroons, especially during their formation period. Obviously, for the survival of the group, women were of vital importance, which is why obtaining women was often part of the raids Maroons undertook on the slave plantations. Often, women did not want to join the Maroons and only went with them involuntarily. Maroon existence was hard and difficult and their future very uncertain. It often happened that women with their children eventually returned to the plantations they had come from. Emotionally, this must have been extremely difficult; because of their children and relatives, they exchanged the relative freedom of Maroon life for the non-freedom of slavery (van Stipriaan 1992). Price (2003) points out that the chronic female shortage regularly led to mutual conflicts, too. Also, raids for women were sometimes undertaken among the Indigenous people, which led to tensions in the free territories of the interior. Indigenous people were of great significance for the Maroons virtually everywhere. They were the original inhabitants of their settlements and knew them very well. The Maroons could learn from them, and they could trade with them and maintain other forms of exchange. At the same time, the Indigenous people were sometimes competitors or even enemies, because they served as guides for the colonial armies. This combination of cooperation and suspicion led to an often ambiguous relationship between Maroons and Indigenous people.

This ambiguity can also be found in the mutual relationships between and within the Maroon communities (Price 2003). Disagreement about women was often the breeding ground for this; adultery with someone else's wife was one of the most serious offences. With respect to newcomers – who could be traitors – a great suspicion also often applied. Long waiting times and even forms of imprisonment often preceded admission to the Maroon community.

Between 1650 and 1750, many smaller groups eventually formed a few larger Maroon peoples. The most important ones were and still are, the N'dyuka or Okanisi in the southeast and a later split off the Paramaka or Paamaka in the east; the Boni or Aluku also in the east (now mainly in French Guiana) and the Sara-maka or Saamaka and Matawai and Kwinti in Central Suriname. At one point the Maroons had become such a major threat to the slave colony that the colonial authorities thought it was more sensible to make peace with most of them in exchange for peace and the delivery of new refugees. The Maroons were thus definitively recognised in their freedom, had the promise that they would no longer be attacked in their territories and received a sort of tribute payment in the form of an annual cargo supply. Of course, delivery of new Maroons as well as the tribute payments often led to conflicts. However, when finally, the Aluku, with whom no peace treaty had been settled, retreated to neighbouring French

Guiana around 1780, the Maroon wars were over. Incidentally, these peace agreements were not unique to Suriname. Other slave colonies sooner or later made peace with Maroon groups as well, such as Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Mexico and Jamaica (Price 2003, 609). The phenomenon was taken over and replicated as a useful means of dealing with Maroons and vice versa. For example, the Surinamese peace treaties of 1760 (N'dyuka) and 1762 (Saamaka and Matawai) were based on those of Jamaica from 1739 and 1740, and both parties concerned used this method. In the prelude to the Surinamese peace treaties, it turned out that a Maroon negotiator named Boston even appeared to have possession of the text of the Jamaican peace agreements (Dragtenstein 2002).

In many slave colonies, after the peace treaties the Maroon communities disappeared and gradually merged into the colony. None of the Maroon communities remained entirely independent of colonial economies. Trade (exchange) took place everywhere, legally or illegally, since the Maroons could not produce some products themselves, such as gunpowder, rifles, iron tools and other necessities. This also applied to the Surinamese Maroons; however, they belong to the few who maintained contact with the colonial society, but at the same time managed to continue to live their autonomous existence outside colonial territory. That autonomous space, however, turned out to become increasingly threatened when it became clear how rich their territory actually was.

From the peace treaties of the mid-eighteenth century and the withdrawal of the Boni/Aluku in French Guiana a few decades later until the end of the nineteenth century, this autonomous Maroon territory in Surinamese interior lands was largely 'terra incognita' for the colonial society in the northern coastal strip; there weren't even maps of it. The only interest that the colony in the region showed was in logging, which was provided by the Maroons. For them this meant an important source of income, with which they could purchase goods in the colony that they themselves did not produce. Thus, despite their relative isolation, they were part of the colonial money economy at an early stage, long before the abolition of slavery. At that time, their number was estimated to be around five thousand.<sup>1</sup>

An example is the Groot-Marseille sugar plantation along the Cottica River. The plantation bookkeeping shows that in the 1820s the N'dyuka traded a large amount of processed wood each year for an average of 2,200 litres of dram, a rough type of rum, plus an average amount of 850 guilders. Together this amounted to approximately 1,150 guilders, as much as the annual salary of the director of this plantation.<sup>2</sup> With the money earned, consumer goods were purchased, such as weapons, pots

and textiles. It must have been a strange situation when the acting Maroons came to trade with the plantations where the working population still lived in slavery. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1863, logging remained important and the Maroons almost got a monopoly in this field. However, when the colonial authorities started to realise how dependent the colonial economy had become on the Maroons in this respect and how much money they could earn with it themselves, they intervened. 'The sooner the entire property disappears and is taken up among the ordinary residents of the colony, the better [...]' and '[...] those gentlemen have already played the boss in our upper rivers for too long', stated some senior officials in 1904 (quoted in Scholtens 1994, 58). As a result, logging was released for anyone who wanted to do it, and by 1920 half of this activity was in the hands of private companies. Increasingly larger concessions were issued by the authorities, which was not in keeping with the autonomy of the Maroon habitats and thus often led to major conflicts. Therefore, the colonial Maroon supervisor at that time said, 'The only means of preventing such instances of legal uncertainty seems to me to gradually deprive the Bushnegroes of the right to cut wood wherever they want. Incidentally, it is also generally desirable to bring these Bushnegroes gradually more directly under the authority of the [colonial] Board' (quoted in Scholtens 1994, 181). When, as a consequence of this new policy the Saamaka granman (supreme Maroon authority) Dyankuso was summoned to the city against his will in 1924, he sighed: 'We have come here to listen to the laws that the whites make for us, about us, without us' (cited in Scholtens 1994, 83).

### Increasing Intrusions

It was clear to the colonial government that the interior part of the country had much more potential than previously thought. Between 1855 and 1890, at least ten cartographic and geological expeditions took place and another seven between 1901 and 1911. Many of the old Surinamese collections in European museums nowadays consist of objects collected during all these expeditions. However, apart from this exotic interest in Maroon culture, colonial entrepreneurs and authorities felt like the Maroons were an obstacle to colonial progress. But at the same time, they could not possibly do without their cooperation. Maroons were at home in the interior. It had been their territory for a long time; to those from the colony it still was unknown and almost 'foreign' jungle territory. Generally, Maroons did not greatly like these strange, prying eyes. Although it generated revenue, many expeditions and commercial enterprises were thwarted because their territorial rights were violated and they knew that ultimately these activities would maybe not be in their best interest. The observations of expedition leaders are telling in this respect. Although they praise the capabilities of Maroons as jungle guides and boatmen, they mainly

1 Cf. National Archives Netherlands, Ministry of Colonies, A796.

2 Philadelphia, James Ford Bell Library, arch. B1482.

portray them as lazy and unreliable; the N'dyuka granman Alabi was, for example, described as 'hateful of Europeans and a schemer' (Wentholt 2003, 151).

In some places Maroons managed to keep out the intruders for a long time. For example, a colonial official reported that specific areas had been declared by the N'dyuka as no-go areas for outsiders, 'on the pretext that their Gods forbade it', he stated. They refused to allow gold diggers and others access to the area, or, elsewhere, they – 'as rightful owners of the lands' – demanded tax from the yields of these outsiders (Van Lier 1919, 19; Scholtens 1994, 91). Nevertheless, the colonial government had already issued between 700,000 and 1,000,000 acres of land – to gold concessions – along the Upper Suriname, the Saramacca, the Marowijne and the Lawa rivers, all areas inhabited by Maroons. The 5,000 to 10,000 people working on the concessions in the forests were predominantly outsiders; still, the gold sector and the balata (natural rubber) sector became the big money-makers for Maroons. With their knowledge of the interior of Suriname, they made themselves indispensable as boatmen, guides, cargo carriers and unskilled labourers. The peak of this new wealth was reached between 1900 and 1925. Obviously, colonial Surinamese and foreign gold, balata and timber companies made the real money, but Maroons also managed to get their piece of the pie. When, for example, the Balata Company was shut down in 1931 because of severe foreign competition, about one-third of the more than 1,000 redundant workers were Maroon. At that time about 20,000 Maroons lived in Suriname, almost without exception in their traditional territories (Scholtens 1994, 89–94).

The most important sector for the Maroons was cargo shipping with their long canoes. The highlight of that activity coincided, obviously, with that of the gold and balata production between 1880 and 1930. These activities mainly took place in East Suriname and neighbouring French Guiana, meaning that especially the N'dyuka and the Paamaka were active in these sectors. Yet, large groups of Saamaka, Matawai and Aluku participated too, sometimes causing mutual tension (Scholtens 1994, 81). However, every Maroon involved in cargo shipping earned quite a bit of money, which made the intrusion of the money economy into Maroon societies deeper and deeper. Estimates of the annual number of cargo-shipping runs range from 1,000 to 2,500, with at least two or three Maroons being involved in each trip. This means that many hundreds of Maroon households – and probably more, because many men had several women – benefited from cargo. On average, a bagasiman (cargo boatman) earned around four guilders per day, though a substantial proportion of that went to the Maroon boat owner. An indentured labourer on a plantation, however, received on average about sixty to eighty cents a day, which the bagasiman considered a tip, at most. In the period 1880–1920, their average annual income was around 2,500 guilders, in those days a capital (Scholtens 1994, 62; Thoden van Velzen 2003, 25).

Maroons actually had a monopoly position in cargo shipping, a situation which the colonial government looked on with dismay. They tried to gain control by introducing all kinds of new rules and pass systems. In 1921, a large strike broke out among the boatmen when gold and balata production declined and freight rates dropped, while at the same time the prices of goods in the stores increased. Moreover, most of the bagasiman were illiterate and were often deceived by the weight of the freight shipped by their clients. Eventually the colonial Maroon supervisor broke the strike by manipulating the political and religious affairs of the N'dyuka and humiliating their granman. The sociocultural damage he caused was still felt four decades later when an anthropologist was hit 'by the sharpness of the feelings about the strike, the aversion felt for Maroon supervising official Van Lier and the tensions that still existed between some of the descendants' (Thoden van Velzen 2003, 48).

An even larger effect than the intrusions of the gold, balata and logging enterprises came from the rise of a new industry: bauxite mining and refining, which began to boom from the 1940s onward. In particular, the construction of the reservoir in Central Suriname for the benefit of that new industry had a lasting impact. During the 1920s, when gold and balata production were beginning to decline, the American multinational Alcoa started winning bauxite in Suriname, the raw material for aluminium, and was later joined by the Dutch multinational company, Billiton. Soon bauxite became the largest production and export sector of the country, which was further stimulated by the Second World War's enormous demand for aluminium for military aircraft production. Moengo became the bauxite company town of Suriname, in the middle of the Maroon area, but Maroons were not allowed to settle there and only entered with a day pass.

As bauxite production increased, energy requirements also grew exponentially. In 1958 a large infrastructure project was started in order to build a dam in the Suriname River and thereby generate hydroelectric energy. The Maroons, however, were not consulted and many of them did not understand what was going on until the very end. Quite a few even worked as labourers on the construction of the dam. In just a few years, nearly 1,600 square kilometres were flooded and five to six thousand Maroons had to leave their original habitat. The grounds of their ancestors, the holy places of the spirits, the villages, their livelihood, everything drowned. A large number of the expelled Maroons ended up in soulless transmigration villages closer to the city, which today still offer a desolate sight. Others settled south of the reservoir. The promised financial and material compensation was very disappointing and not paid at all or only partially paid (see Landveld 2009). The facilities also lagged behind what had been promised, and prosperity (including electricity) at the time never reached the Maroons further to the south. Moreover, the situation widened the gap more than ever between Maroons in the interior and the townspeople. Their complaints and protests were seen in the city

as an obstacle to progress, including by descendants of those who had once come to Suriname enslaved like them. Statements could be heard to the effect that they should be happy 'now that instead of palm leaves they have a house with a roof over their head', and 'let the government send them back to Africa, there they will learn what suffering is' (Landveld 2009, 7).

The Maroons involved, including those in majority Saamaka and also some N'dyuka, felt abandoned. They were almost literally uprooted and experienced the reservoir as the umpteenth attack on their existence, which was characterised by a long history of contempt for their rights by 'the city'. In the meantime, the city of Paramaribo was no longer a colonial Dutch capital, but had become in 1975 the centre of the independent Republic of Suriname. To Maroons this hardly made a difference. Or actually it did, for the worse. In 1986 a civil war broke out between the army of the then-military coup leader (and currently democratically elected president) Bouterse, and a rebel group led by the Maroon, Brunswijk, Bouterse's former bodyguard. Many Maroons died, the population of the village of Moiwana was massacred, and tens of thousands of Maroons fled from their homesteads, many of them to refugee camps in neighbouring French Guiana. Most have to this day never returned to their original villages. Meanwhile, the two rivals built up great interests in the once-again-flourishing gold sector, and both have been convicted in absentia in the Netherlands for large-scale drug trafficking via the Surinamese interior. This new gold sector is now the biggest ecological threat for the Maroons. Large areas are deforested, huge amounts of mercury are ending up in the environment, and cyanide is leaking from industrial waste tanks. In addition, a whole new population group has been added to the inhabitants of the interior, namely several tens of thousands of Brazilian gold diggers. The Central Bank of Suriname calculated in 2014 that about a third of the total workforce in Suriname is employed in the gold sector – not counting thousands of illegal immigrants – including a very large number of Maroons.<sup>3</sup> The latter group are in a complicated paradoxical situation. On the one hand, gold mining offers perspectives on prosperity much larger and more within reach than ever before. On the other hand, gold is structurally undermining and poisoning the world they have built up on their own since the days of slavery.

### In Conclusion

Maroons are considered by most Surinamese to be the heroes of resistance against slavery. They even managed to force the colonial authorities into peace, including

3 [https://www.cbvs.sr/images/content/governors/2014/LeadingSectorsofSurinameDecember2014.pdf] (accessed 10-08-2017)

tribute payment and recognition of their more or less autonomous residential areas. Since then they have been able to build up their societies and culture in relative peace. However, they remained dependent on the colonial economy for specific utensils and consumer goods. After the abolition of slavery in 1863, when it became increasingly clear how rich the area is that the Maroons lived in, a relentless process was initiated by the colonial society and its postcolonial successor to invade and exploit that area. To this end, Maroons were indispensable as guides and transporters, but otherwise they were mainly considered an obstacle in the way. Traditional rights turned out to be worth nothing. Descendants of those with whom they had previously lived in slavery, but who had gone into maroonage, had begun to look down on them after Emancipation and even support the intruders of Maroon territory. Eventually they even became part of the postcolonial governments from whom Maroons could expect as little as from the colonial governments before. Traditional rights were not respected at all, mineral and other resources were taken away from them, and their environment deteriorated quickly. As a result, they have taken up arms again, but this time juridically. Twice they presented their case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and twice, in 2005 and 2007, the court ruled in their favour. However, this so-called land rights issue has still not been settled definitively. Meanwhile, Maroons increasingly leave their original habitat, and half of them now live in and around the city of Paramaribo, mostly in second-rate neighbourhoods.<sup>4</sup> There is, however, one important difference than before: Maroons have gathered in two – opposing – Maroon political parties, which are represented in parliament and are on and off part of government coalitions. They are now intruding into the territory of the intruders. It remains to be seen, however, whether this will lead to a stronger and more respected position, or to their gradual incorporation in the Suriname nation state.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dragtenstein, Frank, 2002. *'De ondraaglijke stoutheid der wegloopers'; Marronage en koloniaal beleid in Suriname, 1667-1768*. Utrecht: Culturele Antropologie Universiteit Utrecht.
- Landveld, Erney R.A.O., 2009. *Alles is voor eeuwig weg; de transmigratie van Marrons in historisch perspectief*. Paramaribo: Bureau Conos.
- Lie, Willem F. van, 1919. *Iets over de Boschnegers in de Boven-Marowijne*. Paramaribo: Van Ommeren.

4 Half of the estimated 118.000 Maroons in Suriname now live in and around Paramaribo; between 2004 and 2012, their share in the urban population went up from 10 to 16 per cent [file:///C:/Users/gebruiker/Downloads/presentatie-districts-resultaten-vol1-070314.pdf] (accessed 10-08-2017)

- Price, Richard, 2003. Maroons and their communities. In: Gad Heuman and James Walvin, eds., *The Slavery Reader*. London: Routledge, 608–25.
- Scholtens, Ben, 1994. *Bosnegers en overheid in Suriname. De ontwikkeling van de politieke verhouding 1651-1992*. Paramaribo: Afd. Cultuurstudies/Minov.
- Stipriaan, Alex van, 1992. Het dilemma van plantageslaven: weglopen of blijven? *Oso, Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse Taalkunde, Letterkunde, Cultuur en Geschiedenis* 11/2, 122–41.
- Stipriaan, Alex van, 1996. Suriname and the abolition of slavery. In: G. Oostindie, ed., *Fifty Years Later: Antislavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 117–42.
- Wentholt, Arnold, ed., 2003. *In kaart gebracht met kapmes en kompas. Met het KNAG op expeditie tussen 1873 en 1960*. Heerlen/Utrecht: ABP/KNAG.