People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman

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Abbreviations and Symbols

M = mother; F = father; D = daughter; S = son; B = brother; Z = sister H = husband; W = wife. Thus MZS = mother's sister's son.

[Diagram of male]

[Diagram of female]

[Diagram of marriage]

[Diagram of siblingship]

[Diagram of deceased]

[Diagram of migrant]
Introduction

The primary aim of this study is to fill a gap in ethnographic knowledge. When we planned the research, the Matawai was one of the few Bush Negro or Maroon tribes in Suriname, that had remained unstudied\(^1\). At the beginning of our field research another anthropologist, Edward Green, worked in the Matawai area. Partly because of the rapid migration to town, some anthropologists considered a study of the Matawai to be urgent (Lenoir personal communication). We decided to focus on a restricted number of subjects that were thought to be most deeply affected by recent change. These subjects were religion, demography (including migration) and social organization. It must be noted that as a consequence of this initial choice and of our divergent research interests, this study contains some discontinuities between its constituent parts. In fact, the different nature of, for instance, demographic and religious phenomena, does not permit a common framework. A central theme throughout the book is social change. Due to rapid social change an ethnographic account of the Matawai would be inadequate if it does not consider both Christianity and the traditional Afro-American religion, and both the tribal and urban segments of the Matawai society.

One particular idea has dominated this study more than others. As anthropologists we felt that it was important to concentrate on a single village in order to arrive at a thorough understanding of social processes as they are manifest in a local, small-scale community, involving a limited number of individuals. The advantages of such an approach have been elaborated by van Velsen (1967) and Cohen (1971).
On the other hand, we were well aware of the limitations of such a study. A major problem, as has been aptly pointed out by Köbben (1971: 42), involves whether a village study is representative of a larger area or the whole Matawai tribe. Anthropologists are increasingly becoming aware of regional variations within small areas (see for instance, Pelto and Pelto 1975, Quinn 1975). Moreover, in the case of demography conclusions can not be drawn on the basis of a village with a small population because of the influence of random factors. For these reasons we have chosen to adopt a two-fold approach:

a) We chose to live primarily in one village, that was, in fact, surrounded by three other villages which together constituted our primary research unit.

b) We collected quantitative data for the whole tribe to discover variations of quantifiable characteristics in the different areas. This twofold task required that one of us stayed a few months in the downriver area to perform census work, while the other remained in the upriver village to observe social life within the village.

The fieldwork was carried out in the period between November 1972 and January 1975. Throughout the period from November 1972 until March 1974 we resided in the village, with the exception of a few brief visits to Paramaribo. During the second half of 1974 we lived near Paramaribo to study Matawai life in town.

During our field research, our work was to a large degree determined by events in village life that occurred during our stay. After participating in village councils, we attempted to explore concepts, background and customs with the aid of key-informants. Meanwhile we worked simultaneously on the development of a framework for the collection of quantitative data among the Matawai and finally on the collection of census data. The aim of the census was to provide demographic information on the Matawai population, marital histories, work etc. The information acquired, was more extensive in the upriver area than in the downriver villages because of the fact that we spent more time in that area.

Throughout the first three to four months of our research, we worked primarily in Boslanti and the cluster of the surrounding upriver villages. Much of the time was devoted to language study both in informal contexts and with the aid of an informant-interpreter. During
the following four months, we gradually began to prepare census work. Genealogies for the upriver villages were collected and compiled to provide a framework for the study of social organization and population processes. The aim of the genealogies was to provide complete population lists, that were necessary for our census work. By the end of this period we were able to begin census work in the upriver villages. Meanwhile we continued to complete genealogies for the other villages. Due to the absence of a number of villagers, it took us more than a year to complete census work in the upriver area. Meanwhile we started census taking in the downriver area. Throughout the course of our research the census work and the observation of social events taking place in the village proceeded concurrently. In the last stage of our research fieldwork was conducted among the Matawai who had migrated to town. In this preliminary research we focused on the development of the urban Matawai as a distinct ethnic group and on their relationship with the wider Surinamese society. One of us returned to Boslanti, during this period, to finish some research tasks. For aims of comparison we have divided Matawai territory into four areas, libasei 1 and 2 in the upriver area and bausei 1 and 2 in the downriver area. The villages situated in each cluster are indicated on map 2.

Arrangement of the material

The sections that follow in the introductory chapter are aimed at providing some information to situate Matawai society in a geographical and historical perspective. In this context a short summary is given of the economic life of the Matawai. In part 1 we focus on some aspects of social organization, in particular lineage organization, marriage, divorce and fosterage. The subject matter of part 2 is religion. When Christianity was introduced in the Matawai area more than a century ago, a strong affiliation with the church developed, without, however, obliterating the persistent significance of the Afro-American religion. The relations between the traditional religion and Christianity are explored. The topic of part 3 is demography. In particular, we present an analysis of fertility and of migration to the coast. In the final part an account will be given of recent developments in Matawai society and some speculations will be presented on its future.
Sources on the Matawai

Although the number of publications on Bush Negroes is quite extensive, (see, for instance, the bibliographies in Van der Elst 1970 and Price 1976), publications that deal particularly with the smaller tribes such as the Kwinti, Paramaka and Matawai are scarce. The few existent accounts of expeditions to the Saramacca river (Cateau van Rosevelt 1871; van Stockum 1904) do not give detailed information about the Matawai. The major sources on the Matawai are the accounts of the missionaries. Early relations between Matawai and Amerindians and those between Matawai and Saramaka are mentioned in Quandt (1807) and Staehelin (1913-19). The interest of the international missionary press was aroused after the religious movement of the Mataawai prophet Johannes King. Two publications contain information on political succession in Matawai society (Benjamins 1916, Wong 1938). Recently, the American anthropologist Green has written a Ph.D. thesis on Matawai acculturation (1974) and articles on various subjects (1976, 1977, 1978).

A geographical sketch

The borders of the former Dutch colony Suriname that acquired the status of an independent republic in 1975, are bounded by two large rivers, the Corantijn river in the west and the Marowijne and Lawa river in the east. The southern border is formed by the watershed of rivers, tributaries and creeks which flow into the Amazone river and those rivers flowing north into the Atlantic Ocean. The landscape can be divided in three main types: the interior covered with tropical rain forest and savannas, the older coastplain with a vegetation of swamp forest and finally, the younger coastplain with swamps and occasionally low forest. Before the period of colonization that began in the early 17th century, the Guianas were exclusively inhabited by Amerindians who presently constitute only a small portion of the population, living in the interior. During the plantation period Maroon settlements were established along the main rivers in the interior. Presently, they are divided into six tribal groups. The Djuka reside primarily along the Tapanahoni, Marowijne and Cottica rivers and number about 20.000 persons. Of almost
equal size is the tribe of the Saramaka who live along the Suriname river. The Aluku or Boni are smaller in size, residing primarily in French Guiana but also in a village on the Suriname side of the Lawa. The Paramaka live along the Marowijne. The Kwinti partially along the Saramacca and partially along the Coppenama rivers. And the Matawai reside along the Saramacca river (see map 1). The Matawai territory is situated in the heart of Suriname's tropical forest. The present settlements of the Matawai are located along a stretch of the Saramacca river between 5.00 and 4.00 degrees north of the equator. During the first half of the 19th century a number of new villages were settled along the Saramacca, downriver from Kwakugoon, close to Paramaribo, where Bush Negroes of non-Matawai origin came to live. Nowadays these villages have a mixed population of Saramaka, Djuka, Matawai and also some Kwinti. In 1974 the Matawai gaaman acquired authority over these villages.

The Matawai villages are to be found north of the railway station Kwakugoon. The railway, constructed for the gold industry in the beginning of this century, is still the main transit route from the Matawai territory to the coastal area. The Saramaka villages north of the Brokopondo lake are also connected by this railway to the Matawai territory. The river serves as a major traffic route between the villages. A few trails connect the Saramacca river with the Coppenama and the Suriname river, but these days the trails are seldom used and they have no longer significance for intra-tribal relations. Recently, two airstrips (see map 2) directly link the villages of Posugunu and Njukonde with Paramaribo. These airstrips have been of crucial importance for the development of medical care in the Matawai area.

The climate in Suriname is characterized by sun, warmth and rain. The variations in temperature are greater in the interior than in the coastal plain where seawinds reduce the daytime temperature. Temperatures in the interior average 27 C. The high levels of rainfall cause high humidity throughout the year. Four seasons are recognized:

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<td>early December to early February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short dry season</td>
<td>early February to the end of April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long rainy season</td>
<td>end of April to mid-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long dry season</td>
<td>mid-August to early December</td>
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Map 1 Distribution of Bush Negro tribes in Suriname
The contrast between the long rainy season and the long dry season are most significant. In figure 1 we present data on rainfall in the village of Boslanti in the upper Saramacca region in comparison with data from Paramaribo.

The water-level of a relatively small river like the Saramacca tends to react rapidly to variations in rainfall. After a rainy night the water-level may rise more than a meter. During the dry season it may reach such a low level that boat traffic becomes almost impossible. After a long rainy period the water-level may become so high that the villagers need a boat to reach their own houses. Most houses are build on piles. The highest annual variation in the water-level observed in the Saramacca river has been five meters.

![Figure 1 Monthly rainfall for Paramaribo and Boslanti](image)

**Some historical notes on the Matawai**

Before colonization, the Guianas were almost exclusively inhabited by Carib and Arowak Indians. In the course of the first half of the 17th century some attempts were made to settle trade posts and tobacco plantations in Suriname. The first settlers were Europeans from France, England and the Netherlands. The history of Suriname as a plantation colony began with the settlement of a group of about hundred people
Map 2 Location of Matawai villages
from the island of Barbados led by Lord Willoughby. According to Rens (1952: 14) some years after the establishment of the English colony in 1651, the first Negro slaves were imported from Barbados. In 1666 a number of Portuguese Jews settled in the colony, together with many of their slaves. In 1667 the colony came into Dutch hands. This was the beginning of regular large-scale importation of slaves from Africa, needed for the plantation production (see Price 1976: 7-9). Already in the first period of colonization of Suriname slaves escaped from the plantations. In 1684, a first peace treaty was concluded with three different groups of Amerindians, and also with the so-called Condie Negroes. When the slave force increased, marronage and the subsequent attacks on the plantations became a serious threat to the colony. In 1731 governor de Cheuses decided to send a military expedition to the Maroons to establish a peace treaty. The Maroons did not thrust in the promises that were made and the expedition failed. Because the costs of the military expeditions against the Maroons were very high - Hartsinck estimated that the cost of one expedition was at least one hundred thousand guilders - governor Mauritius returned to the idea of a peace treaty with the Maroons as the best means of protecting the plantations. If the Maroons would be pacified, they would prevent further marronage and the attacks on the plantations would stop. In 1749, despite resistance on the part of the settlers, he sent an expedition led by Creutz to speak to the head of the Maroons, Adu, in the Upper Saramacca. The peace treaty that resulted did not last long. When a small group was sent to bring the promised presents to the Maroons, it was attacked by one of the Maroon leaders named Samsam and no member of the expedition ever returned to the colony. According to Mauricius, the Maroons who lived in the Upper Saramacca were descendants of slaves who ran away during the English period before 1667. Most of them had been born in the forest and only a few had ever seen a white person (Mauritius cited in van Sypestijn 1854: 54, see also Herlein 1718: 116). More than a decade later the attempt to negotiate peace with the Maroons in this area was renewed. In 1760 a peace treaty was concluded with the Auca Negroes, who lived near the Djuka creek, a tributary of the Marowijne river, and who later became known as the Djuka. A year later the government succeeded in concluding a treaty with
the Maroons who lived in the area between the Suriname and the Saramacca rivers. In fact, they constituted three groups, the main group under the leadership of Abini, a second group under Samsam - these groups became known as the Saramaka - and finally a group who lived along the Saramacca river under the leadership of Becu and Musinga. This was the group of the Matawai who in older documents is also known as Becu- and Musinga Negroes. The truce was arranged by Abini who was considered the major leader. The treaty was soon broken by Musinga who was offended by the fact that he had not shared in the presents provided by the government. Musinga reacted by stealing 150 slaves from the plantations. In 1763 the peace treaty was again renewed (see Wong 1938: 318). In the treaties, the relations between the government and the Maroons were set out. The Maroons were obliged to return the slaves who came to their villages and to assist the government in the struggle against hostile Amerindians and fugitive slaves. They were permitted to come in small numbers to the coast to trade their products and were promised a number of yearly presents if they adhered to the treaty. These consisted of machetes, guns, gunpowder, cloth and other essentials. The presents were later given once in two years, and finally once in four years. In 1849 the last presents were distributed(5).

The period 1760-1780 was marked by tense relations between the government and the group under the leadership of Becu and Musinga. In 1761, for instance, they burnt the missionpost Saron where the Moravian missionaries had gathered a number of Amerindian converts (Staehelin 1913-19, II(5): 195-197). Some women and children were abducted to stay among the Matawai. Musinga's act in 1762 has been described above. In 1765 he attacked four plantations in the Para district and again made off with slaves. Both Abini's group and Maroons living along the Coppename river joined the government to battle Musinga and his people. On this occasion, Abini was shot by Musinga and the others had to return to their villages. Despite the small size (about 150) of the Matawai group, they caused a great deal of trouble for the colony. Finally, in 1767 the government was able to renew the peace with them. However, their refusal to return the slaves to the government remained a serious point of conflict. Still in 1778 mention is made of fighting between government troops and Becu who worked with some of the slaves.
According to oral history accounts, the Matawai and Saramaka came independently to the Upper Saramacca where, according to some interpretations, they lived for a while together on Hansesipow (litt. beautiful rope), a large mountain nowadays known as Tafelberg or Tafa birgi. When fear for the colonial troops began to decrease, they came down to settle in a large village called Toido, situated along the Tukumutu, a tributary of the Saramacca river. Probably, not long before the peace treaty of 1762 the Saramaka moved to the area between the Suriname and the Saramacca and along the Suriname river. The notes and diaries of the missionaries who settled in one of the Saramaka villages in 1765, indicate that the Matawai and the Saramaka maintained regular contacts (see Staehelin 1913-19, III(3): 187, 190). The relations between the two tribes, however became tense after the death of Abini.

During the 1820s, members of both the Djuka and the Saramaka began to settle in the downriver area on the outskirts of the plantation colony\(^a\). A small group of Matawai also moved into this area and established the village of Maipaston. After 1850 a number of villages shifted from the area south of the rapids to the region between the great falls. It was at this time that a group of Maroons who had been living in the forests made peace with the Matawai and joined them along the Saramacca river. These people, the Kwinti or Kofimaka Negroes, first lived among the Matawai in the village of Ameikan, and later settled in their own village of Kwangu. A group of the Kwinti left the Saramacca after a conflict with the Matawai gaanman Noah Adai (see de Beet and Sterman 1980: 16-22).

After 1860 Matawai history is dominated by the introduction of Christianity. We will elaborate upon the impact of this religion in a chapter on the development of Christianity.

**Population density**

The part of the Saramacca river above Kwakugoon that is considered to be Matawai territory proper is only sparsely populated. The 19 villages (17 inhabited by Matawai and 2 by Kwinti) are unevenly distributed.
along the river. There are three clusters of villages (see map 2). The largest cluster consists of the villages around Boslanti and has a total population of about 400. There are no indications of land scarcity along the Saramacca river. In the past, shifts in village locations have been explained by the scarcity of land suitable for horticultural purposes. However, even in the most densely populated Matawai area where people have cultivated their gardens for about a century in a restricted area around the villages, we have never heard of conflicts concerning horticultural land. In fact all gardens are still cleared within a relatively short distance from the villages, reachable within a few hours. Although the discussion of carrying capacity - the theoretical limit to which a population can grow and still be supported permanently by the environment - in tropical forest areas has largely concentrated on available land (see Caneiro 1960), the importance of other resources such as animal protein of game and fish is becoming increasingly recognized. Gross, for instance, has argued that the availability of animal protein may explain the differences in size, form and permanence of Amerindian villages in the Amazon basin (1975).

Returning to the Matawai it must be emphasized that despite the limited population numbers residing along the river, game and fish have become quite scarce, especially in the areas in close proximity to the villages. For this reason men may travel several days before reaching the favourable hunting grounds. Migration to the coast and the move of villages to the downriver area have contributed to the fact that despite population growth population pressure remained relatively constant.

A word about migration

In the chapter on migration we will elaborate a number of factors that have contributed to shifts in mobility patterns. The rapid migration of the Mataway to the coast during the last few decades has changed Mataway society such that it can no longer be considered as an isolated cultural entity. The exodus to the coast has divided the Mataway into tribal and urban segments which do, however, maintain close relations. The demographic characteristics of the two segments diverge and deeply effect the social organization. Not all villages have been equally effected by
the migration flow. In fact, the majority of the migrants originate from the downriver villages. In the part dealing with social organization we will elaborate the effects of migration on particular institutions such as marriage and divorce, fosterage and lineage organization. When there are large variations within the Matawai area we will elaborate on the relevant differences. In other cases, we will concentrate on the Boslanti area where we spent most of the research period and collected the most extensive data.

**The village**

All Matawai villages are located along the river. The dense tropical forest along the river banks is interrupted by several landing stages where the boats are moored. The forest immediately behind the gallery is less dense than might be expected, however, the secondary forest near the villages is dominated by rapid growing and dense vegetation. Sporadically the forest is interrupted by granite plains with flora and fauna peculiar to that ecological niche.

Boslanti is the largest village within the Matawai territory; it has a total population of about 200 inhabitants. Boslanti and the villages of Wanati, Pniël and Vertrouw, form a territorial cluster whose inhabitants constitute one church congregation. Before the introduction of the outboard motor in the late 1940s, a journey from Paramaribo to Boslanti could take a week to a fortnight depending on the water-level. Nowadays the communication between city and the tribal villages is facilitated by the construction of two airstrips (see map 2).

Approaching the river by boat, one can observe the first foot paths leading to the gardens; these are marked by dug-outs with as many as five to ten boats during the planting season. The river is the major route for inter-village traffic and travel to and from the gardens. Before reaching the village we encounter several boats with people going to their gardens. The church and the pastor's house dominate the initial view of Boslanti. On the landing stage, at almost any hour of the day women are washing dishes or laundry while men often saw planks or construct boats under the shadow of the large mango tree. Children like to play along the river side, attempting to catch small fish where
the food remnants have been thrown into the water.

The impression one acquires on a short visit greatly depends on the season of the year and the time of the day. During the day throughout the peak horticultural season the village may be almost completely deserted with only a few old women at home. On weekends many of the men who spent some days upriver, as well as couples who stayed a few nights in the garden camp, will return to the village. Many travellers have noted the chaotic character of the village plan, however, upon closer examination, a clear link with principles of social organization becomes apparent. Most houses are small, especially the traditional ones with palm-leave roofs. The newer houses with the corrugated iron roofs are usually larger. Most houses are built on wooden stilts which are five to six feet long. The place under the house is used for various activities ranging from sewing and wood carving to breaking *maka* nuts and preparing food.

**Matawai economy**

As the Matawai economy is in a process of transformation, it is necessary to distinguish between the more traditional pre-1960 pattern and the present economic system. The river basin of the Saramacca river and its tributaries provided the main resources for the traditional Matawai economy. All activities such as horticulture, hunting, fishing and gathering were conducted in the immediate vicinity of the river. Until the 1960s the riverine niche was significant not only for subsistence activities but also for lumber work and balata bleeding which were done mainly along the Saramacca river. Besides work in freight transporting, gold-digging, balata and lumber provided the major opportunities to acquire a monetary income. While food products, such as rice and peanuts have been exchanged for products from the coast even before the peace treaties were concluded, the production of cash crops for the coastal market has never become a significant source of income.

**Wage labour**

The Matawai economy has never been completely independent from the coastal economy. After 1849, when the Bush Negroes were no longer provided
with presents, they became increasingly dependent on lumbering. In particular, after emancipation of the slaves in 1863, lumbering provided them with their major source of monetary income. For a long time the supply of lumber in the coastal area was largely in the hands of the Bush Negroes. Lumbering required the cooperation of men in large groups. Areas, that were rich in valuable trees and accessible by a creek, belonged often to a specific descent group. Matrilineal kinsmen worked usually together with other men, who were invited on the basis of affinity or friendship. Most of the work groups in the work histories we collected, consisted of 20 to 30 men. Paths were cleared through the forest connecting those places where valuable trees were located with the river side. Men worked in couples, felling and squaring the trees. And the whole group worked together to haul the squared logs. The logs were dragged to the creek over poles laid on the path (*lolo pasi*). Cooperation was also required to transport the logs, which were fastened together into rafts, over the large rapids downriver to Kwakugoon, where the lumber was sold (see Martin 1886: 50-51). It must be noted that lumbering was always one activity within a larger range of other economic activities, and the allocation of time to this activity was restricted by the horticultural cycle, climatological conditions and also by ceremonial activities. As lumbering was a communal activity, the death of a kinsmen of one of the workers could delay the working period for a while.

At the end of the 19th century gold exploitation and balata bleeding provided new labour opportunities for Matawai men. Particularly those from the downriver region engaged in these activities. During the 1930s the balata trade collapsed and the companies that worked in the downriver area went bankrupt. This had led to the development of one man occupations of selling the collected balata to traders. Matawai men also participated in these activities. During the 1940s and the early 1950s, the lumber trade of the Bush Negroes flourished. Until 1960 almost all Matawai men worked seasonally in logging wood and balata gathering, although men were occasionally also recruited for other jobs. In the course of the 1950s many men in the opstream area were recruited to gather *maka* nuts, along the Coppename river, for oil production (see Bruijning and Voorhoeve 1977: 84).

Recently, the traditional manner of lumbering with large working
groups has lost its significance. In the early 1960s the prices for lumber were so low, that the tribal council decided to suspend lumber exploitation within the tribal area. A number of developments preceded this decision. First, the most valuable trees had become scarce after a long period of rather intensive forest exploitation and the remaining valuable trees were at a greater distance from the major creeks and the river. Second, both the import of lumber from Brazil and the new methods of forest exploitation introduced by large lumber companies, served to weaken the position of the Bush Negroes in the lumber market. Another factor that affected the traditional lumbering was the emergence of permanent migration during this period. It was precisely the men in the age category most capable of lumbering work, who were attracted to governmental services and became migrants.

After the decline of lumbering and to a lesser degree balata bleeding, the work pattern of Matawai men became more individualized. A number of men gradually shifted their focus of economic interest to the coast and joined the urban labour market in search of temporary and permanent jobs. The men who continued to live mostly in the tribal villages, remained engaged in seasonal work, but in contrast to previously, the work was now mainly outside the tribal area. The transformation of a collective working pattern into a pattern involving individuals, couples and sometimes small groups, has increased the flexibility in the time that can be allocated to wage labour. However, the climatologically determined first phase of the horticultural cycle has remained an important period in which men are obliged to return to the village to fulfill their role in felling a plot. In figure 2 it is shown that the absenteeism of men residing in the tribal area has maintained its seasonal character.

Despite the importance of wage labour, the Matawai are to a large degree still dependent on subsistence activities such as horticulture, hunting, fishing and gathering. The quantity of food products imported to the tribal area, is very restricted. Most of the money earned at the coast is spent on such essentials as clothes, hammocks, soap, salt, pots, pans, machetes, guns, out board motors, fuel and luxuries such as rum, beer, transistor radios etc.
Figure 2 Male and female absenteeism of adults of four upriver villages (migrants excluded) during the years 1973 and 1974
Males between 15-55 years of age
Females between 15-49 years of age
**Shifting cultivation**

The annual schedule of activities is largely determined by the horticultural cycle. In this cycle a number of peak periods can be discerned. Both climatological factors and the traditional preference for cooperation in garden work, contribute to the coordination in gardening. Most work throughout the peak periods is accomplished by groups who alternate work in each other's gardens. Traditionally, all work, during these peak periods, was conducted in large groups. In the past, particularly in the activity of felling trees (*faa goon*), one of the first tasks in the horticultural cycle, large groups of men were recruited. Women cooked to feed the working group. Presently, in felling, as in other peak activities, there has been a trend towards a certain amount of individualization. Men will often cut the gardens themselves for a number of consecutive days, before asking their kinsmen and affines to help them finish the work. Although this change has restricted the number of an individual's obligations to reciprocate by helping others with their gardens, it has not significantly changed the absolute time allocated to gardening during the peaks of the horticultural cycle.

The decrease in the use of working groups in the felling of trees is explained by the Matawai as a conscious attempt to avoid the kind of accidents that frequently occurred during the dangerous work. It can, however, also be seen as an adaptation to the changing patterns in migrant labour. Formerly when most men worked in lumbering, the men departed in groups to work at the creeks, and after having sold their lumber, returned in the same groups. They would then start with felling and burning, and had to stay for a fixed period in the village as a result of their obligation to assist others. With the development of increased diversity of jobs, the larger number of kinship obligations became more of a hindrance. Consequently, the groups became smaller. These days, the men who help each other preparing fields often form working teams to search for temporary jobs on the coast. During the first stage in the horticultural cycle the percentage of men involved in the work is at its largest. Their involvement is minimal in the harvest period. In fact, the harvest of rice is exclusively the task of women. Men do not leave for the coast immediately after cutting and
and burning, but will stay to help their wives clear the gardens of weeds before the rice can be planted.

During particular peak periods in the horticultural cycle, men and women are almost exclusively engaged in one of the various kind of activities. Cutting underbrush (*koti baasu*) and the subsequent felling and burning of trees (*faa goon*) require men to spend many days on their own and kinsmen's gardens. During harvest time women are also occupied for almost two months. Weeding (*limba*) requires men and women to work continuously on their gardens, staying overnight, for between two weeks and a month and in planting of rice (*diki alisi*), they will rush to finish one garden after another before the first rains appear. It is no wonder then that when one of these activities has been completed, people are relieved to remain in the village and rest. However, in between the seasonal peaks there remains a lot of work to be done in the gardens, especially by women. Men's work is mainly restricted to clearing paths to the garden and repairing the camp just before harvest time. Only occasionally will men visit their gardens to fetch sugar cane or a bunch of plantains. When the men are not primarily engaged in horticultural activities, they will be engaged in a wide range of other activities, such as hunting, fishing, house- and boat making. Women visit their gardens regularly throughout the year. They may clear rice stalks on a former neighbouring plot to make a peanut garden, or collect seeds and planting material from a former garden to plant it on the newly cleared one. And they will regularly harvest some garden produce. After the rice has been planted and shortly before it ripens, they visit their gardens daily dispersing the gathering swarms of birds, by noisily beating the trees with machetes and sticks. Women, in fact, consider the garden to be their own domain and they like to combine gardening and food processing, by conducting activities, such as pounding rice or making cassave bread, in their gardens instead of in the village.

**Selecting of a field site**

A household may claim landrights in the lineage domain of both the wife and the husband. Formerly households cultivated their gardens in both domains. Nowadays, the majority of men will prepare a garden only near
the wife's village, on her lineage land. Rights to a piece of land are determined by the fact that lineage ancestors or lineage members had cultivated a garden there. No lineage rights exist in virgin or primary forest. Although it is recognized that the soil of the primary forest tends to be more fertile than that of the secondary forest, most gardens are cut in secondary forest. These gardens are situated closer to the village. Also, the preparation of a garden in this forest type is less painstaking because of the lack of hard wood trees. Some of the younger men, however, prefer to prepare a garden in the primary forest.

**Felling and burning**

Matawai recognize the value of a well-burned field. The burning is timed to coincide with the dry season and is very much dependent on the weather conditions. Although the weather is normally quite predictable, some years deviate from the expected pattern. If the dry season turns out to be too rainy, it is likely that the horticultural production will be reduced due to the poor burning.

After the cutting of the undergrowth and the subsequent felling of the larger trees the field has to dry for a period of about one month. The larger trees are not completely burned and the field remains covered with many parts of wood. This prevents the rapid re-growth of weeds. Before rice, the major staple crop, is planted in April or May, the men will gather a large amount of the residual wood which is burned locally on the field. If the wood is too wet, gasoline will sometimes be used to set it in fire. A well-burned field not only improves the soil fertility, but also reduces animal pests such as the leaf-cutting ants (see Ruddle 1974: 73). The Matawai prefer to plant vegetables in places where the ground is most heavily covered with ashes.

**Cropping**

Shortly following the burning, the first products are planted in the new garden. Seeds have been selected and gathered throughout the previous year. Rice, the so-called *jai alisi*, is planted around the change of the year and can be harvested before the major rice harvest. Other products
planted shortly after the burning are sugar-cane, water melon, corn and cassave. In the period that follows the weeds grow rapidly depending on the amount of rainfall and on the length of the fallow period. In February and March most people are occupied with clearing the gardens. Sometimes the weeds grow so rapidly that the work must be redone before it has been finished. The clearing often involves three weeks of intensive labour by all members of the household. The soil is then hoed and the whole surface of the field is planted with rice in April and May. The rice can be harvested four to five months after sowing. Some months after the major harvest the women will return to the garden for a smaller harvest of the rice that fell to the ground during the main harvest and sprouted. This rice is called baka alisi.

**Fallowing**

Throughout the year food products such as cassave, sugar cane, pineapple and sweet potatoes are harvested in the old garden. Some years the old garden is reused; it will be partially or completely planted with rice for a second consecutive year. Peanuts, also, are often planted in the old garden. If a woman does not have a partner to prepare the field for her, the rice stalks (alisí kakisa) will be burned in order to fertilize the soil. In other cases, after two years the garden is left fallow for a period of about ten years. It is obvious that shifting cultivation with long fallow periods requires a large amount of land. As we have already indicated (see p. 12) there is no scarcity of land in the Matawai area.

**Surplus and scarcity**

Generally the gardens provide sufficient food for the consumption needs of the household. The small surpluses of certain products are distributed among kinsmen, neighbours and friends. Within the village, money is rarely used in food transactions. In the downriver area, however, it plays a more dominant role even within the village. The distance to the coast is a major barrier for the development of trade in horticultural products and the production of cash crops. Recently a few attempts have been made
to encourage the production of cash crops but they have remained unsuccessful (see p. 225). Peanuts and ginger, with their high, stable price and a lengthy durability, are the only two products that are cultivated, albeit on a small scale, for trading purposes. Some women acquire a small monetary income of their own, by the sale of these products.

Although the Matawai take great care of their gardens, severe food scarcity is not unknown. Unfavourable weather conditions can result in crop failure. When the rainy season is too dry, as was the case in for instance 1912, 1926 and 1936, the harvest will be bad. Food shortages are also reported during extremely rainy years, such as in 1918(8).

**Hunting, fishing and gathering**

Hunting is one of the favourite activities of men. A man will seldom leave the village without his shot gun and hunting bag, in which he carries gun powder, matches, salt and some piece of cassave, in case a peccary, agouti or another animal crosses his path. Especially early in the morning or in the afternoon men often roam the forest near the village in search of hunting game. Because of the scarcity of game in the inhabited areas, hunting does not greatly contribute to the diet. Protein resources, in general, are limited. Chickens are raised in the village and occasionally salted meat or dried fish is bought in the small shop of Posugunu, but the significance of bought food is very small.

Outside the peak periods in the horticultural cycle hunting trips are made to the uninhabited areas of the Tukumutu tributary and the Upper Saramacca river beneath the Lawai falls. Hunting is preferred particularly during the dry season when game is attracted to the river. Kwata monkeys are becoming fat, and coming down from the trees, they are an easy prey to the hunters. Fishes such as jumaa (*Hoplias macrophthalmus*) are easy to catch, sun bathing in the shallow water above the falls. Iguanas are breeding on the sandbanks along the river. They leave traces in the sand where they make holes, so that the eggs are readily located and often the animal can be caught by hand. The hunting strategy of the Matawai is based on extensive knowledge of the food habits of animals and of their behaviour in general. They know, for instance, the time in the morning when deers can be expected to be eating the cassave in the
garden, or when forest fruits that attract monkey will begin to ripen. The trap gun (*seti goni*) is a weapon sometimes used in hunting. It is placed on the field in the evenening and a line is attached to the trigger. If the line is touched, the gun will fire. The trap gun is still used despite the fact that it has been forbidden. Other traps are constructed for catching birds.

Hunting is an auxiliary activity combined with others. When the men go to the upriver Saramacca to collect palm leaves in order to make or repair roofs, or to build a boat, they often spend a great deal of time hunting. This is also the case for men travelling to and from town. Hunted game will be shared by close relatives and friends. Larger animals, such as a tapir, are shared by the whole village, and parts will be sent to the surrounding villages. The killing of a large game called *lanti meti* (a tapir or a herd of *pingo* crossing the village) is accompanied by festivities that conclude in a dancing party. In the downriver area, where hunted game is often sold to traders in Kwakugoan, the tradition of sharing is becoming less common. Men will often prefer to sell it in Kwakugoan.

Fishing involves both men and women, and even children, when they have reached the age of five or six, may spend hours catching small fish at the riverside. Women commonly fish with a hook and a long nylon line of about 12 meters while they wash dishes or clothes at the landing-stage or while they journey in their boats to the gardens. Men prefer other fishing techniques. The most common are fish traps, bow and arrow and fish poisoning.

The forest resources provide a large number of materials used by the Matawaï for the construction of houses, roofs, and boats, for handicrafts such as basket weaving, for the manufacture of kitchen utensils. Forest fruits are often collected by men during hunting trips or while journeying to their gardens. Close to the village and the gardens, the highly valued palm fruits such as the fruits of the *maipa*, *kumu* and *awala* palms are collected. Every second year small groups of women assemble to gather the fruits of the *maka* palm. The *maka* seeds are stored in the kitchen attic and used for the preparation of fat. Collecting, however, is a less important food resource than gardening, fishing or hunting. The forest resources also a number of products used in the
preparation of medicine such as herbs, forest fruits and the bark of certain trees. Other assorted useful items are gathered from the forest and gardens: grubs, worms and grasshoppers are used for fishing; honey is often found when the garden is prepared; iguana eggs are collected in the dry season, and *sombi* (grubs), gathered from the garden, are roasted and eaten.

Eindnoten:

(1.) The English word ‘Maroon’ is derived from the Spanish *cimarrón*. Originally it referred to domestic cattle which had been taken to the hills in Hispaniola. The term was also used for slaves who ran away from the plantations in Afro-America. In Suriname *Marrons or Weglopers* was used to refer to illegal runaways and *Boschnegers* to those whose freedom had been confirmed by the peace treaties (see Price 1976: 2-3). Marronage is the process of running away of slaves from the plantations.

(2.) For the problems involved in collecting quantitative data in Bush Negro society see also Köbben (1967a).

(3.) The interest in the movement of Johannes King was not restricted to the Moravians. Already in 1863 the monthly Evangelical Christendom: its state and prospects, reported about King's movement (1863: 100). See also Mission Review of the World (1897: 814) and Dosker (1896: 519-23). We thank Prof. H. Turner for these references.

(4.) ARA KA 73: November 22, 1871.

(5.) A description of the last occasion at which presents were given to the Matawai can be found in LA BIB 1846-50(12), May 27, 1849.

(6.) See for instance ARA NWI 800: 67, December 14, 1825 and ARA NWI 735: 60, April 29, 1829.

(7.) For a critique of Gross' viewpoint Beckerman (1979).

I Social Organization
2
Social Organization

The purpose of this part is to describe and analyse some features of Matawai social organization. We will particularly focus on kinship, descent, marriage, residence and fosterage.

Our emphasis will be on empirical events and social processes in their relation to structural principles. We consider structural changes to be generated by individual recurrent behaviour channelled by economic and ecological constraints (see Barth 1967). Our analyses are primarily based on observations in the upriver area; however, quantitative data collected for the whole Matawai area provided data to compare up- and downriver patterns. The data revealed significant variations within the small Matawai society. These variations can be partly explained by the resettlement of segments from the upriver area to the downriver area and by the migration to the coast which has been a more important factor in the downriver villages.

Recruitment in social groups is based on the principle of matriliny. Matrilineal descent organization only flourishes in a restricted number of ecological and economic circumstances. Societies with matrilineal descent tend to be horticultural with women playing an important role in the production process. They tend to be egalitarian and occur where there is no scarcity of land (see Aberle 1961; Douglas 1969). The importance of matrilineal descent groups tends to decline when a society becomes involved in a market economy or when the matrilineal ideology is directly threatened by a concurrent ideology such as Christianity (see Poewe 1978; 1980).

We will pay special attention to the two factors that have dominated
the process of social change in Matawai society: Christianity and migration. The first factor has, although in a restricted way, directly affected matrilineal ideology, while the second factor changed behavioural patterns in terms of the allocation of time and resources, thus indirectly affecting ideology as well.
3 Kinship and Locality

Matrilineal descent groups

The most important structural principle in Matawai social organization is matriliney. Conceptualized as it is in physiological idiom, matrilineal kinship calls for strong feelings of solidarity and involvement. The expression ‘people of one womb’ (bee) is used to refer to descent categories of various spans. The term points to genealogically restricted descent groups, such as the direct matrilineal descendants of two sisters, as well as to wider descent groups that include hundreds of members and which are divided into a number of smaller segments. Membership in a matrilineal group is determined at birth when the individual is incorporated into his mother's descent group, an incorporation that in principle is definitive and everlasting. Traditionally neither change of residence, fosterage in another village, or marriage, will alienate him or make him loose membership in the descent group of his birth. And as an ancestor he is considered to remain strongly involved with the living members of his descent group.

Matriliny assigns individuals positions in a continuous kinship system, classifying them on the basis of a restricted number of principles into broad categories. It accords them positions vis-a-vis each other, which normatively determine their behaviour. Kinship obligations provide Matawai with a standard to judge the behaviour of others.

Matriliny is a structural principle that dominates the individual's choice of settlement. As we will indicate the actual composition of local groups, such as villages and their segments, especially upstream, clearly reflects this principle. It is the basis for the formation of corporate descent groups of various spans, controlling land, property,
political functions and religious specialties. Supported by and heavily dependent on religious principles, matriliney influences both the internal relationships between descent group members and the external, mutual relationships between descent groups. And by giving rise to structurally analogous descent groups, it also determines, to some degree, the political organization, by defining the structure of authority within each descent group and by restricting the possibility of one group exerting authority over another.

The most important corporate matrilineal descent group is the lineage, called bee. Variable is generation depth and span, Matawai lineages usually cover six to seven generations, and include from 50 to 100 members. Traditionally, there are several ways to indicate a specific lineage. Most commonly a lineage is specified by reference to its founding ancestress, for example, ‘Andoi bee’ for one of the lineages of Boslanti. It may also be indicated by the name of an important lineage elder or former headman, for example ‘kapiten Andoma bee’ for the lineage of Vertrouw. The latter specification is often less precise, because the function of village headman, although lineage bound, involves a whole village and may include several lineages. Other lineages are usually specified by reference to their traditional names (gaan ne)(1). The three lineages, formerly residing in the village of Mombabasu, that resettled in Wanati, Pniël and Vertrouw, are referred to as Sikanaki bee, Djone bee and Golafu bee.

The Surinamese government has attempted to register persons in the interior using Christian and surnames in a system analogous to that operating on the coast. As a result, surnames have recently been introduced in Matawai as markers to distinguish lineages. Because lineage members tend to let themselves be registered with the same surname, choosing, according to traditional practice, the name of one of their lineage ancestors, lineage members are nowadays distinguished from others on the basis of their surname. One lineage of Posugunu is registered as Lafanti, after the name of their former ancestor who had been gaaman, while the other lineage carries the surname Asaf, after their ancestor, the former gaaman, Asaf Kiné. In the downstream area the situation has become more complex. Lineage membership can no longer be
derived from the sharing of a surname. Originally each lineage had chosen a common surname, and some persons are still so registered, sharing their surname with their mother. However, the number of children registered under their father's surname is increasing. Downriver fathers, who are frequently also migrants, are able to acquire more authority over their children by having their children ‘legally recognized’ under their own surnames in the coastal area.

Solidarity among lineage members is strengthened by traditional religious concepts in which the belief that gods and ancestors may interfere in the life of humans is central. An individual's transgression of customary rules and infringement of religious laws can invoke supernatural harm on his lineage members, thus kinsmen are directly involved in each other's behaviour. This explains the stress on harmony and the striving to avoid conflicts between lineage members. Also the collective responsibility among lineage members that is an important principle in Matawai social life has its roots in religious concepts, as lineage members share vulnerability to their principal lineage avenging spirit (kunu). Lineages are marked off from each other by their individual kunu. Lineage members become vulnerable to the vengeance of a kunu, who is provoked by a matrilineal kinsman (see further p. 341). To propitiate the kunu and ward off further adversity lineage members must cooperate closely in collective rituals.

This collective responsibility among bee members also consolidates the corporate character of the lineage. It implicates lineage members in each other's lives; they become involved in each other's well-being, physical development, reproduction and moral behaviour. It not only explains the normative rule of sharing (food and services) among lineage members, but also the fact that a lineage member can easily be substituted by another in several contexts (see also Köbben 1969).

As a result of this communal involvement, individuals in all kinds of matters, must seriously consider the opinions of the other members of their lineage, particularly those of the lineage elders who are accorded authority. A mother who gives her child in fosterage to another, a man who wants his sister's son to accompany him on a hunting trip or his daughter to go with him on a shopping trip to the coast, a woman who accompanies her migrant husband to settle in town - all need to
inform their lineage and solicit formal approval. Marriage as well is not purely an individual matter, but involves, as we will elaborate later, the members of both lineages. Conflicts will be rapidly settled in palavers, attended by a great number of lineage members. Moreover, this collective responsibility provides the main explanation for the strong involvement of lineage members in life crises and in the performance of collective rituals in case of illness and death.

The judicial authority of a lineage over its members appears in conflicts in which compensation is claimed for harm or injury inflicted upon one of its members. When blood is spilt during a fight, the victim's lineage must be compensated by the lineage of the individual who caused the infliction. Also, as we will see, when a girl is impregnated, her lineage must be compensated by the lineage of the seducer. At marriage only a restricted number of service rights are transferred from the woman's lineage to her husband; corporeal rights remain with her lineage.

Several factors in Matawai social structure contribute to the effective functioning of the matrilineage as a corporate group. The descent group of the lineage (*bee*) is localized in the residential unit of the village (*konde*) or in a village section (*pisi*). In the upriver area this localization of the lineage is rather exclusive. A small village usually coincides with a lineage. Members of its constituent lineage segments reside in distinct sections of the village (we will later return to the close genealogical correspondence between lineage and village section). Upon reaching adulthood both men and women, even when they have been fostered in another village, are expected to settle in their lineage village. An individual's choice in which village to settle as a permanent resident, his 'domicile' (Price 1975: 75) appears to be strongly influenced by this expectation. The actual settlement pattern bears witness to the strict observance of this rule. In the upstream area all adults have built their house in their lineage village, thus living there as permanent residents. In this area not a single adult has settled in his or her father's village. Even in the downriver area, where specific historical circumstances have contributed to a larger variation in village composition, presently only 6.3% of the population (22 out of 348 adults) is - or at least was before their migration -
actually domiciled in their father's village\textsuperscript{\textendash}1. Most of these adults have, moreover, been influenced in their choice by the fact that their mother was already domiciled in her husband's village. For 5 of these adults (1.4\%) this concomitant factor was absent. Permanent settlement in a foreign village is rare; it hardly ever occurs upriver and its occurrence is downriver restricted as well\textsuperscript{\textendash}2.

The result of the fact that both male and female lineage members have a house in their village of domicile, is that marital partners have two houses, one in the wife's and one in the husband's village. This gives individual marital partners the opportunity to spend time apart from each other, each in their own village, as well as together, either in the village of the wife or that of the husband. Indeed individuals are allowed a large degree of mobility. Still the wife's lineage expects the marital couple to spend most of the time in her village. Although the duration of the husband's stays away from his wife and the couple's stays in the husband's village is somewhat variable, as we will indicate later, the actual time spent by the couple in the wife's village generally exceeds the time spent in the husband's village. We will later return to individual mobility and elaborate conjugal residence patterns, in which the uxorilocal pattern plays such a significant role, specifying the circumstances determining them. The consequence of the fact that marital couples stay most of the time in the wife's village is, that at any point of time a lineage has a more direct and effective grip on its adult female members, the more stable residents, than on its adult male members, residing dispersed in their wives' villages most of the time. The actual time spent by individuals in villages other than their own, does, however, not interfere with their status in their village of domicile. For no matter how many time men stay in their wife's village, they remain to have the most strong allegiance to their village of domicile, where they have a house of their own and where they consider themselves, together with their lineage 'sisters' to be the owners of the village, and essential in the managing of lineage affairs. In the village of their wives these men occupy, particularly in the initial period of their marriage, a more marginal position.

Male lineage members must gather regularly in order to settle
disputes pertaining to their lineage. Occasionally, when a number of them reside as
spouses in the same village, they are able to manage their affairs away from their
own village, but in most cases they must return to their lineage village. Several factors
in Matawai social organization contribute to the fact that men are able to maintain a
uxorilocal residence pattern and still regularly be available to run their lineage affairs
in their own village. Despite all kinds of normative marriage restrictions, many men
contract marriages with women originating from neighbouring villages (for details
on local endogamy see p. 99). These neighbouring villages form clusters, and are
referred to by the Matawai as covering the same stretch of the river, wan pisi wata.
In this way, even if a man fulfills a political function or is an important lineage elder,
he is accessible and can be called when needed. Moreover, most villagers known
each other's whereabouts. The common greeting concludes with the exchange of
information concerning one's plans for that day. So when men have to attend a social
event in their village, messengers will be sent even as far as the hunting camps upriver
or near the falls. Another factor that contributes to the effective functioning of the
lineage is that members and even functionaries such as headmen and basia, can
substitute for one another and represent each other.

The lineage owns and controls horticultural land. No claims are made in primary
forest in the neighbourhood of the villages. However, as soon as a person clears a
garden, the lineage acquires an option over the resulting secondary forest. Village
members tend to clear gardens not too far away from the village. This is related to
the fact that people regularly have to go to their gardens to work on it and they must
also be able to transport the harvest back to the village. When a village is shifted
from one site to another, its lineage rights over horticultural land expand, as it acquires
new rights near the newly established village, while retaining its claims over land
near the former village. All lineage members, including those who have settled
downriver or migrated to the coast, are entitled upon their return to reclaim land from
their own lineage. Formal permission must be acquired from the lineage which owns
the land before a new village can be established and gardens can be cleared. However,
there has never been evident shortage of horticultural
Since the first villages have been established far in the interior along the tributary of the Tukumutu, villages have been regularly shifted (see p. 43). This has been a gradual process, first moving from the tributary to the main river, and thereafter northward. Nearly all villages were established in non-occupied land. Since 1900, when there have been hardly any shift of villages upriver, it has still been possible to clear gardens not too far away from the villages.

Despite fixed rights on horticultural land by the lineages, the situation in the upstream area has become quite complex. A husband and wife may choose between either clearing a garden on land owned by either his or her kinsmen; their choice is mainly influenced by the pressure of kinsmen in either lineage to work with them. In fact they tend to alternate. Because of the tendency to marry within a short distance, garden sites of both lineages are not far away from each other. Even if the couple stays in the woman's village, they may work a garden on land owned by the husband's lineage, bringing the bundles of rice to store in the granary in the woman's village.

Leo of Boslanti cleared his first gardens near Paatibaka, somewhat downstream, close to the former village of Abookotanda. This was a place where his own mother's mother, her sister and his own mother's sister used to clear gardens. In the following years he cleared gardens upriver, first at Kambalua, a former village of Boslanti, and then at Latambo, across the river, where the people of Kambalua had acquired rights as they moved to Bendiwata (see also p. 45). On both these sites Leo's mother's mother's brother, a former headman, had cleared his gardens. Then he went to Kojee, behind the present village of Vertrouw, where lineage members of his wife of the Baanabaka pisi of Vertrouw (see p. 47) traditionally had their land claims. Finally he went to Paukajawata, where his mother used to prepare a garden, although she herself was no longer clearing there, but had gone to Tusewosu. His mother's sister, however, was still clearing there. For a number of years he had cleared two gardens, one nearby at Kojee, the other at Paukajawata, an hour's walking distance from the landing stage.
In the meantime he asked Nicanol, a classificatory brother, to clear a garden with him at Paukajawata, because he considered Nicanol to be bound to him by various kinship ties. Firstly Nicanol's and Leo's grandmothers were sisters (Nicanol was Leo's MMZDS), secondly Nicanol's wife was a daughter of Leo's classificatory uncle (his MMMZDS), and finally Nicanol's wife was Leo's wife's sister's daughter.

In addition to horticultural land, the village site is also owned by a particular lineage. It is this lineage that may grant members of another lineage permission to settle in their village. As we have already indicated (p. 32), most villages are inhabited by two or more lineages, that have acquired rights over a section of the village.

Political and religious functions are considered to belong to the lineage. Ownership of political offices such as that of paramount chief (gaaman) and village headman (kapiteni) is represented in terms of the symbols of their office, the bench on which they are seated (bangi) in councils and particularly the staff (pau), that incumbents of office formerly were given by the Surinamese government as a sign of their dignity. Functionaries are, in principle, appointed for their whole life. After death a successor is sought. Formerly the choice of a successor was highly influenced by the preference of the previous incumbent, as derived from divination signs. Nowadays, with the decline of public oracles, all lineage members are consulted. They will consider a person's capabilities in speaking in councils and in mediating conflicts as well as his relations with the Surinamese government and the mission. Those who are most closely related matrilineally to the former incumbent are thereby most eligible. A person belonging to the previous incumbent's own generation (brother) is given preference over one of the next generation (sister's son), and close matrilineal kinsmen are preferred to members of other matri-segments. Divination has, however, continued to play a role in the choice of a successor. The eventual decision is ultimately dependent on the judgement of the gaan kunu, whose oracle (a medium), is consulted (see p. 243). After having been designated, the gaaman must ask permission from the Surinamese government to appoint the chosen individual. If appointed, the man goes to the coastal area and
and receives a uniform and tokens of his dignity. Upon return, he will be inaugurated (wei) in the gaaman's village. Dressed in his uniform (bisi), he is presented at the faaga pau to the ancestors and former office holders. This ceremony is repeated in his own village, and only then is the official appointment thought to be complete.

Although the function of village headman is commonly considered to be owned by a specific lineage and in fact usually remains within it, the headman is recognized to represent all village members, his own lineage members as well as those of other kin groups who happen to coreside in his lineage village. On several occasions the independency of his position is stressed. He is reminded at his installation that he no longer represents his own kin group, and that he must strive to judge in an unbiased fashion in cases of conflict. When conflicts arise between persons of two kin groups within his own village, he must keep aloof and if fighting develops, he must not participate. A basia (assistant headman) also represents, in principle, the whole village. However, since his close kinsmen frequently bring their cases before him, he primarily acts as the representative and spokesman of his own kin group. Despite the incumbent's customary public display of unwillingness to be appointed for this function, political functions are, in fact, highly coveted and easily become points of latent conflicts between lineages or lineage segments residing in one village.

In an upstream village which, strictly considered, consisted of one lineage, two matri-segments had gradually grown apart due to an increase in size. A latent rivalry between them concerning the fulfillment of the functions of headman and basia, occasionally became manifested. This was probably not yet the case around 1918, when a former basia, Kisian (see figure 1) transmitted his function to his 'brother' Abolon, who belonged to matri-segment B. This was a somewhat unusual procedure, because most political functions are inherited for life and are only transmitted after death. Until that time headmanship was transmitted within matri-segment B, and candidates had always been actual sister's sons of the deceased predecessor. But when captain Akadja died, this rule was
almost changed. Markus\(^2\), Akadja's classificatory's sister's son of segment A was suggested as his successor. However Markus felt himself too much burdened with his task as local church functionary and asked his classificatory brother Taja\(^4\), a son of Akadja's sister to take over this task. He paid Taja a small bottle of rum and requested that he take the staff. This happened in 1929. In 1955 Taja's classificatory's brother, Baaja\(^6\), of his segment, was appointed as his successor. The members of matri-segment A claimed the captain's staff, because, as they argued, they had only lent the staff to Baaja. In the early 1960s a new rule was established by the government, that each village had to have two basia. Old Abolon\(^5\), himself still basia, suggested that Keni\(^7\), his classificatory sister's son from matri-segment A, be appointed to prevent segment A from asserting further claims on the function of headman. However, members of matri-segment A came back to the question when the old headman\(^7\) became ill and a future succession was ahead.

![Figure 1](image.png)

*Figure 1 Rivalry about the fulfillment of political functions between two matri-segments*
A descent based category that is more encompassing than the bee is the lo or matriclan. The concept of lo, also known by the previously more common term of kompani, is, however, less clearly defined. Of all descent group categories the lo has come to play the most insignificant role in Matawai society. Lo and kompani are terms that can be traced to the time of slavery and marronage. Slaves who originated from the same ship were referred to as belonging to the same kompani. The term lo (group or herd) was used to refer to bands of maroons who run away from the plantations together. When, however, the communities were formed in the tribal area, matrilineal descent became the dominant principle of social organization. The term lo came to be used to refer to matrilineal descent groups, whose members were able to trace descent matrilineally to members of the original bands. Because during Matawai history groups of people with close kinship ties have always tended to settle in a common village, at this time Matawai use the term lo, to those people whose ancestors in the past were settled in a common village, but between whom one can no longer trace any actual matrilineal ties.

Lo names therefore refer to the names of former villages. The people who now live in the village of Bilawata are referred to as Misatan nenge (people of Misatan), after the name of their former village. Other lo names only allude to such former villages without actually being named after them. Although a great number of people resided in the former village of Apefunda, only the two bee, nowadays residing in Boslanti, are referred to with the lo name Gaanfunda nenge.

Particular obia, brought to the Matawai area by the runaways who used them to survive in the forest and to fight other hostile groups (both other runaway bands and whites), were traditionally owned by lo. These were, for instance, feti obia (protective charms) that enabled people to make themselves invisible in the forest, and invulnerable to gun bullets and machetes. After the original fighting bands united, these obia became less important. In Matawai traditional religion ownership of obia shifted from the lo to the bee. Specialized knowledge became concentrated in particular lineages, thus resulting in the dependence of one lineage on another in order to settle certain forms of adversity. This has contributed to a greater cooperation between lineages, but also to an incidental rivalry. In the course of time the awareness
of Matawai tribal identity has been strengthened by the focus on tribal wide religious concepts. The two most important of these concepts are the belief in the God of the river, venerated at the boundary of Matawai territory, who is considered to be able to punish all Matawai for transgressions against each other, and the belief in major avenging spirits who victimize throughout all Matawai lineages.

Traditionally the forest along the great creeks upriver was exclusively owned by different lo, and nowadays these claims are still recognized. These tracks of forest were, in fact, an important economic resource. The area was used for trade logging, as well as the felling of trees to build houses and boats. The working groups who went lumbering together upriver, never consisted exclusively of members of the owning lo. They tended to be mixed, as fathers took along their sons and men invited their brothers-in-law. These days, when lumbering upriver for trade purposes has been abandoned, people still tend to forage in the area of their own lo.

Matawai consider the tribe to be the most encompassing descent group. Tribal membership is ultimately traced on the basis of matrilineal descent, to original band members of runaways, who settled along the Tukumutu. Although the Matawai have never acquired exclusive rights on their land, the tribal area has been recognized in the peace treaties. In the renewed peace treaty of 1838, for example, it was stated that the Matawai had to continue to live along the Upper Saramacca, never approaching the colony nearer than two days travelling distance upriver from the post Saron (Boonacker 1916: 395). A paramount chief (gaaman) is officially installed by the Surinamese government. He rules over all descent groups and villages. He also represents his tribe in relations with outsiders. Decisions pertaining to matters surpassing the local level are made by him in large lanti kuutu, councils in which all lineage elders and village headmen are present. Rules and laws instituted by him are considered binding for all Matawai. The Kwinti tribal group who settled among the Matawai and concluded a peace treaty with them, also recognize the Matawai gaaman as their head. At the time of the conflict when half of the Kwinti left for the Coppename river, the government appointed Alamu as paramount chief over the Kwinti, in 1887, but after his death his successors were appointed to the function of head

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
captains, and the Matawai gaaman was recognized by the government as head over all Kwinti again (see de Beet and Sterman 1980: 21).

**The meaning of paternity**

Maternity, defined in a strictly biological sense, is, as we have already seen, used as the basis for the delimitation of the child's matrilineal descent group. Paternity, defined in a biological sense, is used to define the child's relationship with his father's matrilineal descent group, which plays a significant role throughout his life. The acknowledgement of the paternity of a child is essential. It is the woman's lineage task to make sure that the man who is considered responsible for the pregnancy, publicly admits to be the father. In most societies a man acquires paternity rights over children born during his marriage relationship, and he may even acquire legal rights over children fathered by other men who were born before the marriage and are considered to be his own. In Matawai, the marriage contract does not automatically legalize the husband's rights over children born during this relationship. Although most children are born in a marital relationship, there are cases in which the paternity rights are recognized as belonging to other men. As long as paternity is acknowledged children born extra-maritally have, in principle, the same status as children born out of a marital relationship.

The importance of biological parenthood is related to beliefs concerning the contribution of both partners in conception. Conception is seen to be the result of the union of the man's semen with the woman's blood. Regular sexual intercourse of the father with the mother is thought to be essential for the prosperous growth of the foetus in the womb. It is from his father that a child inherits a specific food taboo (*tata kina*), that has to be observed throughout his lifetime. The concept of *tata kina* symbolizes, in religious idiom, the unique relationship between a child and his genitor. Matawai recognize that a person shares his *tata kina*, by necessity, with a number of others, however, no social groups are identified on this basis (see also Price 1975: 52).

A man's relationship with his children is enduring and is, in principle, not dependent upon his relationship with their mother. Usually,
he associates with them closely and will be actively involved in teaching his son male skills, even when he does not live together with the child's mother. Actually the number of persons whose parents, at the time that they reach young adulthood, are still living together, is large.

Young children are taught to recognize their father and to address him respectfully with the correct kinship term (taata). In contrast, mothers do not like to be addressed by their children with the corresponding kinship term (maama). They feel that being addressed by this term reminds them excessively of their motherhood and especially of their old age, and thus makes them ashamed. They instruct their children to address them with other terms that indicate a whole category of female lineage members, such as gaingsa, used for women who are older and belong to the same generation, or tanta, for women of one's mother's generation.

The birth of children and acknowledgement of paternity by the biological father strengthens the alignment of kin groups to each other. Kin groups who initially have contrasting interests and are ready to side, in case of conflict, with their own members, are transformed into the child's mother's lineage (mama bee) and father's lineage (tata bee), and are highly interested in its development. Cooperation between these two lineages is necessary in the rites that mark the individual stages of life. In rituals to mark physiological and social maturity the father's lineage plays an important role. These rituals are performed in the village of the father's lineage, where the child is officially presented with traditional clothes by close kinsmen of the father's lineage. Two rituals are performed for girls: when a girl's breasts begin to bud she is given the apron (kojo) and when she has had some menstrual periods she receives the skirts (koosu). For boys, likewise, two rituals are performed by the father's lineage: at reaching maturity he is given a loincloth (kamisa) and some years later, when he has worked and acquired his first gun, his gun is inaugurated in his father's village. In marital proceedings as well as in funerary and mourning rites mama bee and tata bee closely cooperate.

The relationship of a person with members of his father's lineage can, to a certain degree, be considered as extensions of his relation with his father. Because they are not recognized as having judicial authority over him, as are his own lineage elders, their relationship
can be more intimate. The readiness of a person's tata bee to back him in case of conflict, is officially recognized in council meeting procedures wherein a person's tata bee is given the opportunity to plead his case or ask for a reduction of the punishment. Furthermore it is the ancestors of his father's lineage, who are considered to be able to ritually protect him. In turn, individuals show their attachment to their father's kinsmen by regularly visiting them, assisting them in various tasks, asking their advice and attending rituals in their behalf. Mourning rites are also often attended by a number of an individual's brother's children, who may officiate in the offering of libations.

Individuals, and particularly men, take pride in being linked to their father's lineage. This is apparent in the way in which they will defend their father's lineage in conflicts, defend his reputation, take pride in the glorious deeds of ancestors of their father's lineage, and boast about their father's lineage while drunk.

**Lineage segmentation and resettlement**

Villages have regularly moved throughout Matawai history. There has been a gradual shift from the area along the Tukumutu, first to the main river, known by the Matawai as Mama Saamaka, and then further downriver. These moves have been accompanied by fission, incorporation and fusion of matrilineal descent groups. While some villages moved as a whole from one site to another, most of them have been split by one lineage segment resettling elsewhere. Frequently the original village, which consisted of two or more segments of a lineage, split along genealogical lines, when members of each segment started to clear gardens on separate sites, and gradually spent more time there. The original garden sites or working camps developed into two new villages, each composed of a matri-segment of the original lineage.

Conflicts, particularly about women, and the attempt to avoid supernatural interference, have frequently stimulated such shifts. However, the less spectacular factor or population increase has always been highly significant. This factor often results in the development of matri-segments into new, more or less independent matrilineages, who still consider each other as kins. Some segments may develop into lineages,
Map 1 Former Matawai villages
without actually segregating. When they permit their members to marry, this indicates a new stage in the segmentation process. Others reach a stage in which independence is marked by settlement in a separate village. They develop more independence from each other as they acquire the specific symbols of a village, their own ancestor pole, a council house and their own local functionaries, *basia* and *kapiteni*, appointed by the government.

In the upstream area this process has not threatened homogeneity of villages in terms of lineage composition. This can be illustrated by providing a detailed history of settlements of some upstream villages.

A number of lineage segments seceded from Apefunda (see map 1) and settled in Paasitonu and Afompai, later resettling in the present day villages of Pijeti-to-Bethel. Other lineages settled in the village of Kambalua. In the end of the 1860s this village lodged a number of different kin groups. There were the three lineages of Golafu, Djone and Sikaanki, whose members belonged to one *lo*, but who had at that time already developed into sufficiently independent lineages that marriages between them were permitted. They had their own headman, Majoo, who originated from the Sikaanki lineage. Furthermore two lineages belonging to the *lo* of Gaanfunda *nenge*, lived in this village and were represented by their own headman Dadi (or Anasi). After a conflict, Dadi persuaded the members of his own lineage as well as those of the associated lineage to leave. In the beginning of the 1870s they crossed the river and settled in Bendiwata. A small matri-segment of Golafu *bee* also joined them. About ten years later, the village of Bendiwata was left again and the village as a whole settled farther downstream near the small rapids of Tusewosu, in the village of Abookotanda. Some time later Kambalua also shifted to another location, Mombabasu. A number of deaths occurring in Abookotanda, again resulted in a move. As was customary in these times, the supernatural cause of these deaths, investigated by means of divination, appeared to be related to the anger of the ancestors about the fact that Dadi had brought...
about a separation between the lineages. Headman Dadi had already died and had been succeeded by captain Manuel, when they decided around the turn of the century to settle closer to their former village members in Mombabasu, to prevent further accidents. They chose as their new site the place where Dadi used to clear gardens and had made his camp, a place which he called Palulugoon, after the large quantity of palulu (a palm species) that he used in the roofing of his camp. Here they cleared a stretch along the river and settled in the village of Boslanti. Each lineage settled in its own village section, one in the downstream part in Basukununu, the other in the upstream part in Libakununu and the Golafu segment in an adjoining section of the village, called Akalubaka (behind the corn). Shortly thereafter other people, belonging to one of the lineages of Paasitonu, came to settle with them in an area called Kumuku (behind the kumu tree). The people of Kumuku had originally been living in small camps, but as a result of their marriage relations with the Libakununu lineage of Boslanti, they settled in Boslanti. Later, when their lineage members moved to their own village, Alenbaka, they left Boslanti and joined them. Meanwhile, after the turn of the century, the lineages of Mombabasu had become more independent and each had its own headman. In the beginning of the 1930s, when the population of Mombabasu had greatly increased, it too split. Numerous small internal conflicts and the restricted possibilities of expanding the village because of its rocky ground, resulted in the decision to leave the area. The members of Golafu left first and built the village of Vertrouw in walking distance from Boslanti. Soon the other lineages of Djone and Sikaanki also crossed the river to build two adjoining villages, Pniël and Wanati. Finally, around the same time, 1935, the Akalubaka segment came into conflict with the members of the owning lineage of Boslanti. A young boy of Akalubaka impregnated a girl of the Basukununu lineage and fighting between the two lineages became so violent, that the village owners of Basukununu and Libakununu chased the Akalubaka segment
out of their village, despite the great number of marriage ties linking the
two groups at that time. Their own lineage members who had settled in
Vertrouw, helped them clear a site in Vertrouw, called Baanabaka, where
they still live.

This process has also taken place in the downriver area, as can be illustrated by the
settlement history of Misalibi and Makajapingo.

Lineage members residing in the present villages of Bethel, Makajapingo
and Misalibi (see map 1) are able to trace their ancestry back to three
women, who are said to have been close lineage members. In the native
model, these women (A, B, and C) are represented as full sisters, who
would have been founders to three lineage segments that finally developed
into new lineages. Marriage between its descendants is still rare, despite
the fact that it was a long time ago that their ancestors resided together.
Common residence in Apefunda, upriver from Kambalua, can be traced
to the first half of the 19th century. Around 1848 the descendants of A
and B had already moved further downstream near the great falls, to
Ameikan (or Bellevue) at Tiakamisa creek. The headman of this village
was a certain Troyai, who was also considered to be the headman of the
group of Adensi (see p. 179), who at that time lived downstream in a camp
near the creek Mao. The descendants of C, who had remained upriver with
the other upriver lineages in the village of Feefipau, left for Paasitonu (also
called Lantiwei), close to the present village of Padua, where they resided
with the ancestors of the present day villages of Pijeti-Posugunu. During
the 1870s the village of Ameikan split up. They had been living together
in a camp near the rapids of Bookoboto. The descendants of A stayed at
Bakapaati where their headman Baakafuuta was residing, while the
descendants of B stayed mainly near Jakaabasi at Tabikijedi. Baakafuuta
was also recognized as the headman of the descendants of C, in Paasitonu.
The other residents of Paasitonu had a headman of their own, Jacob Toobi,
who had just established the village of Jacobkonde at the mouth of the
Pikin Saramacca. Probably it was
not long before Baakafuuta established Makajapingo, in 1880, that the
descendants of B went downriver. After a conflict this small group left
Tabikijedi and settled in Misalibi, near Jacobkonde. The village of Misalibi,
would not become independent of Makajapingo until 1905, when the first
headman, Zacharias Janbooki, was appointed by the government.
Meanwhile Paasitonu was also abandoned and its people moved to
Maipakiiki, Alenbaka, Pikin Lembe and Afompai. In Afompai the
descendants of C came to live with the ancestors of the present day village
of Posugunu, but they did not remain there for long. During the 1890s
they moved to Malobi (Zenzentebasu). Malobi was not independent; it
had no village headman of its own, and its residents were not allowed to
erect an ancestor pole. Only its basia indicated a certain amount of
recognition on the part of the government. Until his death in 1916,
Baakafuuta functioned as the headman of Malobi. The official appointment
by the government of a headman in Misalibi and of another for the two
villages of Makajapingo and Malobi, has not been recognized by the
residents of these villages, who feel that the relationship between Malobi
and Misalibi has been closer, than that between Malobi and Makajapingo.
Again, conflicts concerning women, were the cause of the break-up of the
village of Malobi in the 1930s, and the establishment of Bethel. After the
death of the last headman in Misalibi, some 20 years ago, it was proposed
to appoint a man, who although belonging to the descendants of C, had
left his village to take up residence in Misalibi, in connection with fear
for supernatural interference. He, however, refused to be appointed in
Misalibi, but some years later was appointed in his own village of Bethel.
The independence of the three former lineage segments was now considered
to be complete.

The process of lineage segmentation initiated by population increase, in which
lineages split up along the lines of its structurally similar constituent parts
(matri-segments), has contributed to an increase in the number of villages that have
been established in the course of time.
There are, however, other processes that have operated in the history of Matawai settlement along the Saramacca river. The settlement of some downriver villages by people originating from the upriver area, resulting in the present-day situation in which some matri-segments are predominantly represented upriver, others downriver, has not so much resulted from the process of segmentation. Rather, it has been the outcome of a number of moves of individuals who left for the downriver area, and were soon followed by other close relatives, until most of the members of their matri-segment were living downstream, leaving behind a relatively homogeneous population in their villages of origin upriver. This process has been particularly important in the settlement of the downriver villages of Jacobkonde and Balen.

Members of the two lineages, who before 1850 were still living in Paasitonu upriver (see map 1), have had a long history of intermarriage. At the end of the 19th century Paasitonu split up, and together with another lineage that had been residing with them in Paasitonu, they settled in the neighbouring villages of Maipakiiki, Alenbaka and Pikin Lembe. In the 1860s the men of Maipakiiki started lumbering along the Pikin Saramacca downstream. The tributary proved to be a rich source of valuable trees, exclusive rights on which had been claimed against the Djuka and Saramaka who had already settled on the Lower Saramacca in the 1820s, and the laborious transport of logs over the rapids could be avoided. Because of the cooperative character of lumbering, these men were dependent on the help of others, their own brothers and sister's sons with whom they traditionally formed working teams, and other lineage members and brothers-in-law. The first working camp of Jacob, Jacobkonde, soon developed into a more permanent settlement, when the men started to clear gardens downriver and to bring their wives and children along with them. More kinsmen of the settlers followed suit, most of them bringing their wives. Men of the Maipakiiki lineage, spending most of their time downriver, increasingly found themselves living with their lineage ‘sisters’, who had been brought by their ‘brothers-
in-law’ of the Alenbaka lineage, and vice versa. After their initial joint settlement in the camp, which soon developed into the village of Jacobkonde, the two lineages settled in the adjoining villages of Jacobkonde and Balen. From the 1860s until today there has been a continuous movement of people downriver, from Maipakiiki (Pijeti) and Alenbaka (Sukibaka) to Jacobkonde (Njukonde) and Balen. As people moved to join their kinsmen, more or less exclusive lineage segments have settled in the up- and downriver villages. Until recently, when the process of individual movements had been stabilized, the Matawai did not acknowledge the independence of the two settlements. From the moment that Jacobkonde was established, headmanship over the joint villages of Jacobkonde and Maipakiiki (later Njukonde and Pijeti), has shifted between the down- and upriver area, depending on the accidental residence of the incumbents.

Economic factors have played a dominant role in the move of individuals or groups of lineage members from the up- to the downriver area. Since the 1880s the gold-industry along the Saramacca river and its tributaries attracted many Creole gold-diggers to this area. In the 1920s many foreign gold-diggers came to stay in the mining centres of Lemiki and Mututu, in the neighbourhood of Kwatahede. Some of them stayed for years in this area and initiated relations with Matawai women. Especially in the more isolated villages of Kwatahede and Makajapingo, these relations were thought to be a threat to the authority of lineage elders and a distortion of the customary marriage system. Increasingly, men from these villages, came upriver to seek women. They had done so only incidentally before. After having resided with their wives upriver for a number of years, they would request permission from their affines to take their wives downriver to work in their own area, where there were more labour opportunities. Some found work in gold-digging, others in the transport and selling of produce to gold-diggers, and still others in balata that also still flourished in this time. Those men who fulfilled important functions in their own villages were particularly successful in countering the claims of their affines. Attempts by lineage
elders to persuade grown-up children, who had been fostered in their father's village, to return to their lineage village met with varied success. In this way downriver villages were settled by ‘fathered children’ (tata pali miii) and their descendants, forming clusters of lineage members originating from upriver villages (see further p. 57). By contrasting the settlement histories of two women from Boslanti and their descendants, we will document the mobility patterns that were characteristic in this period.

Around the turn of the century Adolphina of Boslanti married a man from downriver. Nicodemus was a Kwinti, whose family originated from the Lower Saramacca, near Santigoon, where Kwinti, Djuka and Saramaka resided in the village of Dampaar. Nicodemus had taken his first wife in the Kwinti village of Paka Paka, where he spent most of his time. Soon he also took Adolphina downriver. He brought his kinsmen together in the village of Heidoti (see map 1), near Kwatahede, where he was appointed headman in 1915. Adolphina's children who were born downriver, were fostered in Heidoti, and stayed only for short periods in Boslanti. After Nicodemus' death, in 1926, Adolphina left the village of Heidoti to take up residence in Kwatahede, where her children attended school. Kwatahede was Adolphina's father's village and her father's kinsmen assisted her in building a house in their section in Manjabanu. She remained downstream until her death in 1936. Her lineage elders in Boslanti had attempted to pressure her children to return. They succeeded in arranging a marriage for one of her sons, but a younger son married a woman in Kwatahede. After her death they were finally able to persuade all her children to return upriver and build a house in Boslanti.

The elders were less successful in their attempt to influence the descendants of Mikolina again. Before the turn of the century Mikolina (2) (see figure 2) of Abookotanda, married Elias of Makajapingo (1), who would later succeed his brother Baakafuuta as headman. Their daughter (4)...
was born in Abookotanda. Later when they had shifted the village to Boslanti, she married Adaude, a Kwinti from Dampaa, a full brother of Nicodemus. Their children's and were born in Boslanti. Mikolina, however, did not stay long in Boslanti. Her move was ascribed to a supernatural cause. She moved with her husband and her eldest daughter, who had two children from her marriages with downriver men, to her husband's kinsmen in Heidoti. Her second daughter with her husband from Fiimangoon, also settled in this village.

In the course of the 1930s Adaude was appointed headman. After his death in 1943 the inhabitants of Heidoti dispersed; the original Kwinti owners settled in Paka Paka, while others returned to Dampaa. Mikolina's eldest daughter and her sons moved to her father's village Makajapingo. The other daughter went to her husband's village Fiimangoon. The others dispersed to Kwatahede and Bilawata. Despite great pressure from their lineage members upriver, none of Mikolina's descendants returned to Boslanti. They highly feared that supernatural interference would be invoked immediately if they went to settle permanently in Boslanti. Thus, instead of accepting his kinsmen's proposal to arrange a marriage in Boslanti, Mikolina's grandson stayed downriver and married in his father's village, Makajapingo. Her son who was lured by his kinsmen back to Boslanti by being offered the function of

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*Figure 2 Matrilineal descendants of an upriver woman who remained behind downriver.*

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
basia, died a few months after his inauguration. His death was ascribed to supernatural intervention. Again some years ago, their kinsmen renewed their attempts to bring Mikolina's descendants back to Boslanti. A tract of forest was cleared in the hope of inducing them to settle upriver, but still they refused and no houses were built. The site was used temporarily as a football field, and then neglected, it became bush again.

As we have indicated the residents of the up- and downriver villages are connected by close kinship ties (see map 2). Feelings of solidarity

Map 2 Descent links between up- and downriver villages

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
persist and are constantly activated by interaction. On their annual trips to the coastal area, upriver villagers commonly visit their kinsmen downriver, where they are readily welcomed. As lineage members, they remain highly involved in each other's well-being, and upon their return upriver news of their close kinsmen is quickly circulated. Visits by downriver villagers to the upriver area are less frequent. Young downriver people who have never visited the upriver area, may still be well-acquainted with their lineage members upriver. Upriver villagers may stay downriver for long periods, sometimes even for years. These stays are instigated by illness, fear of supernatural harm, a new marital relationship, or a combination of reasons, which they describe as a family visit (luku famii). And as we have indicated, cooperation is needed between associated villages sharing one village headman.

Probably it is due to these strong ties between the two tribal segments, and the restricted size of the total Matawa population, that contrasts between them based on perceived cultural differences are relatively restricted. These factors also contribute to the ease with which recent upriver migrants are accepted into the migrant community, despite the fact that it is dominated by people from the downriver villages.

**Village composition and residence**

In the upriver area lineage (bee) and village (konde) closely correspond. Small villages may exclusively consist of one lineage, and inversely lineage members are localized in one village. Still it is important to distinguish the descent based group and the local group.

Matawa villages consist of a number of sections (pisi), inhabited by lineage members. The sections can be inhabited by two matri-segments belonging to one lineage, as is the case in small villages, or by lineages of different origin. In either case, the sections are terminologically distinguished. As villages are settled along the river, their sections and its inhabitants are referred to as libasei (upstream) and bausei (downstream), or as libakununu (uphill) and basukununu (downhill).

Villages are basically comprised of two categories of residents: permanent residents and their spouses (konlibi), who are, in turn,
aligned to other villages in which they are permanent residents. Most villages are exclusively inhabited by permanent residents who belong to the owning lineage, and who are called goon miii or konde masa. Other villages, particularly those in the downriver area, may include, besides this category, also other categories of permanent residents: the descendants of male members of the owning lineage, known as ‘fathered children’ (tata pali miii), and also strangers who have permanently settled in the village without direct ties via their mother or father.

The status of these distinct categories in the village differs markedly. Because they consider their settlement in the village as a honour granted to them by the owning lineage, ‘fathered children’ are aware of their strong dependency on the owners. In contrast to goon miii, tata pali miii can be chased out of the village. In case of conflict with other lineages, fathered children are ready to side with the owning lineage. Like goon miii, they have the right to attend village councils, but political functionaries are not chosen from their ranks.

Konlibi, however, are expected not to meddle in the affairs of permanent residents of the village. They express their aloofness by not attending palavers and avoiding any active interest in the lineage matters of the village owners in case of illness and adversity. In conflicts between the village owners themselves or between the village owners and members of other villages, they do not take sides. Because of their independence, they are accorded important tasks in the handling of certain delicate matters. For a lineage, it is considered more respectful to choose a konlibi as a delegate in matters to be handled in other villages. Konlibi consider their delegation as a honour. They are accorded important roles in marital proceedings, the reconciliation of marital partners, the settling of disputes after adultery and funerary proceedings. In the course of his marital career a konlibi acquires a more significant role vis-a-vis his affines. After having lived for a number of years in his wife's village and fathered a number of children, he is assigned to handle more trustful tasks, and will become an expert in mediating conflicts. Female konlibi, who are readily welcomed in their husband's village, and are occasionally assigned specific tasks in marital proceedings and funerary rites, never acquire as important a role as their male counterparts.
Figure 3 Layout of an upriver village inhabited by members of one matrilineage
In figure 3 we present the layout of an upriver village, inhabited by members of one matrilineage. It indicates the close correspondence between genealogical distance and propinquity of houses in the village. The basic pattern of sections that are almost exclusively inhabited by matrilineally close kinsmen has changed little in the course of time, despite the continuing settlement of new houses, and demolition and relocation of old ones in the village. An individual's choice of a site on which to build a house is highly influenced by traditional rights, which his close kinsmen or ancestors acquired since the first settlement in the village. Various factors contribute to the continuation of this pattern. New houses are built near those of close lineage members and old houses are commonly given by the former owners to close kinsmen. Close kinsmen are also given preference in the inheritance of houses of the deceased and in the assignment of houses of migrants to be occupied by others. Since houses can be easily broken down and rebuilt on another place, even houses that are acquired in another part of the village can be relocated to a site closer to one's close kinsmen. When a section becomes too crowded, permission to expand must be requested from the members of the other section.

The structural characteristics of the category of the descendants of male members of the owning lineage, which are called ‘fathered children’ (*tata pali miii*) domiciled in the downriver villages, need to be analysed in more detail. This category includes both the direct descendants of male members, and the matrilineal descendants of women, who after marrying male members of the owning lineage, have permanently settled in their husband's village. The descendants are considered by the members of their original lineage to have remained behind (*fika*). Direct descendants of male members of the owning lineage, adults currently settled in the village of their own father, at least before their migration, comprise 43.1% (22 out of 51) of all ‘fathered children’ domiciled in the downriver villages. Of them, 17 were influenced in their choice by that fact that their mother had already permanently settled in her husband's village. The other ‘fathered children’ are domiciled in villages in which they have more indirect links.

When such a deviant settlement pattern is repeated over a number of generations it has structural implications for the village composition.
The recurrent settlement of individuals in their father's village over a number of generations results in the dispersion of lineage members in several villages, or seen from another perspective, to a clustering in one village of ‘fathered children’ originating from different lineages. It's occurrence in Matawai is rare. Inversely, when a woman's settlement in her husband's village is followed by the subsequent settlement of her matrilineal descendants in the village in which their mother settled, it results in a lineage segment of ‘fathered children’ settled in the village of an owning lineage, which may gradually acquire a more important status. The occurrence of this pattern is, in fact, more common in Matawai. The developments in two downriver villages illustrate the operation of these principles.

While still living in the former village of Jacobkonde, a man married a woman of Abookotanda and took her downriver to settle in his village. Not only she, but also her children and her matrilineal descendants remained downriver and later moved with the original village owners to the village of Njukonde. They would develop into a matri-segment linked as ‘fathered children’ to the owning lineage of their village of domicile, and far away from the village upriver (Boslanti) in which the rest of their lineage was domiciled. The original residents favoured the co-residence of this other lineage, since it enabled them to contract intra-village marriages and still continue to reside in the same village. Before the village was affected by migration, this segment comprised 22.3% (25 out of 112) of its total permanent residents. Because of their long residence history, these ‘fathered children’ had acquired a relatively independent position from their own lineage members upriver. When people from this village began to migrate to the coastal area, close ties were retained between those remaining in the village and the migrants, contributing to the fact that a number of its residents became part of an intermediate category between migrants and non-migrants.
The village of Kwatahede, which the Moravian mission had chosen as headstation after the abandonment of Maipaston at the beginning of this century, continued to flourish for a long time. Because of its church, school and strategical situation near the gold-mining centres, it was an economic and religious centre in the Matawai area. While the number of its own lineage members strongly decreased, and one of its lineage segments was nearly extinct, the recruitment of members of other lineages successfully compensated for the loss. From the turn of the century men were able to bring their wives to the village and induce their children to stay permanently. People continued in later generations to settle in their father's village. A number of such ‘fathered children’ found spouses among the owning lineage. Others who married women from other villages, continued to persuade their adult children to settle with them. The result has been that shortly before it would be affected by mass migration to the coast, the village was inhabited by a large number of ‘fathered children’; who comprised 43.8% (25 out of 57) of the total adult permanent residents, a very exceptional situation in Matawai. These persons thought of their position predominantly in relation to their fathers, and had few common ties as a group. They had acquired a somewhat intermediary position. They had secondary status in the village in which they resided, while in the village of their original lineage they had given up claims to fulfill political functions by their settlement elsewhere.

The factors involved in an individual's place of residence, have been delineated above. In sum, for most Matawai, settlement is not, in fact, an individual choice. Having been born a member of a lineage that resides in the village, and having been, in most cases, fostered there as well, are the determining factors for most people. Those people who have been fostered in their father's village and whose mother, moreover, is still living in this village, are confronted with the choice of settling in their father's village or returning to their mother's original village.

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Table 1 Individual mobility of lineage members and their spouses of the village of Boslanti

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Their decision is usually determined by the advantages offered by each of the villages. If they acquire the extra tie of marriage, it is usually more profitable for them to settle in their father's village and to change regularly between residing as ‘fathered child’ and as ‘spouse’, while staying in the same village. The longer the residence history of a lineage segment settled as ‘fathered children’ in another village, the less likely it becomes that their members will return to the village of their original lineage. It is only under very specific and unusual circumstances that individuals will permanently settle in a village in which neither their own lineage nor their father's is settled\(^{(7)}\).

In all Bush Negro societies individual mobility is an inherent aspect of social life. On no two consecutive days will the village be comprised of the same number of persons. Also over a longer period, village life fluctuates between times of congregation and dispersal of its members. Data on the daily mobility of non-migrant adult residents who, either as lineage members or as spouses, were affiliated with the village of Boslanti, and spent the night there, are presented in table 1. Data were compiled on four arbitrary, non-ceremonial days in the course of the year. We have specified the circumstances influencing the presence of male lineage members, and in case of absence, we have indicated their whereabouts.

From this table it is evident that female lineage members are less mobile and form the greatest number of present adults. Women without partners, old widowed women as well as young divorcees, are the most stable residents; they are seldom taken along to the hunting camps or on shopping trips as married women will be. Older men will take their wives to the hunting camps, when younger men have left for temporary work in June, or when there is not much work in the gardens at the end of October-December. Young married women will accompany their husbands on shopping trips to the coast during one of the last months of the year. Married women will also stay overnight at the gardens during weeding time, in February. Women in general spend more time in their village rather than in that of their husband. Women who occasionally go to their husband's village to clean his house or sweep his yard, will return to their own village before nightfall. A woman accompanies
her husband to his village upon their return from a shopping trip. Women will also spend some time in the husband's village in the case of death or crisis in the husband's village. This rule even applies within sections of one village. A woman who has contracted an intra-village marriage will shift to her husband's section of the village. Part of the three months during mourning period is usually spent by the couple in the husband's village.

From the table it is also apparent that with the exception of male lineage members who stay in their own village because they are unmarried, or because they contracted an intra-village marriage, male spouses always outnumber male lineage members. Except for the period in which they are engaged in wage labour (May-August) and are residing on the coast, the male village members stay mainly in the village of their wives. This is most clearly indicated in the figures for April, just before their departure to the coast.

**Household**

We will now focus on the smallest effective unit within the village, the household. The concepts of household and family have frequently been used interchangeably. As Bender has pointed out, they must be clearly distinguished because ‘first, they are logically distinct, and second, they are empirically different’ (1967: 493). These concepts are based on different organization principles. ‘The referent of family is kinship, while the referent of household is propinquity or residence’ (1967: 493). He proposes further to analyse household in terms of its two social components co-residence and domestic functions. We will follow his recommendations in our analysis of the Matawai household.

In Matawai society co-residing groups can be distinguished who share some domestic functions. As a point of reference and orientation we will use the concept of household for the smallest social units sharing a common homestead. Such a homestead extends as far as the small parcel of land around a house which is referred to as *djai* or more commonly as *pisi*. Besides the house, several other smaller buildings compose the homestead, including a cooking house, a granary for the storage of the rice harvest and a shed which protects the firewood from
rain, and is used for the preparation of food. In the *pisi* fruit trees are grown and some vegetables and medical herbs are cultivated.

The pile-built houses have two rooms; the frontroom (*sakasa*) is used as a living room, and in the backroom (*denduwosu*), arrangements are made for the attachment of hammocks. Houses are small in size. The backroom provides just enough space to sleep for two adults. The number of people comprising the household is in most cases restricted, basically consisting of a married couple or a single adult, with or without children (their own or fostered).

Matawai place a high value on the independency of adults, and we will see that older people maintain their own, in many respects, independent households. There are rules that tend to prevent the extension of households. Part of the avoidance relationship between a man and his parents-in-law, prohibits him from living with them in the same house. This is also true for brothers- and sisters-in-law. Therefore a newly married couple will not be incorporated into an existing household. These rules also prevent the incorporation of old widowed or divorced parents into the households of their children. In fact, few adults who are not in a marital relationship, will share a common household. When these arrangements do occur, they will only be temporary, for instance, a grown-up son or daughter, who is not yet married, still belongs to the parents' or foster parents' household. As soon as they marry they will begin a household of their own. In some cases sisters may share a dwelling for a while.

Olka, 21 year old, a divorcee with two children, lived together with her 19 year old sister Eseline who was still unmarried, in a house that Olka had inherited from her mother after her death. Although they resided together, they used to cook apart: Olka in her own cooking house and Eseline under the piled granary. They both used the rice from the same granary, harvested from one garden. Eseline had joined Olka after the death of Eseline's foster mother, but lived together only for a few months. When Olka became pregnant in an extra-marital relationship and it was assumed that she was having regular sexual intercourse with the future father
of the child, Eseline moved into a vacant cooking house that belonged to her mother's sister who had migrated to the coast.

Young children usually sleep in their parents' house. They share their mother's hammock while they are breastfed. After weaning they sleep in a hammock of their own. Soon they move to the front room of the house, joining their other brothers and sisters. Children may regularly shift sleeping quarters on their own initiative, without the intervention of those who rear them,

Four year old Tuntu loosened her hammock in her mother's house and brought it to her grandmother next door. She asked her grandmother to fasten the hammock and complained about the punishment she received from her mother. She stayed a few days before returning to her mother's house.

Kinsmen may ask for each other's children, as the expression goes, for 'one or two nights'. Such stays may, in fact, last several months.

Matawai are attached to privacy and dislike to have sexual relations in the presence of children who are becoming conscious. Lovemaking during marriage takes place in the small backroom in the uncomfortable position afforded by the hammock. They insist that older kids, especially boys, should not share the house with their parents. Some children will sleep in a cooking house, others are given their parents' former house or may inherit the house of a deceased lineage member. A large number of boys between the ages of 15 and 19 have their own dwelling. Boys in this age category who sleep in a separate place, become increasingly independent of their household and may provide shelter to their brothers and age-mates. Girls also inherit houses at young ages, but they are not allowed to sleep there alone. Girls are expected to maintain their virginity until marriage and the mother or foster mother is held responsible. Consequently, more girls than boys in this age category, remain in their parents' home. Other arrangements are made to lodge the girl elsewhere, for instance, in a cooking house together with an old single female relative.

At quite an early age girls are given a cooking house of their own to prepare them for their female role. Increasingly they will
prepare their own meals and, in this way begin to form a separate unit within the household to which they belong. Sometimes they are given the responsibility of feeding and looking after the children of temporarily absent kinsmen. Girls will only settle in a house of their own and initiate a new household when they are married. She will then be expected to cook for her husband, as is explicitly formulated during the marriage ceremony (*da manu ku mujee*). After the marriage celebration the new household will be publicly recognized on several occasions.

We will now examine the composition of the household in more detail. Table 2 shows the composition of households in the four upstream villages, excluding the households of migrants. Of the 22 single person households, two are of men, and 20 of women. The one-man households are temporary arrangements. They are set up after the death of or divorce

### Table 2 Composition of tribal households of the four upstream villages (*Libasei 1*) *n = 119*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man alone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman alone</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and foster children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother with own and foster children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total one adult households</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife and husband</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife, husband and own children</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife, husband and foster children</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife, husband and both own and foster children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife, husband, children and grandchildren</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife, husband, foster children and foster child's child</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total conjugal households</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from a marriage partner. After spending the mourning period in the village of his deceased wife, a widower returns to his village. Usually within one or two years after the end of the former union, a man will remarry. This is not always the case for women, who sometimes remain without a partner for long periods. All the one-adult households with children, are women's. They include women who are widowed, divorced and a small percentage of those who never married. One-adult households are less frequent than those including a married couple. A large percentage of the adults are married. Of all women 64.6% are married, and this percentage reaches its highest value for the 35-39 age group (93.5%). The percentages are still higher for men. As a result of a mean difference in marital age of about eight years and a longer life expectancy, women tend to survive their marriage partners, causing a number of households of older single women. Both one female households and conjugal households may include own or fostered children. Households of single women are less likely to include children than those of married couples. Of all households 31% do not include children, 33.6% include foster children. We will later return to the role of children in the viability of the household.

Seasonal labour on the coast requires men to stay away from their homes for a period of three to four months. We consider these absentees as part of their wives' household since the reason for their wage labour on the coast is to support the household in the village. Moreover, they still identify themselves with the household. In a few cases a non-migrant woman has a migrant husband. These are, are we will indicate later, transient arrangements and will end when the husband comes to take his wife to the coast. It may be justified to consider these cases as two single person households, as long as they do not unite, since the contribution of the husband to the household is minimal, and both individuals operate in different domestic domains.

Households seldom include more than two generations. More commonly children are born after marriage, when a new household has already been set up. Sometimes young girls give birth to children before marriage (see p. 128) and stay in the household of their parents thus giving it a temporary extension.
Magda, 15 year old, became pregnant and she was forbidden to attend school. In the lineage council, she named a boy who she claimed made her pregnant, but the boy insisted that he did not. Magda, who was fostered by her maternal grandmother, stayed in an old cooking house of her ‘sister’ (MZD) and remained involved in the household until, in her last months, her mother sent a daughter, whom she raised herself, to help her ageing grandmother in Magda's place. Her two younger sisters, who were also being raised by this grandmother, were considered too young to be of good assistance. Magda's mother accompanied her to the clinic at the time of delivery, and after they returned to the village with the baby, took care of her in her own homestead. Magda then changed places with her sister again, becoming, together with her child, part of the household, because fosterage was not considered to be ended.

Apart from seasonal labour couples spend most of their time together. Periodically men will spend a couple of weeks away from their households on hunting trips or some nights away visiting their own village where they will be fed by their matrilineal kinswomen. There are certain periods when the sharing of one sleeping room by a husband and his wife is prohibited. During his wife's menstruation, the husband ties his hammock in the front room, and immediately following childbirth the woman resides with the newborn child in the cooking house, sleeping on a mattress close to the smouldering firewood.

Except during the wife's menstrual period, household members share daily meals cooked by the wife. Women consider it to be their exclusive task to provide cooked food for residents of the homestead, and will define the household group in terms of the people for whom they are responsible to cook. Each household member has specific tasks according to one's age and sex. At quite an early age, children contribute to the daily work in the household by fetching water, washing dishes, pounding rice, breaking palmnuts for the preparation of oil, and fishing. As they grow older they are quickly given more responsible tasks: cooking rice, preparing sweet potatoes, distributing pieces of hunting
game among relatives, and so forth. Certain tasks involved in the preparation of food are shared by members of different households, who co-reside in one section (pisí) and constitute a domestic group. Almost every household has its own garden plot which is cleared every year. Women, who visit the garden almost daily to harvest tubers or fetch plantains, prefer to be accompanied by another woman or a child. A woman with a baby does not go to her garden as regularly as a woman with older children, but if necessary she will tie the baby on her back and go to the garden, where she will place him in a hammock under the small shed. A woman with more than one child, who are still unable to walk a great distance by themselves, is particularly hampered in her garden work because she must carry heavy loads returning to the village.

One-female households are able to maintain a certain degree of independence by the help of kinsmen. Men will clear a garden for their old widowed mother, or for their divorced sister. Often, though, these women have no right to claim the help of kinsmen and must resort to using the same garden for two consecutive years by burning the rice stalks after harvesting. This means that there will be a smaller yield the following year. Sometimes kinsmen will help these women build a house or a cooking house. They do not, however, always have enough time, because others may also request their assistance. They are more inclined to make provisional repairs, instead of renewals, so that housing conditions for single women are usually worse than for married women.

Older single women, especially those without children, are in an unfavourable position, since they must do all the small household chores by themselves, while other women may delegate these chores to small children. They also have no right to claim the assistance of children of neighbouring households. Until quite an old age, these women will have to perform all the daily household tasks. Thus, it is no surprise that ageing women try to insure themselves against remaining alone by urging kinswomen to give them children to foster.

The individual perspective

Our analysis which has focused on the principle of descent, has provided a one-sided view of Matawai social life, wherein other structural
principles intermingle and interfere with those operating in the demarcation of descent groups. Our descent based approach, therefore, needs to be balanced by a more individually oriented perspective. Such an approach is justified by the Matawai conceptualization of kinship which is focused on descent groups and on individual networks.

The position assigned to an individual on the basis of his birth in a descent group, highly determines his relations with others but he is also able to manipulate these relations in his own right. On the one hand there is, as we have indicated, the tendency to distinguish ‘others’ from ‘we, ourselves’, which becomes manifest in the recognition of descent groups of various spans. Our matri-segment is set against the other matri-segment of our lineage, our lineage or our clan is opposed to other similar groups, and most particularly we Matawai is contrasted to other people, sometimes negatively defined as non-Matawai and sometimes specified as members of another tribal group, fotonenge or bakaa. This clear-cut demarcation is counteracted by the individual's readiness to single out people from other groups, with whom a special relationship is emphasized.

Matawai conceive of the individual as having a central position in a wider network of people consisting of kin, affines and non-relatives. Basic to this conception is the differentiation between close and distant relatives, or in Matawai idiom, between someone's wosu dendu (inside kin) and doo famii (outside kin), affines and non-relatives. The distinction between close and distant kin, which is based on general principles, has important social implications. Generally kinship obligations tend to be more strictly observed between close kin. This is reflected in several domains of social life: cooperation in the processing of food and horticultural tasks and in particular in councils and rituals. Individuals are, however, allowed a great deal of freedom to stress certain relations with particular kinsmen over others, and to initiate closer relations with more distant kin, according to their own will. The recognition of kinship and quasi-kinship and the occasional extension of kinship and affinal obligations towards more distant ones will correspond to the individual's needs.

An individual's network cuts across lineage and village boundaries. But because Matawai thinking is so strongly dominated by the principle
of descent and local group, people are more ready to categorize others by referring to their lineage or village, than to the consanguines through whom kinship is traced. This principle is clearly shown in the way in which an individual refers to a number of persons (his mother, father, MM, MF, FF and FM), whom he considers to belong to his own circle of kinsmen, his egi sembe. Instead of lumping these people together, he will classify them according to their membership in descent groups or villages. Thus he points to his egi sembe in his own lineage (M, MM), in his father's lineage (F, FM), in his father's father's lineage (FF) and in his mother's father's lineage (MF).

In this way he is able to specify his wosu dendu famii or egi sembe in his own lineage, separating direct matrilineal kinsmen from classificatory ones. Because he himself is aware that these people belong to the category that in descent group terminology can be distinguished as his matri-segment, he may also refer to these people as his pisi (localized matri-segment) or as his closest lineage members (djugudjugu bee). In the same way, an individual may refer to particular persons in his own or in another village, with whom he wants to stress their matrilineal kinship relationship as distant kin, as members of his lo, or as his paansu (planting material) or bongo (seed) i.e. those who have been planted by a common ancestor.

Among his father's lineage members, an individual likewise differentiates close kin, whom he specifies as his father's direct lineage members (tata wosu dendu famii), or as members of his father's pisi, from more distant kin, i.e. his father's classificatory lineage members. An individual will develop an intimate and enduring relationship with members of his tata wosu dendu, especially his FM, FB's and FZ's. They are highly concerned with the individual's life and are directly involved in all rituals that mark his life stages. In turn, the individual likes to visit them, regularly spending a Sunday in their village, finding rum and food with several kinsmen. He will assist them in horticultural tasks and housebuilding and attend funerary and mourning rituals performed at their death.

The need for an individual to distinguish close and more distant affines, whom he acquires through his own and his consanguines' marriages, is urgent. Even an individual's close affines can be so
extensive that it often appears impossible for him to keep up with all these relations.

After a dancing party which concluded the mourning period for a woman of Boslanti, a fight developed between her lineage members and a mixed group of labourers from the Geological and Mining Service, who had their working camp opposite Pijeti and had attended the party. Soon they were fighting vigorously on the open plaza near the landing stage. Only the lineage members of Boslanti participated. Konlibi from other villages, who had attended the party, ran to watch the fighting. After Donu, in the heat of fight, had knocked an Indian to the ground, he was abused and provoked by the Creole boss of the working group. Donu attempted to hit him, but accidentally hit Kaloisi, who had been merely watching the fighting. Old Kaloisi was an elder brother of Donu's wife's father, and was living as konlibi in Boslanti. Kaloisi turned to ask who had hit him so strongly, and Donu suddenly became aware that he had hit his ‘father-in-law’ (his pai), whom he was obliged to treat with respect. He hastened to apologize: ‘O no, uncle, I did not hit you intentionally’. But the old man seized the opportunity to remind him of his obligations and replied: ‘No pai (my “son-in-law”), you have to pay me, because you beat me too hard’. Kaloisi was known to be fond of rum, and when Donu visited him the next morning with a small bottle of rum, Kaloisi acknowledged, after having emptied the glass, that finally he had come to his senses again.

The conclusion of a marriage relation by death or divorce does not necessarily change the relations between the individual and his former affines. Even after the initiation of a new marriage, an individual will maintain relations with those people in his wife's village with whom he has developed a particularly close relationship during his lengthy stay there.

In addition, there are persons outside of one's own lineage and that of one's father, who are recognized as distant kin (doo famii). These include all descendants of an individual's male consanguines.

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
(i.e. his brother's children, mother's brother's children, father's brother's children, father's children with other women, and so on). In figure 4 we present a chart of the distant kin traced by a man of the upriver village of Boslanti. Notice that these kinsmen are dispersed throughout almost all Matawai villages.

Individual networks differ from each other in the number of distant kin that are included. These variations are not so much based on the actual number of descendants, as on the degree to which the individual is inclined to recognize these descendants as kin and to maintain relations with them.

A society is never exclusively determined by one structural principle. In Matawai society, while localized descent groups dominate the social structure, other structural mechanisms operate to cross cut the exclusive ties and to align individuals of these descent groups with each other. One such mechanism is the frequently observed conjugal residence pattern of uxorilocality, which makes men develop extensive relations with the kin group of their wives. Another, is the recognition of distant kin belonging to several kin groups and living dispersed over a number of villages. This provides individuals with opportunities for mobility. By maintaining relations with distant kin, women, for instance, are able to regularly leave their own village and stay with more distant kin in other villages. Sometimes they pay them a common visit, sharing food and drinks and exchanging information. A woman will also attend mourning rites and other ceremonial occasions in connection with a distant relative. Moreover, the dull routine of cooperating in food processing and gardening with the same close kin can be broken by going to stay for some time with a more distant kinswoman to assist her with a specific task. This kind of cooperation is particularly common with a distant kinswoman who belongs to the woman's own generation (her FBD).

Men, too, recognize distant kin in other villages with whom they occasionally cooperate and whom they may visit. Men, more than women, are also inclined to maintain relations with distant kin in villages situated at a great distance from their own. This is especially the case for upriver men, who will stay overnight with kinsmen on their annual journey by canoe to the coastal area. These journeys are
Figure 4 Distant kin (doo famii) traced by a man of Boslanti
undertaken in pairs: father and son, a man and his sister's son, two brothers or two brothers-in-law. In the unhabited area they prepare a camp to spend the night. But, preferring to stay in a village, they will plan their trip so that they arrive in a village before dark to stay with some distant kin. On their arrival in such a village, the group disperses, each individual finding a place with one of his distant kin.

Among non-kinsmen, Matawai recognize certain people as acquaintances (sabiman) or those with whom they have acquired familiarity (gwentiman). Particularly in the coastal area, temporary and permanent migrants recognize such relationships with Bush Negroes of other tribal groups or with Creoles. These relationships are used to achieve very specific goals, such as finding work and housing facilities. More important still, are the formal friendship bonds. These relationships are initiated both with Matawai and with Bush Negroes of other groups. The friendship relation is initiated by one of the two friends (teki mati) and in order to be recognized by others, it must be formalized by the exchange of food and goods purchased in town. Also the persons' wives are involved in the relationship and even their close kinsmen. Such relationships are often enduring. The persons may address each other and their wives either as mati or using first names. The relationship involves the mutual expectation of helping each other, sharing game and purchased goods from town. On Sundays after church groups of men walk through the village and enter each other's houses to drink and chat. Drinking couples consist either of suagi (brothers-in-law), meti (men who both have married women of the same lineage), or mati (formal friends).

Some people tend to consider their assistance of kinsmen in terms of the repayment of a debt (e.g. I will help her cut rice, because she has helped me planting; or I send my daughter to work with her, because she has helped me before). However, in general, people are more inclined to put it in terms of ‘the idiom of kinship’ and consider their obligation as arising out of the kinship or affinal relation (e.g. I will help her planting, because she is my sister). Although most kinship obligations tend to be reciprocal, between close kinsmen there may be a delay before reciprocation. Particularly when a person is in
distress, his kinsmen will readily assist him by contributing the necessary rum for a libation to the ancestors, and will expect to be helped by him, only when they themselves are in need. Reciprocity between formal friends tends to be more direct. The gifts exchanged after returning from a trip to town are usually equivalent not only in value, but also in the kind of gift. The function of the exchange is not so much so much to provide each other with the dearly needed items, but to confirm the existing relationship.

Because individuals, living in neighbouring villages, can usually trace kinship and affinal ties to each other in a number of ways, in their daily interaction they will choose one of these as the basis for their relationship. This will be manifested in the terms they use to address each other, as well as their specific behaviour to the other. We will indicate the implications that result when the relation is changed by a new marriage, without, in this context, going into detail about the subtleties of the use of terms of reference and address.

When Waido (see figure 5)\(^\text{(2)}\) was still married to Lita\(^\text{(3)}\), he addressed her younger brother Aloma\(^\text{(4)}\) as suagi, the common term used between brothers-in-law. Even after his divorce, he continued to address Aloma so, until Aloma\(^\text{(4)}\), in turn, married the daughter of Waido's brother, Nola\(^\text{(5)}\). and Waido thus became his ‘father-in-law’. They then changed their terms of address in accordance to this new marriage relation. From now on Aloma\(^\text{(4)}\) addressed Waido\(^\text{(2)}\) as tio, the term with which he also addressed his real father-in-law, Simeon\(^\text{(1)}\), Waido reciprocated with pai, son-in-law, the term used by Simeon\(^\text{(1)}\) to address Aloma\(^\text{(4)}\).

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Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Cooperation and Sharing

There are a number of implications that are directly related to the descent group ideology, that pervades Matawai social life. Social life, as it takes place in small descent based residential groups, is strongly dominated by the principle of cooperation. The importance of cooperating in specific tasks has been most apparent in lumbering, traditionally performed by a large group of men. Such large-scale cooperation was necessary in order to haul the logs through the forest to the creeks, and transport the rafts over the rapids downriver. Other specific tasks such as building houses and boats have also always required cooperation. Cooperation, however, is not restricted to those circumstances wherein it is a necessary condition to the achievement of a particular task. Some form of cooperation is involved in the performance of almost every task. As we have already indicated, cooperation between lineage members is a kinship obligation, based on religious beliefs and moral values. The act of cooperation is highly valued and lies at the heart of Matawai social life.

It is clear that working together with others involves the elements of sociability and companionship, that are in themselves positively valued. Village life fluctuates between the congregation and dispersion of its members. At certain times general sociability prevails. After a peak period in the horticultural cycle, villagers enjoy gathering together in the evenings to exchange hunting stories with their kinsmen by the light of the small kerosine lamp. When, on the other hand, weeding reaches a peak, and most of the villagers have gone to stay in the gardens for the whole week, those who stay behind in the village will complain: ‘di konde koto pii’ (the village is cold thoroughly), thus indicating how they regret the restriction of their social contacts.

People also prefer to perform individual tasks in the company of others, and will schedule their activities accordingly. One woman, planning to pound her rice, rolls the heavy mortar to the neighbouring compound of her lineage sister, who, in the shade of her granary, is preparing cassave bread, in order to be in her company and exchange news while they work. People on the river navigate their canoes within talking distance. And the men working near the waterside on their boats,
will often seek each other's company and ask each other for advice.

In most cooperative activities, some aspect of sociability is present, making these working patterns attractive to the participants. Particularly in ritual and ceremonial contexts, wherein people coordinate their activities towards communal ends, a certain degree of harmony is aspired towards and temporarily approached. At the conclusion of mourning, a party is organized by the lineage members of the deceased. Some days before, *kwinti daan*, an alcoholic beverage of sugar cane, is communally prepared for the party. As soon as the date for the party is set, lineage members make a trip to their gardens of the previous year, and return to the village burdened with bunches of sugar cane. Men and women gather the cane early in the morning. Poles, used to squeeze out the cane, are dug up from the compounds of the lineage members, and erected in the village on a place where this communal work will be performed. Teams of men and women are formed; one holds the cane, the other presses the pole to squeeze out the juice into large enamel bowls. The people work in a joyful, mocking mood, laughing and yelling to each other. The very old come to watch, sitting on the side and verbally taking part in the activities. The work is concluded with the communal drinking of fresh sugar cane mixed with ginger.

Cooperation also plays an important role throughout the horticultural cycle. Due to the abandoning of seasonal lumbering, large-scale group cooperation at the felling of trees has been significantly reduced. Other horticultural tasks are still performed cooperatively. Despite the fact that the garden is owned collectively by the household, and not by its individual members, assistance is claimed and given in terms of individual obligations towards the woman or her husband. Thus, whether such assistance is expressed in terms of kinship obligations or the reciprocation of an outstanding debt (*paiman*), such cooperation is always a matter of an individual tie.

To illustrate the category of kinsmen on which a household makes such claims throughout the horticultural cycle, we will present the following case.

**Clearing (*koti baasu*)**

Djama cleared his garden on three subsequent days, forming a team with his 12 year old S and his MMZDS, who worked on an
adjoining garden. After finishing his garden, the team moved to the adjoining garden of his MMZDS in order to finish the clearing in three days. Together with his S, B and BS, he cleared a small garden for his widowed mother, finishing it in one day. He assisted his wife's MMZDDH, who had been in the hospital, and was now being helped by 8 persons in order to complete the clearing within one day. He assisted another MMZDS (= WZH) with the clearance of a garden of that man's S, a migrant who had just returned to the coast and who was married to Djama's own ZD. Finally, together with his 12 year old S, he began clearing a garden for his eldest S, who had not returned in time from his temporary work.

Felling (faa goon)
Djama felled his own garden on five consecutive days, being assisted by his MMZDS (2 days), his MMZDDH[^1], another MMZDS[^1], ZDH[^1] and second S[^1]. He, in turn, assisted his MMZDS on the adjoining garden[^3], B[^1], first S[^1], second S[^1], WZDH[^1] and ZDH[^1].

Weeding (limba)
Djama weeded his garden together with his wife, completing the work within two weeks. He received assistance from his WZD (= MMZDSW)[^1].

His wife assisted two of her Z's and her ZD, each for four days He himself assisted his M, B, and MMZDS, each for two days.

Planting (diki alisi)
Djama and his wife's garden was planted with the assistance of 11 persons, 8 of whom were recruited from his wife's lineage (WB, WZ, 3 WZD's, and 3 WZDD's) and 3 from his own lineage (B, and 2 MMZDS's). His wife assisted in planting 8 persons' gardens. With 3 persons, she, directly reciprocated the help received (Z, 2 ZD's). She also assisted 5 others, her M, 2 MZ's, HZ and HZD.
Djama assisted 10 persons in planting. 4 of them involved direct reciprocation (his WZ, 2 WZD's, MMZDS). The other 6 consisted of his M, MZ, 2 MMZDD's and WZD.

Harvesting (*koti alisi*)

Rice from their garden was harvested by Djama's wife on five consecutive days; she was assisted by 2 Z's (4 days), MZD\(^{(3)}\), ZD\(^{(4)}\), MMMZDD\(^{(1)}\), MMZDD\(^{(3)}\), MMZDDD\(^{(3)}\) and HFDDD\(^{(1)}\), who represented her mother. She herself assisted 8 persons in harvesting, directly reciprocating her MZD\(^{(3)}\), ZD\(^{(3)}\), Z (a whole week), MMMZDD\(^{(1)}\) and HFDD\(^{(1)}\), as well as helping her M\(^{(4)}\) and MZ\(^{(1)}\).

Actually the number of persons on which households make claims is variable and is dependent upon several factors. In the first place, it depends on the ability of the adult household members to reciprocate the assistance. Women without spouses can usually make claims on fewer people than those with spouses, and women with grown-up children (especially girls), who can be engaged in reciprocating their own obligations, are able to claim assistance from a wider network. In addition, the stage in the developmental cycle which the household has reached, related to the age of its adult members, influences the kind of kin and affines from which assistance is sought. Younger adults will mainly extend their network laterally, making claims on lineage members and affines of their own generation. When their children reach adulthood, kinsmen and in-laws of the descending generation are also included; and, when they have grown old, they predominantly cooperate with and receive assistance from their own children and their children's spouses. Finally, some people prefer not to be burdened with too many obligations. An individual, for example, might plan to do temporary work during a particular period and thus be unable to reciprocate. They tend to do their garden tasks by themselves, seeking any assistance from a small number of kinsmen.

A person, planning to finish a particular activity on his garden will arrange a date beforehand. By announcing to his kinsmen that he is going to plant his garden on a certain day (*piki*), he, in fact, solicits their assistance. Although attempts are made to organize such tasks on
different days, during peak periods a number of gardens will be planted on the same day, so that people, often linked with a number of persons whose gardens are being planted, will have to choose whom they will assist. After the whole garden is planted and before leaving for the village, the owner expresses his gratitude for the assistance he received by giving food, drinks and tobacco to those who helped him. This is purely a token of gratitude and does not relieve him from his duty to reciprocate. In contrast, during the rice harvest, when most granaries have become empty, by assisting each other with harvesting, women can acquire some rice for the following days, until their own rice is harvested.

In contrast to the common traditional pattern, in which more than 20 persons are invited to plant the rice thus completing the work within the same day, some people will work with their own household members for a number of days, and only call on some four or five of their closest kinsmen on the last day. However, those who restrict their network in such a manner, are suspected of intentionally nor permitting others to share their services in order to maximize their own production. An individual who does not share his food and goods is thought to be an anti-social, wicked person, who is successful by backing out of his responsibility towards others.

Individuals are constantly reminded of the need to share. Children are educated about the value of sharing at an early age. Small toddlers are taught when eating a piece of cassave in the company of others, to break it into pieces and divide it. Despite the importance of sharing, it is common for an individual to maintain some privacy in order to limit the amount of sharing. Secrecy over one's food produce and game is a common policy to avoid the excessive pressure of kinsmen. Only when a large amount of game or a big animal has been killed, is it publicly announced and divided between a large number of people. Game is scarce near the villages and the killing of game is not a daily occurrence. The number of kinsmen who, on the basis of their kinship and affinal ties, feel that they may claim a share in the game is usually larger than the number of people who actually receive a portion. A man who returns from a hunting trip will therefore take certain measures to avoid disposing of it. He may take another path, cover it
up in banana leaves, or cut the game in pieces before approaching the village. Shortly after his arrival, his children are sent with a plate containing small pieces covered with a lid, to distribute them among particular kinsmen. Other kinsmen who see them passing will know, but they will not inform their neighbours about it. And the standard question: ‘ju fenigbangba tidei?’ (did you get any meat or fish today?) is usually denied or countered with the vague and avoiding phrase: ‘brother, some person gave me a tiny little piece’, without disclosing the name of the person. This secrecy is even more commonly practiced in the more private domain of the garden.

The principle of sharing is reflected in the ceremony for those who have returned from a trip to the coast. Matawai spatial orientation is dominated by the flow of the river that links libasei (upstream, the Matawai area) and bausei (downstream, the coastal area, town). Different values are attached to these points of orientation. Matawai territory is defined in terms of relative poverty, town in terms of wealth (gudu). Tribesmen who will easily acquire food in their own area because of the norm of sharing among kinsmen, have only limited access to the wealth of the coast, that as to be bought from the bakaa (whitemen or town Creoles), who are rich by definition.

Matawai, especially those residing in the upstream area, face many uncertainties when they leave for the coast. They must travel for several days, crossing wild rapids and dangerous places. Their stay in town (foto) is even more uncertain. They are not accustomed to traffic and have to be on their guard against robbery and cheating. The sight of Kwakugoon, at the border of Matawai territory, has different meanings depending on the direction from which they come. Arriving from the villages upriver it signals foto with luxuries (bread, cold beer) available in shops; returning from the coast the view of the river reminds them of their tribal self-consciousness and makes them eager to show villagers and kinsmen newly acquired wealth.

Crossing the boundary between tribal and coastal area is marked by rituals of passage. Seasonal migration involves a great number of men leaving their villages during the same period. Most men leave in groups of two or three, after rice planting in April. For weeks they
are busy with food preparations for their stay on the coast. In small groups they discuss their eagerness to leave, exchanging experiences of the foregoing years, stressing their ‘toughness’ and mobilizing work teams. In the afternoon on the day before leaving, pairs of brothers, brothers-in-law or friends make their last rounds through the village to inform their kinsmen about their departure. They try to avoid too many requests to buy goods in town, by ‘failing’ to inform everyone of their departure. Kinsmen will offer them a drink.

The transformation of villagers into coastal labourers is marked by the performance of ritual acts on the morning of the men's departure. Cloths are tied around their necks (tuwe koosu) by female relatives, friends or lovers. Talcum powder is sprinkled on their heads and they are given a bunch of bananas, pounded rice, and cakes of roasted cassave as they walk rapidly through the village.

At their return they approach their village slowly in boats laden with town goods. They are tired from many days paddling upriver and from continual reloading of the boat to pass over the rapids. Before they land, in the village the shout: ‘tjo-ho-ho, bakaaman kon’ can be heard from the bank informing other villagers of the travellers' return. From all parts people run to the landing stage to help the men carry goods to their houses, glad to see their kinsmen and eager to know how many gudu they have brought from the land of the bakaa. For the moment such a man is the richman (guduman) or (bakaaman), the man who has worked for the bakaa, and the burden of sharing is put upon him. He will divide a bottle of beer or limonade among those present. The following day he presents particular kinsmen and friends with small bakaaman gifts (such as a soft drink and a package of soda crackers, delivered on a plate draped with a cloth). After a few nights in his own village, having set some provisions apart in his house and divided part of his goods among his kinsmen, he proceeds to his wife's village where the same bakaaman ceremony is repeated, and his affines expect a share of his momentary affluence.

In inheritance procedures attempts are made to recognize the claims of close kinsmen, while still making it possible for many people to share in the goods of the deceased. After a man's death, his gun and machete
that he used in his wife's village are brought to his own village. His properties are stored in his house and sealed by two of his lineage members who are delegated to assist the widow during mourning. Towards the end of the mourning period, some days before the final ceremony, the properties are divided. Two sessions are held, one indoors (a wosu) the other in public (a doo). First all his belongings are brought out of the house in boxes and cases and shown to the villagers. The more valuable belongings are then brought upstairs again. Two persons are appointed to divide the small household utensils (the half broken things as Matawai call them, gpokolo gpokolo sondi), making sure that each person receives something. Matawai are masters at dividing. Just as they are able to divide one bottle of beer over a group of more than 30 persons, so also in this case, all those present will receive something, whether a food stirrer, a comb or a bottle. Some of the money is also divided. The inheritance session indoors is attended only by members of the person's matri-segment(8). There more valuable goods such as tools, clothes, hammocks, boats and his house are divided.

Collection from and redistribution to lineage members of food, drinks and goods - an aspect of all ritual performances - symbolizes the implication of each individual in these communal events. When a widow is brought to the village of her deceased husband to spend the mourning period in his village, food is collected among the lineage members of the deceased. The widow is led around the village by two lineage members who are delegated to spend the mourning period with her. She stops at each house to greet the lineage members. Hence the ritual episode is known as da u-wiki, the opening phrase of the greeting. After presenting her with some food and drink, such as a cup of pounded rice, a bunch of plantains, or a bottle of beer, the villagers follow the procession to the house of the deceased. There, part of the food and drink is redistributed among the same villagers who had contributed it, in the first place, thus strengthening their involvement in all aspects of the ritual.

In this society, where cooperation and sharing are valued and individual differences tend to be reduced by the leveling mechanism of redistribution, any indication of inequality evokes suspicion. Indeed individuals are inclined to measure or evaluate the condition
of others in comparison with their own situation, or with that of kinsmen with whom they identify. They disapprove of the man who returns from the coast laden with goods and does not share them with others. They criticize the woman who has given birth to many children and has not been willing to give any of them in fosterage to a woman without children.

Skillful manipulation of information is common in this context. With envious eyes they will search for indications, which may confirm their suspicion that others have acquired goods or food by anti-social, possibly supernatural means. And they are inclined to observe others carefully with an eye to ascribing their own illnesses and adversities to the transgressions of others. All sorts of private means are used to this end. Information may be sought by spying on another (logoud), or by being secretly informed via a third, interested, party (pindja). An individual may also go over to a neighbouring compound with the specific purpose of secretly overhearing people talk about another (jaika woto), give private comments or criticize him behind his back. Revealing the gossip in public, either one's own observations or hearsay at a later time, is considered as 'selling him to others' (sei en). One can take revenge on another for an earlier trap set by him, by secretly suggesting things about him that were not true (njam en a baka) and harm the other's public reputation by talking about him in gossip and slander (konku) or openly spreading lies about him (buta lei, legede).

Although this manipulation of information in a certain degree characterizes relations between people related by various ties, most particularly it affects the relations between the members of two localized matri-segments residing in one village, aggravating their rivalry. The latent tensions, caused by envy, can frequently be masked by a public front of unity. But as the tensions increase, fed by recurrent irritations, a trivial quarrel between small children may flare up into a full-scale quarrel between the adult members. Matawai recognize the disruprive effects of these latent tensions that force kinsmen to take sides and eventually end in open fights and fission. To prevent the escalation of conflicts, attempts will be made to nip them in the bud. A council meeting is hastily organized. Members of
both parties are given the opportunity to explain the circumstances of the quarrel. Other kinsmen, directly or indirectly involved in the matter, are called as witnesses. By probing into the motives behind the conflict, an attempt is made to reveal earlier tensions that have played a role in the case. Fearing the harmful effects of *fio fio* (see p. 501), they try to eradicate any grudges that might remain in the hearts of those concerned. The people involved are pressured to reveal the grudges in public, before the ancestors, and to ritually revoke any accusations that have been uttered. This procedure serves to check any escalation of the conflict, if only temporarily.

**Eindnoten:**

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(2.) In order to compare up-and-downriver residence figures, migrants have been included. Although some of them no longer have houses in the village in which they resided before they migrated, they are still considered as residents by their former village members and they themselves feel attached to the village.

(3.) The number of persons residing in villages in which they have neither ties via their mother nor their father, is small - upriver only 1, downriver 5.

(4.) Political functions are valued both for the status conferred upon the incumbents and for the yearly salary paid by the Surinamese government.

(5.) Another lineage, that formerly resided in Apefunda, and is now settled in Makajapingo, occasionally uses the same name to refer to itself.

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(7.) After having been fostered by her MMFD, whom she considered to be a distant grandmother, a young woman was incorporated in her foster mother's lineage, being registered with their surname, and permanently settled in her village. She had been given in fosterage, as as small child when divination revealed that the extinction of her matri-segment was due to supernatural vengeance.

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(8.) Generally, only close matrilineal kinsmen receive a share of the inheritance. Men who want their children to receive a share, may give property to them before their death or indicate their wish to their matrilineal kinsmen. Usually the kinsmen will respect the wishes of the deceased. And if a son claims his father's gun after his death and the father has not expressly requested this, they will still give it to him, but then will readily ascribe any adversity that occurs to the son as a sign of the father's disagreement.
4 Marriage

The marital process

Marriage is considered to be a normal transition in adult life. Permanent celibacy is not seen as a possible alternative. The unmarried status for men and women who have lost their partners because of death and divorce is temporary, and attempts are made to reduce the length of time without a partner. Marriage defines the roles of the two individual partners as adults. Moreover, it is the most important social institution that aligns two different kin group. The later function will become clear when we delineate the marital process. Traditional marriage, as it is still concluded by all Matawai in the tribal area, is not a single ceremony, but a process extending over a period of time, involving numerous transactions between the two kin groups and going through a number of customary stages before its becomes legal. Recognition of the union by the two kin groups is crucial to the marital process. Also the partners have to perform certain customary acts for the legalization of the relation. Particularly in the case of a marriage initiated by the partners themselves - sometimes initially against the will of the kin groups - the role of the partners is important. Such marriages have to be recognized by the kin groups at some point in time in order to become durable relationships. The partners' first step towards a formal marriage is to make the relationship public. While a man involved in a secret affair will leave his lover's house before the cock crow to make sure that he is not seen, the man who intends to marry the woman will stay the whole night. He will sit in her doorway the next morning to ascertain that his lover's kinsmen will see him and know that they spent the night together. He may also attempt to legalize his relation with the
woman by acknowledging responsibility, when the woman, pressured by her kinsmen, indicates that he has made her pregnant.

We will delineate the marital proceedings of a first marriage for a young woman (abense mujee). This is the most common type of marriage and the marital proceedings for a divorcee (ganda mujee) are modeled after it. The following description is based on observations in the upriver area. Data about changes in the proceedings were acquired from discussions with older informants.

The proceedings are initiated in the family of the young man. Formerly a man's lineage elders, on instigation of the man's mother, would call the young man and tell him that they thought the time had come to seek a wife for him. They would suggest a specific girl or ask him to mention one. The wishes of the man were given little consideration, and it was thought to be disrespectful to oppose his elders' choice. Nowadays, the initiative is usually taken by the man himself, who asks his elders to seek a certain girl for him. To be sure that the girl will accept the proposal, he has already asked her either through a kinswoman who has approached her secretly (pindja saapi) or by means of a letter. The agreement of all lineage members is, however, still essential before further negotiations can be made, and his kinsmen are still able to veto a marriage. During this first stage, word is sent to the lineage of the man's father to ask their advice. When an agreement is reached three kinsmen are delegated to bring the marriage proposal to the woman's lineage.

The principle of delegation is an essential element in Matawai social life. Members are not usually chosen from the person's matri-segment, but from the wider localized lineage or village. Attempts are made to find lineage members from both sections of the village and to assign different people to these tasks at each new ceremony. In this way, all villagers, young and old, men and women, acquire some experience in handling such procedures. In all these cases, the persons originally delegated to the proceedings continue to play a central role throughout, and are given thanks (tangi) in the form of a baabi (small bottle containing ¼ litres) rum divided among them by the person concerned at the end of the proceedings.
The first stage of negotiation involves the transmission of the marriage proposal (tuwe buka). Usually the delegation of the man's kinsmen visit the girl's village in the afternoon. After bringing together some of the girl's kinsmen, they reveal the reason of their visit. At this stage, the girl's kinsmen simply indicate that they have received the message, but do not as yet give an answer; or as they say metaphorically ‘You can not poison a creek by yourself’, thus indicating that they have to talk it over with the others. In addition, the girl's kinsmen ask the delegation to wait for the answer, ‘even if it would take a year’.

Discussions are soon held by the kin group of the girl. After the parents have consented, the opinion of close matrilineal kinsmen is sought. In addition, a delegation is sent to the lineage of the girl's father to ask their opinion. Agreement on the part of both her own and her father's lineages is essential. Any opposition can terminate further negotiations. The girl must also publicly give her consent to her lineage elders. She complies by saying that she agrees with what the elders think is good for her; it would be disrespectful to oppose them. When agreement is reached, the young man's kinsmen are informed that the proposal is accepted by them (a kai ku den). They are invited to come together with the man, to the girl's village.

The delegation members, now accompanied by the man, again go to the girl's village, where they meet with some members delegated by the girl's kin group. On this occasion the man is summoned and asked if he did, in fact, send his lineage members to ask for the girl. During the proceedings he sits uneasily with his head bowed. Next, the girl is called and asked if she agrees. This meeting, at which both parties reach an agreement (fiti di taki), is concluded with the handing over of rum by the kinsmen of the man to those of the girl. The amount is wan bata ku wan weti bata (1½ litres) rum in the case of an abense mujee, and one bottle of rum in other cases. Part of this rum is drunk by those present, thereby legalizing the agreement; the rest is later brought to the village council to be divided and drunk by all villagers, thus informing them of the agreement. The fiti di taki is concluded by a final transaction. About a week after the fiti di taki, some women from the man's lineage take a canoe full of goods, the engagement load (fiti di taki lai), given
to them by the man, and bring it to the girl's mother or another kinsmen to set it apart for the girl until after the 'giving ceremony'. In the past, this load consisted mostly of handicrafts made by the man himself, such as a basket, benches, winnowing tray, calabashes, combs and so forth, as well as some town-bought items, proof of his ability as household provider. The greatest part of the goods were presented after the 'giving ceremony' and consisted of purchased goods. Nowadays, no sharp distinction is made. Both loads may consist mostly of purchased goods and even the time that they are handed over is no longer fixed.

Between these transactions and the 'giving ceremony' (da manu ku mujee) the partners are considered to be formally engaged (kiia). During this kiia-period, while both partners are still under the guardianship of their parents and each is still living in his own village, the young man is expected to clear a garden plot for his fiancee, to perform labour services for his future father-in-law and to present them with game and fish. In addition, he starts to use the appropriate kinship terms to his affines-to-be and must behave towards them with the expected deference. He may visit his kiia mujee regularly, eat food she has prepared for him and spend the night in her village. Sexual relations must, however, be avoided. The girl is expected to remain a virgin until the 'giving ceremony'. When the man visits her, a child must be present as a chaperone. When the man leaves for wage labour on the coast, the girl will prepare food for him and give him an embroidered kerchief (angisa) to wipe his sweat. On his return, she is reciprocated with goods and luxury items bought in town. But the bulk of his money earned on the coast, will be spent for the purchase of goods to set up a household.

The date for the 'giving ceremony' (da manu ku mujee) is determined by the girl's lineage together with her father's lineage. It will depend upon her physiological maturity. Usually the girl is given in marriage soon after she has been given a loincloth (koosu) by her father's lineage, in other words, soon after the menarche has set in and she has had some menstrual cycles. A message is sent to the young man's kinsmen that the girl is 'ready' (tjika) and that they can come to take her.

The morning of the 'giving', a number of the man's kinsmen, together with members of his father's lineage and some konlibi of his village who
will act as middlemen in the transactions, will go by boat to the girl's village. But before their departure, discussions are held in which the man is told about his future responsibilities. The villagers sprinkle the man and the delegation members, who will stay the night in the girl's village, with talcum powder (formerly *pimba doti*) and cover them with cloths. When approaching the girl's village they adopt a modest and deferential attitude. The man himself with his masculine attributes of gun and gunsack leads his kinsmen towards the house of a relative of the girl, in which they will spend the night. In the girl's village, lineage elders, *konlibi* and some members of neighbouring villages have assembled in the homestead of an older woman, where the ceremony will be performed. The ceremony, beginning with a lengthy palaver, is held outdoors (in the case of the remarriage of a widow or widower the ceremony is held indoors, p. 279). At the palaver the parties are segregated. The men, who are the principle actors in rituals and ceremonies, cluster together with other members of their groups, taking their place opposite members of the other party. Groups of women huddle together under neighbouring houses at some distance, forming an audience, who by their critical comments to the men, take an active part in the discussions. Like other communal affairs, such as councils and mourning rites, marriage ceremonies invite lively debates. Each person's comment on some specific point, leads to heated discussions and it takes some time before a consensus is reached. Questions as to whether the man should attend the palaver in person (a recent trend), whether either the woman or the man should cover their heads (dependent upon local tradition), and whether the man himself should take the girl by the hand, or should be represented by a close lineage member (common procedure ten years ago), are among the points of discussion.

The girl's lineage elders use their powerful position as wife-givers to settle the conditions under which they are disposed to give the girl away. Members of the man's group listen quietly, and only occasionally interrupt to give their consent. The man himself attends the palaver with his head bent low. The mutual duties and responsibilities, as implied in the marital contract, are specified. Some of these are quite standardized as 'If you are in conflict with the woman, do not fight with her on the river, do not beat her in the forest, people have to see' and
‘you have to “know” your affines’, that is, to treat them with respect. Then, the marriage payment is determined. This payment for an abense mujee consists of three bottles of rum and two wine or beer. As soon as this marriage payment is presented by a konlibi of the man's group to the woman's elders, the attitude of the wife-takers changes markedly. ‘We have brought the rum already, now we have to see the woman’, they loudly shout. The girl herself has, until then, been staying in a nearby cooking house. Now a woman of the man's delegation hurriedly brings her by the hand. Her face is covered with a cloth to express her feelings of shame at being the centre of public attention. Likewise, a delegation member of the woman takes the man by the hand. The hands of the man and the girl are given to each other and at the same moment the girl's face is uncovered by one of her elders. Quickly following this joyful moment, they leave the scene, climbing up the steps of a neighbouring house.

Meanwhile, the woman's elders have already divided the rum. Two bottles of rum have been set apart, a portion will be presented to the girl's parents, who do not attend (they would be ashamed), another part will be sent to the lineage of the girl's father, while the rest will be drunk in a lineage meeting indoors. At this point, the remaining bottles plus the wine or beer are divided among all present (lanti).

After this ceremony, the visitors are served a meal prepared by the girl's mother who was assisted by her kinsmen. Soon dancing parties are started in the houses of the girl's closest kinsmen, each of them providing some drink (such as a bottle of beer) for the guests. While both groups are involved in the dancing and drinking, sometimes going from one house to another, the new partners only reluctantly attend them and have to be dragged by their new affines to take part in the dancing. They are ashamed to be the focus of public attention. In the afternoon, most of the members of the man's group return to their own village, while the dancing continues.

Shortly before dark, women from the lineage of the girl's father prepare the girl by shaving her pubic hair. The spouses are given the house of one of the girl's kinsmen, in which they are ‘closed’ (tapa) to spend the night. A delegation of both kin groups are present before the doorway. In the house a large hammock - consisting of three pieces -
is tied. The girl has been given a string (konda) to be attractive to the man, who is expected to deflower her this night. If he appears to be unable to fulfill his duty, he may warn his kinsman outside to prepare a medicine for him (mannenge obia) to promote his potency. After the man has deflowered the girl, he will call his female relative to come in and ascertain that the girl was a virgin. If she is, in fact, a virgin, the woman will make the news known to the members of the girl's delegation who are eagerly waiting. Soon the news is spread to every house in the village that the girl was well-raised (a kìia), and that all things have gone well (a waka bunu).

If it is found that she is not a virgin, the news is spread that the girl was ‘spoiled’ (a poi). Ashamed, the man runs away the same night to his own village. The girl is considered to have shamed her parents and kinsmen and will be punished. In the past, she was whipped, but nowadays she is fined to prepare akaa (rice floor cakes). Moreover, she is pressured to name the person who has deflowered her, or as they say, made her a woman (meke en gaan mujee). This person (or his kinsmen on his behalf) must pay a fine of rum with which the lineage members of the woman have to settle the matter with the husband's lineage and ask him to take her back. In addition, the seducer is expected to present the girl's mother with a large hammock and a mosquito curtain, to take away the shame.

If the girl was a virgin, she is honoured the following morning by her parents and matrilineal kinsmen. The spouses are ‘dressed’ (cloths are tied around them), sprinkled with talcum powder and given various kinds of household essentials. It is said that the girl is ‘paid’ (paka) because she behaved respectfully.

Some weeks after the young man has gone to his village, a delegation of his kinsmen come to take ‘their woman’ to spend a fortnight in her husband's village for the first time. This is only the case if the woman is married for the first time. During this time the woman stays in her husband's house, and helps her sisters-in-law with their domestic duties, so that she can become acquainted with them. Before she is returned to her own village by them, she informs every member of the village. The return of the new wife is accompanied by the giving of goods by delegation members on the man's behalf. Other kinsmen also contribute gifts.
The festivity ends with the drinking of rum in the houses of the man's lineage members.

Following the woman's return, she is accompanied by her husband to her father's village, where they are honoured in the same way as they were in her own village. After these ceremonies, a new household is set up. Until that time, the girl stayed in the house of her parents or with a kinsman. Since the man is usually expected to take-up residence in his wife's village, and because of the customary rule of avoidance between a man and his parents-in-law, new housing arrangements must be made. The newly married couple may dwell in a cooking house, be temporarily given the house of a migrant, or move into a house inherited by the woman, until the man has built a house in his wife's village.

In addition to the traditional *da manu ku mujee*, there are two other marriage contracts, which may optionally be concluded after the traditional one. One, is the marriage celebration in the Moravian or Catholic church. Although the mission acknowledges the traditional marriage - the intention to contract such a marriage is made public by the respective lineage elders to the evangelists of the congregations - the mission prefers that the partners, after being prepared by an evangelist, will become confirmed and let their marriage be solemnized with a church celebration. Such a marriage is considered by the mission to be contracted in the name of God, and is held unbreakable by divorce. If, then, arguments arise or a separation develops, the mission will readily interfere in the personal life of its members, exerting pressure on the partners of a church marriage, towards a reconciliation (see p. 336). Marriage celebrations in the church are usually concluded in a later phase of the marital career. Especially in the upstream area, the percentage of church married out of the total married population is quite high 64.4%, reflecting the strong influence of the church in this area. This percentage was even higher in the 1930s and 1940s.

Some Matawai are beginning to contract a civil marriage in Paramaribo, which is accompanied by a large celebration. Because traditional marriage is not acknowledged in the coastal area, migrants who are employed in steady governmental jobs, who live with their wives in the coastal area for a number of years, and have acquired some property of
their own, are induced to contract such a marriage. In this way they are able to enjoy a number of social security facilities for their wives and children. Further, they acquire more rights over their wives and children, as opposed to their wives' lineage, and - becoming increasingly important - they are able to insure that after their death their property will be inherited by their own children. The number of Matawai who were engaged in civil marriages in 1974, was quite small (6 couples).

Factors influencing partner choice

The selection of a marriage partner is restricted by a number of normative prohibitions and preferences. Most of the principles which operate in Matawai society have also been reported for the Saramaka (Price 1975: 86-94) and the Djuka (Köbben 1967b: 36).

Firstly, the most general prohibition is phrased in terms of descent group membership and ties of consanguinity. Marriage relations between all persons who are consanguinely related are considered to be morally wrong. With the Saramaka, the Matawai share ‘an abstract notion that no marriage should be contracted between people whose matrilineal links are known’ (Price 1975: 86). Actually, this means that marriage between persons sharing a great-grandmother, thus belonging to the same matri-segment, is impossible and that marriages between persons belonging to the same matrilineage (bee) are met with strong disapproval. Their members are believed to be too closely related (tjua tumusi). Two segments of the same lineage are also seen as too close (de zuntu jeti) to permit marriage between their members. When, however, a segmentation process has developed, and the segments have formed new lineages which either are still residing in the same village or have separated residentially into two different villages, their members may be seen as conceptually far enough apart (longi tjiuka) to permit marriage relations. The objection to marriage between close matrilineal kinsmen is supported by the fear of the supernatural interference of the ancestors. It is believed that such a marriage, which is a moral sin, would be punished by the ancestors who would strike the children born out of such a relation with illness. Likewise, the same objections are voiced against sexual relations between close lineage members. But Matawai tend to be
pragmatical when a woman becomes pregnant during such an illicit relationship. They argue that the initiation of an illicit affair is a private matter, for which only the two persons involved, are responsible. Permission for the contraction of a marriage, on the other hand, is the responsibility of the bee, who will refuse to give them permission to marry, thereby ascertaining to the ancestors their own lack of compliance. At the same time, the man is granted permission to have sexual relations with the woman until delivery (luku di bee), and his paternity is acknowledged. Thus, they make sure that they have not hampered the normal delivery of the child\(^3\). The matter, then, is left to the ancestors.

There are also persons among non-matrilineal consanguines who are considered too closely related to marry. Thus, despite the normative preference for a man to marry a woman belonging to his father's lineage (a classificatory FZD), a man's actual FZD, who belongs to his father's wosu dendu (see p. 70), is considered to be related too closely\(^4\). Further, a marriage proposal with a person, who is a direct descendant of a male consanguine, the person's doo famii (see p. 71), for instance, his FBD, would be met with strong disapproval.

Secondly, partner choice is restricted still further by another category of rules. Moral disapproval surrounds marriages both with a consanguine of one's current or former spouse, or with an affine of one's close consanguine. Marital and affinal ties are characteristically seen as leading to conflict and discord, challenging the bonds of solidarity between persons related by consanguineal bonds. Thus, formerly, when polygyny was still practiced, this principle prevented a man from seeking a second wife among the lineage members of his first wife. If he impregnated such a woman, the woman would not be given to him in marriage. Indeed, few women have been reported to have had a lineage member as a co-wife. Nowadays this rule still prevents a woman from ‘stealing’ her (classificatory) sister's husband and subsequently marrying him (puu en na en), or even marrying him after he has already been divorced from his wife for some time; such a marriage would be not only possible but traditionally preferred (see p. 97) if the man was a widower. This rule prevents a man from marrying his mother's brother's wife, his sister's son's wife or his father's wife either during their
lifetime or after their consanguines' death; both are considered to be grave sins. Likewise, it prevents women from ‘stealing’ or marrying their mother's husband, and so forth. This principle also forbids a man to marry the wife or the former wife of a person with whom he is connected in a formal friendship relation (mati) (see also Price 1975: 88).

Third, a strong normative prohibition towards marriage is connected to the principle of kunu. Marriage relations between persons belonging to lineages which are linked to each other in a reciprocal kunu relationship, threatened by mutual victimization, are strictly forbidden (see also Price 1975: 88).

In addition, there is a normative prohibition related to the belief in reincarnation (see p. 285). This rule forbids persons with a common supernatural ancestor (neseki) to contract a marriage relation. Both have inherited their neseki’s soul and are believed to share the same personality characteristics, so that the kind of closeness involved in a marriage relation would endanger the development of their separate souls and thus their death as well.

These normative prohibitions limit the choice of a marriage partner. Actually, marriage between persons belonging to the specified categories is rare. The prohibition also seems to limit the choice of extra-marital partners. Few people become involved in casual affairs with a prohibited partner, as far as is indicated from those cases which became public. A marriage proposal with a partner belonging to a normatively prohibited category will meet with the strong opposition of the lineages concerned, and will be cancelled at the first stage of formal proceedings. However, despite all opposition, such marriages do occur. Their lineage members, initially indignant and strongly opposed to the marriage, can eventually be convinced to give their permission. The lineages will perform the necessary rituals and then leave the matter in the hands of the ancestors. They will readily consider the slightest failure of the marriage as an indication of the ancestors' dissatisfaction.

The Moravian church has further complicated partner choice (see for further details the impact of Christianity pp. 327 ff.) by prohibiting Christians to marry non-Christians and by prohibiting polygynous marriages. They have been able both to effectively restrict the partner
choice of their baptized members and to abolish polygyny by imposing heavy sanctions on transgressors (see p. 327). Later, in the 1930s-40s, when all Matawai villages had been christianized by the Moravian mission and when the Roman Catholic mission also began to gain a foothold in the Matawai area (see p. 222) rules were instigated by the Moravian mission forbidding Moravians from marrying members of the Roman Catholic congregation. Because there were few Roman Catholic congregations, this prohibition had a particularly limiting effect on the residents of the Roman Catholic villages. Moravians, who transgressed the church prohibition, were compelled to choose between ending the relationship, being heavily sanctioned, or changing their religious affiliation.

While some Matawai profess an openness in the choice of a partner and indicate that with the exception of a number of prohibited categories, one may marry the person one likes or finds suitable (ka di sembe ati pisii), in fact, a normative preference is found. Matawai, like Saramaka (Price 1975: 92) and Djuka (Köbben 1967b: 35-6) prefer the marriage of a man with his classificatory FZD. The explanation of their preference is based on the same argument as has been reported among the other tribal groups. Marrying a woman who belongs to one's father's lineage and begetting children, who will belong to that lineage, is, in fact, a repayment of a debt towards the father's lineage, which had given the father away in marriage to one's lineage to beget children for them.

This normative preference does not seem to have a significant effect on the actual choice of a marriage partner (as also appears for the Saramaka, see Price 1975: 95). Out of the 87 currently married men of the four upriver villages, 16 (18.6%) had taken a partner from their father's lineage (bee)\(^5\). Also if we consider only first marriages - where one would expect the traditional normative preference to have a more significant influence - the number of marriages of this type hardly increases.

In the past it was customary for a widower to be granted permission to remarry one of his wife's classificatory sisters. This was especially the case if the man was appreciated in the village and his former wife's lineage members wanted him to stay. The Moravian mission strongly
opposed this custom, arguing that it was morally wrong for a man to marry a woman who had been his sister-in-law. The practice was gradually abandoned\(^6\). Nowadays there are still some remnants of this practice. At the end of mourning, before the widower is brought back to his own village, the lineage of his deceased wife will formally tell him that from now on he is free to go where he likes. But if he ‘sees’ a woman, he has to inform them and ask their permission. Likewise, if they ‘see’ a woman for him, they will inform him. Indeed, to remarry the widower still needs the permission of his deceased wife's lineage, and it is in their village, as we will point out later, that the actual ceremony will be performed.

In the past, a man could traditionally claim a future partner even before birth. He would initiate a formal relationship with the child that would be born by giving a present to the pregnant woman. If a boy was born, the man would be engaged in a formal friendship bond (*mati*); a girl (his *mati mujee*) he would *kiia* until she reached maturity, like a fiancée. In the past, this practice was probably a means of securing a second, younger wife. As a result of the opposition of the Moravian church to the *kiia* of young children and to polygyny, this practice is no longer an effective means of partner choice. Moreover it is difficult to assess the limiting effect that these practices had on partner choice in the past. However, the custom has still remained, and is now considered to delineate a symbolic relationship. It is still believed to be necessary for a man who would like to marry such a woman, to ask formal permission from the man who claimed her in her youth and to present him with a bottle of beer as compensation.

Finally, Matawai prefer a small age difference between marriage partners. They argue that with the increase of the age difference between them, the authority of the man over his wife and the respect of his wife for him, decrease. Thus a man, married to a much younger woman would only serve (*dini*) her, and give into all her wishes, out of fear of being left by her in favour of a younger lover. In the case of first marriages the age difference between marriage partners is, in fact, quite small (see p. 382). The gap tends to increase rapidly at second and later marriages, as men tend to remarry younger divorcees and divorced men tend to remarry young girls.
Tribal and local endogamy

Endogamy has been defined as the tendency of people to mate within the same group (Adams and Kasakoff 1975: 147). The fact that a group is seldom completely endogamous is recognized within this definition. In the context of this analysis we prefer to replace ‘mate’ by the term ‘marry’. Because people usually belong to different groups whose membership is determined by various organizational principles, it is important to delineate the group boundaries in order to measure the degree of endogamy. The Matawai population is formed by all people who can trace matrilineal descent to ancestors who are considered Matawai. This includes the migrants who are presently living on the coast. The Matawai marriage system is fairly closed. Despite the fact that almost half of the Matawai population is currently residing on the coast, only 17.7% (54/304) of all Matawai women are married to members of other tribes or to people from the coastal area; for men, this percentage is even smaller 14.7% (45/306). Among the upriver population these percentages are 6.7% (12/179) for females and 5.7% (11/192) for males. The differences between upstream and downstream area are related to the geographical distance to the coast and to the differential migration from these areas. Due to the economic activities in the downriver area in the 1920s and 1930s, in particular the women from the more isolated villages of Makajapingo, Fiimagoon and Kwatahede became involved in marital affairs with Creole labourers (see p. 50). Besides the difference in the actual distance to the coast, the geographical barrier formed by a series of waterfalls south of the villages Paka Paka and Pikin Paka Paka (see map 2, p. 8), further divides the upriver and downriver areas. While the downriver villages are reachable within five to six hours from Kwakugoon, it takes two to three days to reach the upper river villages by motor powered canoe. The division between the two areas is reflected in the relative absence of marriage relationships between people from up- and downriver areas. For a closer examination we have used the four clusters of villages as the point of departure in our analysis (see table 3 and map 2, p. 8). Cluster Bausei 1 is most heavily affected by migration, while Libasei 1 remains relatively unaffected by permanent migration. The most striking feature of
### Table 3 Matawai local endogamy

#### Marriages of females

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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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#### Marriages of males

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<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>69.4</td>
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1. marriage within *Libasei* 1
2. marriage within *Libasei* 2
3. marriage within *Bausei* 1
4. marriage within *Bausei* 2
5. marriage with non-Matawai
6. total number of marriages
7. percentage marrying within own cluster
8. percentage marrying within own and adjoining cluster
percentage marrying Matawai

*Libasei 1*  
Verrouw, Boslanti, Pniel, Wanati

*Libasei 2*  
Padua, Pijeti, Sukibaka, Tiveedi, Posugunu, Bethel

*Bausei 1*  
Makajapingo, Kwatahede, Fiimangoon

*Bausei 2*  
Bilawata, Balen, Njukonde, Misalibi
the table is that the percentages of men and women marrying within the Matawai tribe in the Bausei 1 cluster (66.6% - males, 61.9% - females) are significantly lower than the percentages in the Libasei 1 cluster (96.4% - males, 96.6% - females). The percentages marrying within the same cluster show similar differences, with the highest percentages for the Libasei 1 cluster (62.2% - males, 72.9% - females) and lower percentages for the Bausei 1 cluster (35.7% - males, 33.3% - females).

Conjugal residence

In this section we will analyse the patterns of Matawai conjugal residence, firstly by comparing current upstream and downstream patterns, secondly by comparing current patterns with those prevailing some 50 years ago, and finally by comparing Matawai patterns with those of Cottica and Tapanahoni Djuka and with Saramaka.

In Matawai nearly all couples have two houses, one in the wife's village, the other in the husband's village. Even partners who are engaged in an intra-village marriage maintain this pattern. Despite a relative freedom allowed to partners in the allocation of the time spent apart from each other, couples are expected to spend most of their time together. The wife's lineage insists that the couple resides predominantly in her village. The position of a man vis-a-vis his wife's lineage elders is weak, particularly during the initial phase of his marriage. He is rarely able at the outset to take the woman away from her village. Later, in his marital career, if the man fulfills an important function in his own village, and the two villages are too far away from each other to alternate or regularly visit, he may be given permission to take his wife for a few years to his own village, on the condition that he returns to live in her village after some time.

When we examine the actual daily residence choices of couples, a number of patterns appear to be more frequent than others. Couples may stay together in either the wife's, or the husband's house; they may spend the night in their garden or in a hunting camp; or they may stay together temporarily or permanently on the coast. In the case that husband and wife stay apart from each other, the most frequent patterns are: the wife stays in her own village, the husband stays either in his
**Table 4 Conjugal residence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Matawai</th>
<th></th>
<th>Saramaka</th>
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<th>Tapanahoni Djuka</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>upriver</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>1870</td>
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<td>high</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>virilocal</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>low</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>autolocal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>low</td>
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<tr>
<td>endolocal</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>(high?)</td>
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<td>neolocal</td>
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<td>81</td>
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|          |         |           |          |          | 120           | 121       | 80               | 95 | 202 unions |

Sources: Saramaka (Price 1975: 111), Cottica Djuka (Köbben 1967b: 31), Tapanahoni Djuka (Thoden van Velzen 1966b: 39). Thoden van Velzen adapted his data on conjugal residence to make them comparable with the Matawai data. His original table, which included more refined categories to measure polylocality was simplified; couples formerly classified as viri-autolocal were now classified as virilocal. Not included are data on permanent migrants who comprised about 30-35 percent of his genealogical sample.
own village, in a hunting camp or on the coast, or the wife may remain in her garden and her husband in his own village. It occasionally occurs that a husband stays in his wife's village, when his wife has left to another village or to the coast. It is a rare occurrence that a wife will spend the night in her husband's village during the absence of her husband.

In Matawai, as we have already indicated, practically all marriages are monogamous. In Djuka and Saramaka polygynous marriages complicate conjugal residence patterns, as the residence pattern of one couple of a polygynous household necessarily influences or restricts the residence pattern of the other couples of the same polygynous household.

In table 4 we present data on the conjugal residence of couples in the four most upstream villages and the four most downstream villages. As migration has become an important variable in residence choice, we have compiled data on both tribal and migrant couples in 1974. Following classification criteria as used by Thoden van Velzen (1966b: 38), Köbben (1967b: 32) and Price (1975: 111), couples are classified as uxorilocal if they reside for more than half the year in the wife's village, as virilocal, if they reside in the husband's village for more than half the year. They are classified as ambilocal, if they reside alternately in the village of each, as autolocal, if each partner resides primarily in his own village, and neolocal, if the couple resides on the coast.

The term endolocality, which is used by Köbben and Price to classify Djuka and Saramaka residence patterns of partners in intra-village marriages, residing in their own (joint) village, or the comparable term natolocality as used by Thoden van Velzen for those couples residing in their joint village section, refers to a situation in which the couple has one common house. In contrast partners engaged in an intra-village marriage in Matawai have two houses, one in the section of the village where the wife's lineage is localized, the other in the section of the husband's lineage. For Matawai no separate term is needed, as couples can be classified according to the time spent in either section. Actually all Matawai couples categorized in table 4 as endolocal, reside more than half of the year in the wife's village section, and can also be classified as uxorilocal.
Most significant in the upriver Matawai pattern is the dominance of uxorilocality, which is confirmed by our data on individual mobility (see p. 60). The time spent by couples in the husband's village is generally far shorter than in the wife's village, and never as long as to warrant classifying their residence pattern as ambilocal. Over a period of two years the actual time spent by one couple in the husband's village varies between a few weeks in one year to about three months in the following.

The strength of the matrilineage upriver is also evident from the occurrence of autolocality. Among the other Bush Negro groups partners classified as autolocal, reside each in their own village in the tribal area. In contrast partners classified as such in Matawai, are migrant men married to tribal women, the man residing in the coastal area, the woman staying in her own village. This residence pattern reflects the powerful position of the wife's lineage, that is able to make its demands to men who return to the tribal area to contract a marriage. Men who work for one of the governmental services, sometimes staying in the forest for months, are ready to acknowledge their affines' claims. They think it preferable that their wives stay with their kinsmen, participating in horticultural tasks, rather than leaving them in town without kinsmen. As long as the woman is permitted to visit him regularly in town, or he may visit her in the village, he has no objections. This residence pattern, characteristic for the beginning marital career, however, remains a temporary one. After some time, the man will request the permission of his wife's lineage members to take her to town to settle there permanently.

It is only when men became engaged in more permanent jobs in the coastal area, that their economic position enabled them to oppose the claims of their affines in the villages, and remove their wives from the tribal area. The figures on neolocality, which are still comparatively low in the upriver area, have strongly increased in the downriver area, where migration started earlier. There are indications that before migration began to affect this area, residence patterns downriver have been quite similar with the current ones in the upriver area. This means that we can infer from our current up- and downriver figures that Matawai residence patterns have undergone a significant change within
the last decade under the influence of economic circumstances and permanent migration. In Matawai uxorilocality and autolocality are increasingly replaced by neolocality, indicating a shift in the bargaining power of the husband. This shift parallels, to a certain degree\(^8\), changes in residence patterns in Saramaka as documented by Price. He observes that ‘During the past hundred years, viri- and autolocality have replaced uxor- and ambilocality as the dominant form of Saramaka conjugal residence. That is, a pattern based on the mobility of men has developed into one based on the mobility of women’ (1975: 112).

There are indications that the dominance of uxorilocal residence patterns have increased at the cost of a more equally balanced pattern in Matawai in the course of time. From discussions with older informants about residence practices some 50 years ago, when polygyny was still practiced, the following picture emerges. Men used to build two houses, one in their own village and one in their wife's village. Although a number of couples stayed predominantly in the wife's village, the pattern of alternating between the two villages was more widespread than it is today. Men cleared two gardens, a pattern that has nowadays become rare. Men who married two or more wives, would take them from different villages. They had to make sure to allocate their time equally between their wives and therefore couples used to spend more time apart from each other. These findings are corroborated by missionary reports, in which the pattern of having two houses, two gardens and frequently shifting households from the man's to the wife's village, is characterized as a ‘double life’. The missionary Voullaire, for instance, related this pattern to the ease of separation and divorce. He considered the pattern to be a hindrance to the development of a Christian congregation (1919: 111). It is no wonder that the church, favouring the nuclear family, also preferred a fixed place of residence. It is probable that in Matawai the church, at least unconsciously or indirectly, contributed to the development towards an increase in joint residence in one village, by both banishing polygyny and stabilizing marital relationships.

We must point out that the degree of polygyny has always been related to imbalances in the sex ratio. Mention is made, for instance, of a strong increase in polygyny after an epidemic of smallpox which
particularly affected the male population (NB 1862: 835). Both the sex ratio of 50 years ago and our genealogical data indicate that the percentage of polygynously married men must have been relatively low. It is probable that the former Matawai residence pattern shows more correspondence to the former pattern of the Saramaka and the current one of the Cottica Djuka, with comparable levels of polygyny, than to the current Matawai pattern. As in Cottica Djuka, a woman's bee was in a strong bargaining position vis-a-vis her husband (Köbben 1967b: 33), and it was ‘regarded as a special favour on the part of the bride-giving village if the wife is permitted to live with the husband in the latter's village’ (1967b: 47). In Matawai of 50 years ago, as in 19th century Saramaka and in present-day Cottica Djuka, it was considered as a prerogative of village elders to have a virilocal wife (Price 1975: 115; Köbben 1967b: 34). Nowadays Matawai are less inclined to grant this prerogative. Such a conjugal residence pattern in current Matawai may only develop in very specific circumstances, involving a combination of factors, such as fulfillment of a village function, economic power, and long distance between the villages of the partners.

The abolishment of polygyny and the stabilization of marriage relations strengthened the grip of the woman's lineage over their affines. Then, both the current Matawai pattern on the one hand, and the current Tapanahoni Djuka and Saramaka patterns on the other, must be seen as the result of developments in two opposite directions, Tapanahoni Djuka and Saramaka shifting towards a more dominant virilocal residence pattern, and Matawai towards a more uxorilocal residence pattern.

**Male-Female relations**

In Matawai society male and female roles are highly segregated. The building of houses and boats, clearing and felling of large trees on the garden, hunting with a gun and fishing with bow and arrow, and the manufacturing of most artifacts such as benches, trays and so forth, are all exclusively male tasks. Harvesting, processing food, cooking and tending children are mainly female tasks. Few tasks are designed for both men and women. Most tasks, especially in the sphere of seasonal work and the horticultural cycle, are traditionally performed either by

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Men and women have their own supplies and possessions. Even their supply of rum is divided; each may help a kinsman pay a fine, or pour out a libation to the ancestors. Both the man and the women have their own unique network of kinsmen, so that each will attend ceremonies, rituals and festivities in other villages on their own, sometimes staying there for several days.

Even when a man and his wife both agree to work in their garden, they usually do not join each other. Typically, the man, accompanied by a son, will go ahead in his boat, intending to do some tasks, such as cleaning the footpath to the garden, hunting, collecting, or doing some repairs on the garden of his widowed mother, before he goes to his own garden. His wife and the other children go straight to the garden. While still sitting in the boat, they each take some food, cooked by the wife and put for each household member in a separate pot.

The socialization of children is in accordance with these patterns. They are taught quite early to be self-sufficient and to acquire some independency.

The segregation of men and women is most clearly formalized on occasions such as councils, ceremonies and rituals, where it is manifested in spatial arrangements and antagonistic behaviour. As we have already indicated (see p. 90), men and women sit apart. Occasionally, a few women may leave the group of chatting sisters and go to the men's side,
to take an active part in the transactions. When crossing the boundary they assume a man's postures and talk with a man's gestures. When invited to do so, women may come to the front, to talk to the ancestors, but mostly the two sides are kept apart. Even at the end of the meeting when rum is shared, the bottles are divided among men and women separately.

During group work such as the planting of rice, which is traditionally done by both men and women, they tend to form groups and work alongside each other. Verbal aggression concerning sexual roles is prominent on such occasions.

One of the few occasions, on which segregation of the sexes is absent, is after the death of a kinsman, when between the time of burial and the all-night wake, lineage members assemble under the roof of the dead to play cards and *adjiboto*, tell tales and make artifacts. Young and old, men and women intermingle freely on this occasion.

The household is also characterized by periods in which the interaction between husband and wife is mainly cooperative. This is especially evident during the weeding of the garden, when a man and his wife stay in the small camp at their garden for a number of days. In the past, weeding, like the planting of rice, used to be performed by groups of men and women who rotated on each other's gardens, finishing work on one before going on to the next, and interaction was characterized by the same sex segregation. Nowadays, some households are still wholly dependent upon the rotation system. Others combine two systems, clearing their own garden for a number of days until the final part, when they call on their kinsmen and give them the honour of finishing the work. A small group of households weed their gardens completely by themselves, staying for a number of weeks in their gardens.

Male and female's contribution to the maintenance of the household are seen as complementary. His wage labour provides for her (*solgu*), while he is taken care of by her subsistence activities (*seeka*).

We have pointed out, that control over a woman's sexuality is primarily vested in her lineage members. After marriage the exclusive rights to a woman's sexuality have been transferred to her husband, and therefore sexual relations between a wife and husband are considered legal; all
other relationships are, in fact, illicit. The Matawai do not conceptually distinguish between relationships with an unmarried woman and with those with a married one (adultery). In both cases the same concept of fufuu (stealing) or pii wan taki or pii wan sondi (searching for trouble) is used. We will, however, treat them separately, because in each case, the parties involved as well as the proceedings which ensue are different.

Illicit relations are by definition secret affairs. The seducer must be certain of the woman's willingness (he will do this by means of a letter or a messenger), because any act, in fact the slightest touch against the woman's will, which she might characterize as indecent, can be used against him and will set in motion judicial proceedings.

A delegation was ready to return to Boslanti after a marriage ceremony, which as usual ended in dancing and drinking. Some of them were standing in the boat, singing loudly. Sijete and the younger Kubi who was sitting in front of her began arguing. He ordered her to sit down and their argument, which at first had been in a joking mood, became more serious. When she arranged her pots and started to sit down, she was touched by Kubi who had reached his hand backwards. Convinced that he intentionally had touched her private parts, she publicly accused him, calling ‘No, no, Kubi, you and I are not age-mates, to touch me there was wrong’. Kubi became indignant and accused her of being drunk. Soon pots were thrown back and forth hurting the others who were sitting in the boat and thus involving them in the case. The palaver took almost a whole day. Kubi kept denying that he had touched her intentionally. He said that he only tried to make her sit down. Others were summoned as witnesses. They did so grudgingly, objecting that they did not want to betray another. However, they declared that Sijete was right and that they had tried to pacify them. This subject caught the imagination of the women of Sijete's lineage, who vigorously discussed the incident, claiming that a man who did such a thing, could not be drunk, but had purely wanted to do so. Others replied that if he had wanted to
initiates something, he would not have done it in public, with his own wife present. As the story spread, more details were added about the exact way in which he had touched her. If it was not, in fact, his intention, he would have apologized immediately, they argued. Kubí's kinsmen privately held the opinion that one may casually touch another. But they resigned themselves in the council, and admitted that touching something of another, or another was wrong, because one does not have the right to do so.

In the past, before Christianity became established in the upriver area, illicit relations were one of the most prominent causes for lineage segmentation and the shifting of villages. They caused fights in which a great number of people were involved, each taking sides with their close kinsmen, pitting lineage against lineage, and village against village. There were relatively few customary rules. Each lineage set its own rules and fixed its own fines. When the first evangelists were stationed upriver, large-scale fights about such affairs were common. Lineage members would hide in ambush waiting to attack the seducer of one of their women. In other cases, the village was disturbed by the woman's lineage members taking revenge on the lineage members of the seducer, who refused to admit that he was responsible. Mothers shut their children indoors, and men hastily jumped into their houses to prepare a potent obia (traditional medicines) which would make them more resistant. Houses were set on fire or broken, and people were hurt during the fights, which would end only when some konlibi intervened to stop the fighting or when the evangelist would ring the church bell to make them return to their senses.

Since that time, attempts have been made to avoid violence. A number of rules (weti) were enacted, in which standard procedures for illicit relations have been proposed and customary rules which were not observed, have been reinstituted. Especially after a fight, the gaaman will summon the elders from all the villages to Posugunu, to discuss the matter in a lanti kuutu and to reinforce or reinstitute new rules.

Firstly we will consider illicit relations with unmarried women, specifically, women who have never married (abense mujee) and divorced
women (*ganda mujee*). Relations with widows are also considered by the Matawai as illicit (see p. 274). Because she is still the deceased's wife for some time, usually sexual relations have supernatural repercussions (the seducer tends to be warned or punished with illness by the spirit of the deceased husband of the widow). They will be dealt with separately later.

There have been important changes in the ways of dealing with illicit relations, which, as we will indicate later (see p. 108), have had an effect on the present-day marriage system. Traditionally, the first step is taken by the woman's lineage members who pressure her in a *bee* council, to name the man who deflowered her, had illicit relations with her or made her pregnant. The woman herself is punished for the transgression by her kinsmen. Especially an *abense mujee*, who has initiated relations before marriage, and thus made her kinsmen ashamed, will, in turn, be shamed by being whipped. Moreover she will be fined, if she is reluctant to mention her lover's name. A pregnant woman, however, will not be whipped and will be fined only after delivery.

Formerly, the woman's lineage members were keen to fight with the lover, especially if they caught him in the act. Customary rules prohibited fighting after negotiations between the two parties were in progress. If the man concerned dared to deny responsibility for a pregnancy, the woman's lineage members would be particularly indignant and would immediately pile into a boat to go fight with the man and his kinsmen. This was the only means that the woman's lineage could use to compel the man to admit his responsibility and to claim any compensation. There were frequent incidents of a man strongly denying any responsibility at first, only to claim the child as his own after birth. Since the 1950s when a rule (*weti*), instituted by the *gaaman*, outlawed fighting with a reputed seducer, the number of fights have diminished. The paternity issue has also been settled. Men who later claim to be the father of the child, are fined and must provide the woman with household utensils.

On the other hand, the woman's kinsmen no longer have any formal means to compel a man to admit responsibility and they will commonly merely threaten to fight. Usually the case remains unsettled and the child is born ‘without a recognized father’, a recent phenomenon, which
seldom occurred in the past.

There are two customary ways in which pregnancies of *abense* and *ganda mujee* are settled: a) the woman is given in marriage to the man who made her pregnant b) the man is formally granted paternity rights over the child without giving him the woman in marriage. The first solution is preferred by the woman's lineage and, in the past, this was the more common solution. Often girls were impregnated during their engagement period (*kiia*) by their husbands-to-be, and the marriage was merely speeded up. For *ganda mujee*, as well, it was a very common procedure to initiate a new marital relationship. There were, however, numerous occasions when marriage was not permitted: if the partners belonged to the same lineage, if the man had made a woman pregnant who belonged to the same lineage as his first wife or if the man was formally engaged to another woman and his family was reluctant to end their betrothal. In such a case the woman's lineage members would summon the man and his kinsmen to settle the matter. They would determine the fine to be paid by the man to the woman's kinsmen. The fine varied and was dependent on the conditions of the fighting. If they had fought him with a number of persons, the fine would be lower. Paternity rights were acknowledged by the woman's lineage, by granting formal permission for the man to ‘look after the womb’ (*luku di bee*), that is to have regular sexual relations with the woman both to feed the growing foetus in the womb and to assure an easy delivery. This relationship would also be formally ended. Some months after delivery the woman's lineage elders would call the couple indoors to tell them that from then on they were to have no more sexual relations (*de na mu mumui moo*). The relationship would then end without becoming a marriage.

Conceptually, this relationship, which points both to the strength of the matrilineage as well as to the special meaning of biological paternity in this society, is clearly distinguished from marriage.

Presently, both solutions are still sought. However, fewer women in these cases are given in marriage (for reasons we will indicate later). Fines have become highly fixed, equalling the customary marriage payments. Although violence has been outlawed, it remains a theme throughout the proceedings. When, for example, an *abense mujee* is impregnated, the man must give the persons who raised the girl (her own or foster parents)
a large hammock and mosquito curtain, 'to take away the shame'. Moreover, he must pay the same amount of rum required from a marital partner, to acknowledge his paternity rights over the child. Part of the rum is drunk by both parties present, while the rest is put aside by the lineage elders for the parents of the woman. The man's lineage elders will talk to the parents of the woman, indicating that they did not approve of the way in which he took the woman, but begging the woman's parents not to make trouble, to wait until the child is born and to cool down their hearts.

Nowadays, impregnation of a divorcee is not as strictly punished as it used to be. The lineage has lost its grip over the sexuality of these women as a result of the recent institution of rules granting ganda mujee more privacy in their relations with (married) men, and prohibiting their kinsmen from fighting with their lovers and with men who deny responsibility. In the days when polygyny was still practiced, a ganda mujee could be given in marriage to a married man who had made her pregnant. This has now become impossible. The social status of the child is ascertained by the woman's lineage, by making the man acknowledge paternity and fining him two bottles of rum, equalling the marriage payment for a divorcee. Moreover, the woman is enabled to temporarily remain without a formal marriage partner by expecting the man to 'look after the womb' until delivery and making him provide the woman with household utensils and game. At the end of these temporary relations, ritual precautions may be performed to prevent the eventual disturbance of smooth village relations. If the man impregnated a woman belonging to his wife's lineage, he is whipped and fined. Moreover both women, considered as quasi co-wives, drink rum together to restore the solidarity of their lineage sistership which was disrupted by the man.

Separation and divorce

The breaking-up of marital relationships is very common in Matawai society. In many cases the partners are eventually reconciled. Therefore it is important to distinguish a temporary separation from divorce wherein the ties between the former marriage partners are permanently cut. Due to the absence of clear markers it is, however, difficult to
absolutely distinguish between the two. Divorce does not require the return of marriage payments. No residential arrangements mark it off from separation, since separation already involves the residential segregation of the partners. The real dividing line between divorce and separation involves the formal proceedings of the two lineages concerning the garden plot or its produce. The Matawai make no terminological distinction between separation and divorce. They may either use the verbs disa (to desert) or puu buka (to revoke the contract, making an end to it) in contrast to tuwe buka, to make a marriage proposal, the first step in the marriage proceedings. These terms enable them to specify which party has taken the initiative in breaking-up the relationship. Thus they will say: di mujee disa en (the woman deserted or left him) and di womi puu buka na en (the man repudiated her). They also use the term paati to refer to the breaking-up of the relationship between the two persons: en ku en paati (they are separated or divorced).

A marriage is frequently broken up after a separation, the duration of which is highly variable, ranging from only one day to as much as a few years. Separation usually leads to negotiations between the lineages of the partners, who try to find the cause of the trouble, to smoothen out the relationship and to reconcile the parties (mindi). A marital relationship will be considered to have ended in divorce, when the lineages concerned have finished their negotiations, without achieving a reconciliation and when, as a result of this, formal proceedings have been made to divide the garden produce. When this point is reached, it is unlikely that negotiations will be reopened at a later date. The best guarantee that the previous break-up is, in fact, a divorce, is the initiation of a new marriage relation by the partners. We will return to this point later.

As in most other societies, the Matawai's standards differ for men and women. Adultery with a woman, meaning an infringement of the exclusive sexual rights of the woman's husband, is considered to be acceptable grounds for the husband to separate from his wife. A woman, whose husband maintains illicit relations with another woman, does not have the right to separate from him. The husband is accorded the right to fight with his wife's lover, while his wife, who will occasionally seek out
her rival to fight with her, is only frowned upon and considered to be a *langa wojo mujee* (a jealous woman). The husband is expected to keep aloof from the fighting of the two women; he would make himself ridiculous if he interfered. Matawai husbands who are absent for a long period of time, expect their wives to give in to men who seek out their favours. But as long as they have no proof, they do not have the right to accuse their wives. An illicit relationship with a married woman must be hidden from anyone who would inform the husband upon his return (his *pindjaman*).

As in adultery, women are seldomly forced into a relation, as any word or act on the part of a seducer may lead to judicial proceedings.

Adultery procedures have changed in the same direction as those of other illicit relationships: less physical violence, and lower fines. The *gaaman* have instituted a number of customary laws concerning adultery which have contributed to this trend. The beating of the seducer and his kinsmen by the husband and his kinsmen has been curtailed; the number of persons involved in the fighting has diminished; the lover is given the opportunity to escape the beating by finding asylum in the house of a lineage elder or functionary; fighting is prohibited as soon as formal negotiations have been initiated and the case has been laid in the hands of *lanti*; in its stead whippings⁹ and other symbolic acts are used to shame the seducer. The fine to be paid by the lineage of the seducer has decreased from 16 bottles of rum, instituted by *gaaman* Kiné after his installation in the 1920s, to 8 bottles and whippings, as Kiné at the end of his reign, in the 1940s, instituted. In the 1950s this further decreased to 8 bottles (or 5 bottles plus whippings). Because this fine was regularly exceeded, the rule had to be reinstated in 1972. Although headcaptain Nicodemus, ruling during the interregnum (1947-1950), instituted a rule prohibiting a husband from deserting his wife before negotiations were initiated, this is still frequently done.

The actual procedure followed depends on a number of circumstances. Fighting is most likely to occur when the lover is caught by the husband in the act. If the adulterer, however, succeeds in escaping the beating, he will be whipped. The crime is considered to be more serious if there was a formal friendship relation (*mati*) between the two men. Occasionally, the adulterer will provoke a fight with the husband, and
this will lead to a general fight in which the husband's lineage will back him up and come to make trouble with the adulterer's lineage. In such a case, the adulterer and his kinsmen will be more harshly punished. More commonly, the husband is informed about his wife's adultery, or finds some proof of it. An illicit relationship may endure for some time, the attention of the husband being attracted by the gifts (a cloth or some money), which the woman receives from her lover.

As soon as he has evidence of his wife's adultery, he will go to his wife's lineage members to indicate that their relationship has ended. After pressuring his wife to admit to the adultery and to name her lover, he will leave the matter to her lineage. He returns to his own village and informs his kinsmen of the reason for his separation. It is the task of the woman's kinsmen to verify the accusation of the husband. The lineage elders will pressure the woman to admit to the adultery and to name her lover. They punish her by whipping her and demanding one or two bottles rum, especially if she only reluctantly confesses. A delegation of the woman's lineage will now visit the lover's lineage. He must confess his guilt, before they are able to secure via his kinsmen the rum which is exacted by the husband's lineage as a fine. Only then can they attempt to bring about a reconciliation. If he forcefully denies any involvement, the woman's kinsmen will fight him and his kinsmen, thus trying to compel him to confess and pay a compensation. If he continues to deny the accusation, the woman's lineage members, if they still want to strive for a reconciliation, will have to pay the reconciliatory rum themselves. This is considered to be a shameful situation.

When the lover confesses, the rest of the proceedings are highly standardized. The delegation of the woman's lineage returns with one bottle of rum to the husband's kinsmen, called da pasi, which is meant to persuade the husband's lineage not to make trouble with him. A number of delegations are then sent by the lover's lineage to the village of the husband, usually in the evening. Delegations for the first two sessions consist of kinsmen of the seducer. The last two sessions, in which both the trouble between the seducer and the husband is settled and the spouses are reconciled (mindi), are usually large gatherings attended by the lover's lineage, the woman's kinsmen and members of
neighbouring villages.

The total payment to the husband's lineage, nowadays amounting to about eight bottles of rum, is paid during these three or four sessions, and is divided among the husband's lineage. The total fine is standard and the lover's kinsmen know beforehand how much rum will be exacted. The payment at each session may differ, for example, at the first session three bottles, the second time two, the third time one and a half. Then the husband's kinsmen will set a day on which the conflict will be finally ended (koti di taki). The evening before, the seducer comes to spend the night in the husband's village, to indicate that he is still begging and that he is ashamed. The husband's lineage comes to make trouble with him in a symbolic fight, for which the seducer has to pay them still a half bottle of rum. At the final session held during the following day and attended by a great number of people, another half bottle of rum is paid for the koti di taki.

In sum, Matawai marriage is considered to be a contract, involving a number of specific rights and duties for each of the partners. Transgression or non-compliance of one of the partners, gives the other the right to make an end to the relationship. The kin groups of the partners who play a crucial role at the inception of the relationship, are directly involved in its continuance. They will carefully make sure that the rights and duties of the marriage contract are observed and are ready to intervene if there are any transgressions or conflicts. Since the members of the two kin groups are aligned to each other by a number of bonds of consanguinity and affinity, they benefit from the continuation of the existing relationship and try to avoid any escalation of conflicts.

Marital partners assume a pivotal position towards each other and their kin groups. When quarreling with their spouse, they search among their own and spouse's kinsmen for people who are able to support their grievance. Moreover, kin groups rightly assume that when a spouse threatens separation or actually separates, he has a good reason. He may feel deprived and want to direct the kin group's attention to it, in this way. Therefore, even minor conflicts between marital partners usually do not remain private.
One evening Meili and her husband Lobato started a quarrel which ended in fighting. Lobato had drunk too much and accused his wife of having visited Julian. Two years before Lobato had married Meili, now 17 years ago, she had had a relation with Julian who was already married. She became pregnant and had a son, Maloni. Maloni, who was fostered by a close kinsman and lived nearby, hastily called Adam, a distant relative who lived in the neighbourhood, to intervene. Adam was able to bring an end to the fighting. Early the following morning, before church, kinsmen assembled in the homestead of Meili’s mother to settle the matter. Lineage members of Meili, Lobato and Julian were present. People were summoned to tell what they knew about the matter. It appeared that the conflict had started one week ago, on New Year's day. Meili and her husband had agreed to spend New Year, each in their own village. On one of these days, Lobato, who used to drink heavily, returned to his wife's village. He went upstairs to rest, while his wife was chatting with her mother and Etan under a neighbouring house. Etan, Julian's brother, was a formal friend of Meili - they used to call each other mati - and he used to visit her and eat with her. After a while Lobato came downstairs and insinuated to his wife that she had told Etan that she visited Julian. This was denied by them, but Lobato kept on returning to this point.

In the palaver, some people tried to end the matter by suggesting that it was drunken talk. But Alfeiti, himself married to Meili’s sister and moreover a close kinsman of Julian (his MZS) insisted that the case must be investigated since some people will only reveal a grievance when they have taken a drink. Directly after church, the palaver continued. Meili told her story, and asked the elders to investigate it thoroughly, otherwise there would be no end to it. Lobato's kinsmen, who had gone aside with him, admitted that he was drunk and did not know what he had said. But Leo, Meili’s brother, insisted that when two persons fought, there were two sides and each had to tell what bothered him. So Lobato should tell...
his story as well. Meanwhile, Julian, a very energetic and self-conscious man, declared that he had become tired of having his name called. He demanded that Meili declare publicly if she had ever, after so many years, come to him. Meili denied this, but desperately insisted that even if the case would be settled by *tanti*, there would still be no end to their troubles. Each time he took a drink he would again bring it up. Julian threateningly stepped over to Lobato, who was sitting shyly with his head bowed, and asked him why his name was called for the seventh time together with that of his wife, adding ‘If I had been here yesterday, both of us would have gone to Santo Boma’ (the prison in town). Lobato admitted in the council that he was at fault, and was finally fined two bottles of rum for having lied.

Unlike the asymmetry in permitting only the man to initiate separation in cases of adultery, in the case of transgressions of the service rights in the marital contract, a man and woman are equally allowed to initiate separation. Both a man and a woman will commonly initiate a separation in cases of evident neglect by their spouse (refusing to have sexual relations; the man has not adequately provided for his wife; or the woman does not fulfill her duties towards him). Also mistreatment (excessive beating), considered a transgression of the restricted rights acquired over the other in marriage, gives sufficient grounds for separation. Finally, any signs of unruly or disrespectful behaviour (the woman drinks excessively despite her husband's warnings; one partner accuses the other falsely; the man does not treat his affines with respect) can be used to initiate a separation.

A woman initiates a separation by turning (*jaka*) her husband out of her house, and publicly announcing this act to her nearby relatives. Having informed his affines, the man will soon return to his own village, where he informs his own kinsmen. On his return from the coast a man is expected to divide his provisions between his own and his wife's house. The salt, soap, and kerosine, stored in his house for use during occasional stays in his own village, are the more needed when he returns at separation. A man's private belongings in his wife's house are few.
(his gun, gunsack, bow and arrow, and so forth). It is considered shameful to leave his wife’s village with a boat full of goods. The man would make himself even more ridiculous, if he, after separation, would return to his wife to claim some of the valuables he had given to her.

When the initiative is taken by the man, the performance is less dramatic. He informs his wife (puu buka) and his in-laws that the relationship has ended, declaring ‘She and I do not live together anymore’, before leaving for his own village.

These acts set in motion a number of proceedings in the kin groups of both the partner who initiated the separation (A), and the other (B). Because the immediate reason for separation tends to be concealed, masqued by A as ‘my love has ended’ (di lobi kaba), the underlying motive has to be revealed by the kin groups. But only if partner B indicates to his kinsmen that he wants a reconciliation, will his kinsmen start the proceedings. Sometimes person B has evoked A’s initiative, in order to avoid himself taking the initiative, especially if he has another partner in mind. A member is delegated by B’s kinsmen - often the same person who was involved in the marital proceedings of A and B, and is therefore considered a confidential agent. He secretly visits A to find out his reasons. It takes several visits before it is revealed to him. Meanwhile the delegated kinsman goes back and forth between person A and B’s kinsmen to inform them of the progress. Person B is confronted by them with the information acquired from A. Finally, when the reason is revealed attempts are made for reconciliation. A number of delegations are sent by B’s kinsmen to A’s kinsmen. First these delegations consist of a small group of only men; later they are accompanied by women; and finally by konlibi as well. The payment of rum, needed for A to take B back, is determined by A’s kinsmen. This payment is presented at the final session, in which the partners are reconciled. The time between separation and reconciliation is highly variable; progress may be retarded by the reluctance of A’s kinsmen towards a reconciliation. If attempts to persuade A’s kinsmen are unsuccessful, negotiations are ended between them. The relationship is considered to be permanently ended.

Separation and divorce are, however, complicated by the interference of the Moravian church, in particular when the union had been
blessed by the church. The church council tries to pressure the partners towards a reconciliation by punishing the partners with church sanctions, and by exercising pressure on their kinsmen who are closely affiliated with the church. On the instigation of a church council, negotiations between the two kin groups will occasionally be reopened after several months, and a reconciliation achieved. There have even been cases, when as a result of the church pressure, the partners were reconciled after two or three years, in which time they had each taken another partner in a traditional marriage.

Despite easy and frequent separations, Matawai divorce rates are lower than those of other Bush Negro groups, as we will later elaborate. In sum, two factors seem to have contributed to the relative stability of Matawai marriage. The matrilineage maintains a strong grip on its members, which is reinforced by the local church organization’s pressure to reconcile marital conflicts.

**A quantitative analysis of marriage and divorce**

In earlier sections we have already indicated the significance of marriage in Matawai society. In table 5a, b, c and d we present data on current marital status. Despite the impact of migration on the marriage system, the number of people who remain unmarried is quite small. In the upriver area only 2.6% of all women, age 30 and older, have never been married; for men this percentage is even smaller 1.06%. The high percentages of currently married men in the upriver area compared to both women from the same area as well as men from the downstream area, are remarkable. Upriver 85.4% of all men older than 30 are presently married; in the downriver area where migration is more prominent, this percentage is 73.9. For women these percentages are lower, due to a surplus of women, especially in the higher age categories (73.7% upriver, and 60% downriver). Restricting ourselves to the resident population, it is striking that almost all men are presently engaged in a marital relation. Particularly men in the tribal area tend to remarry soon after divorce or the death of a partner. In contrast, a large proportion of older women remain unmarried after the death of a partner.

It has frequently been observed that marriage is Maroon societies
### Table 5a Marital status of women in ten upstream villages according to age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>age-group</th>
<th>never married</th>
<th>ever married</th>
<th>total in age-group</th>
<th>% married</th>
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<td></td>
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### Table 5b Marital status of men in ten upstream villages according to age

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Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
### Table 5c Marital status of women in seven downstream villages according to age

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### Table 5d Marital status of men in seven downstream villages according to age

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</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
of the Guianas tends to be quite brittle. Hurault, for instance, notes for the Aluku or Boni:

Aucun Boni partant en voyage de 3 mois n'est sûr de retrouver sa femme. Il peut très bien trouver un autre homme installé à sa place, officiellement, sans qu'il puisse rien dire. Quant à ceux qui partent pour longtemps, c'est à peu près assuré (1961: 154).

Hurault's observations, however, are not confirmed by his divorce statistics. He found, for instance, a mean number of 1.5 divorces for women who had reached the age of 52 (1961: 156). Price's figures on Saramaka divorce indicate a frequent shifting of partners. He found for a sample of 99 current and 203 completed unions a mean length of only 5.63 years. For a small sample of men older than 60 he calculated a mean number of 7 wives (1975: 102).

Matawai divorce rates are close to those of, for instance, the Ndembu of Africa, whose marriages are considered by Turner (1961: 62) to be extremely brittle (see table 6). However in comparison to the Saramaka figures, Matawai marriage can be considered to be quite stable. We have calculated the mean number of partners of all men in the upriver region older than 60 and found a mean number of 2 wives (84/42). For the downriver area the mean was 2.5 partners. It is relevant at this point to add that polygynous marriage relations which are absent in Matawai partly explain the large difference. In table 6 we summarize data about divorce in Matawai society for the different clusters of villages. These data indicate that marriages tend to be more stable in the upriver area. Also, the number of divorced people is higher in the downriver clusters and especially so in the more isolated villages of Makajapingo and Kwatahede. This can be partly explained by the stronger affiliation to the church in the upriver region.

Changes in the marital system

Matawai believe that both men and women are now younger when they first marry than they used to be. They claim that one or two generations ago, a man would not be given a wife before he had reached the age of 22 or

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Table 6 Present marital status, cumulative marital experience, and divorce ratios: down- and upriver Matawai

**Present Marital Status**

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<th>B 1</th>
<th>B 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>total number</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>154</td>
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<td>total number ever married</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td>% divorced</td>
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<td>total ever married</td>
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<td>% divorced</td>
<td>16.3</td>
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**Cumulative Marital Experience**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentage ever divorced</td>
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<td>69.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>mean number of divorces per head</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.43</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>percentage ever divorced</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>42.1</td>
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1.20.960.870.54 percentage of divorces per head

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Divorce Ratios</th>
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<td>A 37.4</td>
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<td>B 74.4</td>
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<td>C 42.9</td>
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</table>

A = The number of marriages ended in divorce expressed as a percentage of all the marriages in the sample.
B = The number of marriages ended in divorce expressed as a percentage of all marriages in the sample that have been completed by death or divorce.
C = The number of marriages ended in divorce expressed as a percentage of all marriages except those that have ended by death.
(Form of table adapted from Barnes 1967: 63)
and a woman would be 18 to 20. Nowadays young boys of 18 to 19 and girls of 15 to 16 are already married. They point to the changed economic circumstances as the main explanation of this shift. In the past, they argue, men and women had to be ‘mature’ enough to be given in marriage. The man had to work for a number of years joining his instructor's (father's or MB's) group of seasonal labourers working lumber or balata, in order to acquire enough money to buy, under his instructor's supervision, all the things that were necessary to set up a household. These days men will go to town to find a job, stay there for months, and receive their pay immediately. This way they are able to earn money more quickly and to marry at an earlier age.

Attractive and convincing as this native explanation may be (Green, for example, has accepted it at face value, see 1974: 145-8), it does not fit the facts. Our data indicate (see also p. 382) that in the past the age of the first marriage was 22 for men and 18 to 19 for women, and has remained so. Also, there has been no significant change in the age difference between women and men.

Probably the Matawai perception of a change, is due to an actual change in the kiia period, which is linked with the changing economic circumstances. One or two generations ago, marriage negotiations were initiated when both the boy and the girl were still in their teens and of school going age. The boy would kiia his future wife for a number of years before the date was fixed for the ‘giving ceremony’. It has always been the physiological maturity of the girl, and not so much the man's social maturity, as Green, following his informants, argues, which was the determining factor.

The Moravian church strongly attacked the traditional marriage system. Not only did the church strongly oppose polygynous marriage, it also attacked the marriage arrangements by kin groups and the marriage rules. Due to the church's opposition to the kiia of children, marriage transactions became postponed until the children had finished school at the age of 16 years. Consequently the kiia period was reduced. One or two years following the first negotiations, the woman was ‘ready’ to be given in marriage. This is also evident in the data of the working histories.

Since the 1960s when lumbering in large crews came to an end
(see p. 16), men began to work in a wider variety of jobs. Some young men still join their kinsmen to seek temporary work in the coastal area, or are able to find work in the tribal area, and remain in the villages. These men usually initiate marriage transactions quite soon and are given in marriage one or two years after kiia, thus continuing the former pattern. But many other young men of the upriver area, directly after leaving school, go to town to seek work. Because they are unskilled and permanent jobs are hard to find, they may stay in town for years, successful only in finding sporadic work (see p. 452). Most of them have not sought a wife before leaving the tribal area. After having spent a few years in town and finding a job, they will start to think about getting married. And as we will see, for those men who return to the tribal area for marriage negotiations, only a short time, sometimes even a few symbolic days will pass between the fiti di taki and the da manu ku mujee.

For some of the girls who remain in the tribal area marriage negotiations are made when they leave school, and they expect to be given in marriage at 17 or 18. This is no longer common practice for all the girls. Some have received no proposal by the time they reach the age of 17, 18 or even 19 years. The result is, that when a young migrant returns to make a marriage proposal, after the first transaction in which an agreement is reached, there is technically no need to postpone the ‘giving ceremony’ because she has already reached adulthood.

When Lode of Boslanti was 17 years old, she had still not be asked in marriage. She was living with her foster parents. At Easter time, Alwi, a migrant from the village of Posugunu visited the tribal area. Accompanied by a delegation of kinsmen from his village, he paid a visit to his father's village Vertrouw and on Friday he made a formal proposal in the neighbouring village of Boslanti to marry Lode. The next two days negotiations were in full swing in both Lode's own lineage and that of her foster father (also from Boslanti). An agreement was reached, and on Sunday Alwi was called for the fiti di taki. The same day, a case of goods was brought to Lode's foster mother. Lode's lineage had agreed to give
her to him in July, on Emancipation day. Alwi, however, informed them that he had a steady job in town, had to leave on Easter II, and because he would only have two holidays in July, he would not be able to marry Lode then. Therefore he urged them to give her immediately. Lode's kinsmen reluctantly conceded and decided that she would be given on Thursday, adding that they did not like the fact that migrants made their own rules.

The migration of young men has affected the marriage system of the upriver area in yet another way. It has increased the number of young divorcees (ganda mujee). Men who have been married for a number of years, and go to the coast to work, are confronted with the same difficulties in finding jobs as their fellow villagers who went directly after finishing school. They will stay on the coast more or less permanently and uncertain about their ability to maintain a household in the tribal area, may send a letter to ask their in-laws for a separation. In some cases the woman will take the initiative, if her husband has gone to the coast and stayed there, without providing the household essentials, and without returning in time to clear the field. Such women, supported by their own kinsmen, argue that it is only a life of hardship (soso pena libi) and will confront their affines with their complaints indicating their intent to end their relationship. If the husband, after having been contacted by his kinsmen, indicates that he agrees, the relationship ends in divorce.

Young women greatly outnumber young men in the upriver area, especially when we consider the resident tribal population. Many couples of the parental generation have stable marital relations. Less women these days are engaged at an early age, few young men are left in the tribal area and the prospects of finding a suitable husband are uncertain. Unlike in the past, nowadays young women become pregnant by men to whom they will not be given in marriage, because they are too closely related, because the man is already married or because he is a transient outsider. The migration of young men to the coast causes young women to increasingly compete for those who are still left.
Magda, a young girl of the village of Boslanti became pregnant. Pressured in the lineage palaver, she declared that Jutihad had made her pregnant. But he strongly denied this. Jutiwas 19 yearsold, had left school a few years earlier and was one of the youngsters who was still tribally oriented. He belonged to the same lineage as Magda, but to another matri-segment. Juti was aware of the rumour that Sandi, a married man, also belonging to the lineage of Magda, had visited her and would have pressured Magda not to mention his name. He felt that Magda was attempting to bind him to her, because he was not yet engaged. Now he arrogantly boasted, suggesting to a konlibi that Magda had mentioned his name because of his ‘beauty’ and to have sexual relations with him, at least until delivery. Juti did not realize that Magda's grandmother was still present. She felt personally offended. However, the case remained unsettled and the child was born without a man acknowledging paternity.

Women consider the unmarried status to be undesirable. However the position of many young divorcees is made bearable by a number of factors. Because of the strong lineage organization, the localization of matri-segments, and local endogamy, a young divorcee in the upriver area is always able to find elder lineage members who are ready to assist her with the clearing of a field and repairing of a house. She is likely to be given the house of a migrant or inherit it from a deceased kinsman. And because of the division of labour between the sexes, and the stress on individualization, she will be part of a group of close kinsmen who assist each other in horticultural work. Although compared to her married sister she is provided with fewer household essentials such as salt, soap and kerosine, she can manage from the small social allowance she receives (potiman moni) as well as the occasional gifts from kinsmen and irregular lovers.

For some women, however, the prospect of remaining unmarried (a ganda), is very threatening. Occasionally such a woman attempts to escape from the village dominated by lineage elders, by migrating to the coast. Both women and minors have to request permission from their
lineage elders to do so, and since permission will not be granted, younger people are forced to leave without informing them. This is likened by the Matawai to the running away of former times and is therefore called fleeing (*fusi*).

Dolini of Boslanti felt trapped in the web of her kinsmen. She was a pretty, spontaneous and energetic young woman, who liked to make new fashion clothes. Now she was 23, and divorced for four years since she was deserted by her husband who had migrated to the coast and with whom she had been living for only a year. She was the youngest sister of a family of five sisters and three brothers, all living together with her mother and other close kinsmen in the tribal area, thus forming a strong matri-segment. One time after she had been divorced a young man from a downriver village in which her brother had found a wife, had tried to marry her by spending the night with her and staying until the following morning. But her kinsmen, who did not want to give her in marriage to a migrant, had opposed it and sent him back. Another time a tribally oriented young man of one of the neighbouring villages had paid her a visit during a wake. Her kinsmen had tried to force him to marry her by closing the door on the two of them when he was drunk. When a new school was built in the neighbourhood, and Creoles and Bush Negroes were hired for it, Dolini had relations with a Saramaka. She came to blows with her mother, who strongly opposed such a relationship. Soon, after the Saramaka had left the area, Dolini was found to be pregnant and admitted that he was responsible. Her kinsmen, who regretted the fighting between her and her mother, did not want to have anything to do with the Saramaka. Dolini, who loved him badly, confided to a kinsman that if they would not permit him to marry her, she would try to escape. They wrote letters to each other and the Saramaka promised to divorce his wife and to try to come upriver. But due to the warnings of her kinsmen, no Matawai boat man was willing to take him upriver, and so he returned to his village. Dolini was desperate.
She had confided her secret to a close relative, who was also a ganda, and they decided together to escape. Her kinsmen were alarmed when they heard that she had tried to borrow money and began to watch her closely. The child was born. Two years later, when some divorcedees of the upriver area had migrated to the coast, Dolini was still a ganda and she was still planning to go to town. Finally, she was able to borrow money from a former school teacher to pay for the flight to town.

Gradually, more ganda mujee become aware of the fact that migration to the coast is the only way to find a marital partner. Indeed, in 1976 several divorcees from the upriver villages had migrated to town.

**Eindnoten:**

(1.) Having already been designated a similar task shortly before, is considered a good excuse to ask to be released from his obligation.

(2.) Actually, there was only one married couple in the ten upriver villages whose partners belonged to the same lineage; they originated from different villages. In larger villages consisting of two lineages that belong to the same lo, members of these lineages more frequently contract a marriage. The number of such intra-village marriages on the total number of marriages is in Boslanti 8/70, in Pijeti 3/50 and in Posugunu 2/50.

(3.) The number of men who impregnated a woman of their own lineage and whose paternity rights have been acknowledged, is, however, small. In the last 15 years there were only some five cases in the upriver area.

(4.) Actually, there was only one man upriver who had contracted a marriage with such a close kinsman.

(5.) It remains difficult to assess the influence of this preference rule on partner choice. In the upriver area where small villages are exclusively settled by members of one lineage, and larger ones of two lineages, about the same number of marriages are contracted with members of each of the other villages of the same cluster, including with members of father's village.

(6.) There are some men who are still living with a partner, contracted in such a marriage. These marriages were contracted between 1940-1960.

(7.) Price used a more refined criterion to measure conjugal residence in Saramaka. Because Saramaka women may spend considerable periods in their garden camps, he specified the time spend by couples in terms of the woman's non-horticultural time (Price 1975: 111).

(8.) This does not imply that the shift in Matawai residence patterns is in all respects comparable to the changes in Saramaka.

(9.) Whipping with bundles of twigs meted out on the shinbones at the ancestor pole is a traditional form of public punishment to shame the individual.
Fosterage is a common phenomenon in Matawai society. It involves a transaction in which the responsibility for the socialization of a child is transferred from the mother to another person. In the transaction only particular elements of the parental roles are delegated; ultimate responsibility is retained by the lineage of the child. For the child, the fosterage transaction does not imply a forfeiting of the rights and duties acquired by birth; it does not change his kinship position, nor does it involve changes in his use of proper kinship terms. It only implies a shifting of accent, from a number of close relatives who before the transaction were already important agents in the child's care and upbringing to one in particular who is recognized by others as caring for him most of the time. Usually he will maintain close relations with his own parents.

It is clear from these characteristics that the transaction in parenthood (Goodenough 1970: 391) better fits the concept of fosterage than that of adoption. Adoption involves the delegation of all parental roles and has a more definitive and permanent character.

Köbben's observation for the Cottica Djuka that fosterage, or in his terms adoption ‘spreads children over the various households more evenly than nature does’ (1967a: 51), is relevant for the Matawai. In this chapter we will explore the circumstances in which fosterage transactions are likely to occur and specify the characteristics of the three parties concerned in the transaction: the parents, the children and the foster parents.
Matawai use the same word *kiia* for the raising of children by their own parents and for the fostering of children by someone else. However, the term *kiia miii* is used exclusively for a foster child.

The motive for giving their children in fosterage to particular relatives tends to be rationalized by parents in terms of the mutual fondness of the child and his foster parents. Fosterage is a consequence of the obligation of sharing, the relevance of which has been indicated in the field of production. This kinship obligation is, to a certain degree, in conflict with the parents' ideal of raising their own children. This conflict becomes most evident, when close kinsmen explicitly ask to foster a child, since it is difficult for the parents to escape from their kinship obligations. Therefore, it is considered to be shameful behaviour to beg for a child and those who openly pressure the mother to give the child are scorned.

On their way by boat to the garden, the women of Sanna's compound were gossiping. They condemned the greediness of Liki who had robbed Sanna of her only child. They pitied the mother, 'poor Sanna, she has no luck with children. Look how she sighed the day Liki sent the boy to fetch some clothes for the child'. Sanna had given birth to this child the same year she had lost her first child who was bitten by a snake at the age of four. She was very fond of the child and looked after her tenderly. After she was weaned, Liki (her classificatory ZD), who had never given birth to a child, but who was still fostering a boy, did not stop asking Sanna for the girl to sleep in her house. Liki had a reputation of begging for children. The previous year she had solicited another child in fosterage, her MBDD, but although the child slept several times in her house, the child did not want to stay with her.

Usually, however, fosterage consolidates already existing bonds between a child's parents and foster parents. An agreement between the two parties has to be discussed with the lineage elders, respecting the ultimate responsibility of the lineage over its members. Although, fosterage is considered in terms of the interests of the parents and foster parents, Matawai are of the opinion that it is also in the
interests of children to be raised by others. Some believe that parents tend to be too lenient with their own children and spoil them.

Children are usually given in fosterage at an early age, most frequently after weaning, between the age of two and four. Weaning is a breaking point in the child's socialization process. He is no longer allowed to share his mother's hammock, where he was able to take his mother's breast at any moment. A female relative will take the child away from the mother (ta puu en a bobi). He will stay with this woman for a number of days. Occasionally such a relationship may end in a formal fosterage transaction. Formal fosterage is often preceded by a trial period. In this respect, Matawai fosterage is similar to the Saramaka practice, where ‘a 4- or 5-year-old girl may, over the course of a year or two, be encouraged to shift gradually the frequency of eating and sleeping from her mother’s house to that of her mother’s sister, who then becomes her foster parent until maturity’ (Price 1975: 118).

Fosterage, as well as the raising of children by their parents, formally ends with marriage. For those who do not marry readily, fosterage has to be formally ended, at which occasion the foster child is returned to his lineage (or village).

Sponsorship

Although from day to day several persons may be involved in the socialization of a child in Matawai, as in Saramaka, only one person is held responsible by the lineage. Following Price (1975: 117), we will refer to the person who has authority over the child on the daily level, as his sponsor. While small children of both sexes are mainly cared for by women, female and male roles diverge as children grow older. In the course of time, men become more involved in the socialization of boys. As a boy grows older he will spend a great deal of time together with his father, particularly when he is raised by his parents together. In this way boys acquire specific male skills in clearing gardens, cutting trees, sawing planks, making boats and houses and navigating on the river. Sponsorship, however, is in most cases not transferred to men. The mother or foster mother will delegate specific tasks in the
socialization process to a man: father, matrilineal kinsmen or husband. The close relationship that develops between a child and his own and foster parents during childhood is maintained in later life, when the adult, in turn, will help take care of them. These adults will help their ageing parents and foster parents by assisting them clear the garden, build houses, cut rice, and so forth. Moreover, as a sign of their appreciation for the education they have received, they may give their own child to them in fosterage.

Currently, most children are raised by their own mothers (72.1%, 520/721); a large number of these mothers are still living with the fathers of the children (51.3%, 370/721). Children who are not raised by their mothers are, for the most part, fostered by matrilineal kinsmen (24.5%, 177/721). Only 2.5% (18/721) of all children are fostered by kinsmen of their father. Rarely a child will be given to the father in fosterage after divorce. Children may be given to a wide range of predominantly matrilineal relatives, but most are given to their own matrilineal grandmother. Actually of the 92 girls fostered by their mother's consanguines, 44 are fostered by their MM. In the case of boys 34 out of 85 are fostered by their MM.

The percentage of Matawai children currently fostered upriver (see table 8) (39.6%) is similar to the former figure of the same area, as calculated on the basis of fosterage histories of adults born between 1915-1935 (42.2%). The similarities between both patterns, concerning the dispersal over mother's and father's consanguines and the percentage raised by male and female sponsors, is striking. The Matawai percentage children fostered, calculated on the basis of fosterage histories of adults, comes also close to the figure in Saramaka, 45.2% (43/95) (see Price 1975: 120-1). However, the specific characteristics of upriver Matawai and Saramaka fosterage patterns are quite different. The greater number of children raised by both of their parents in Matawai (formerly 47.7%, and currently even 50.9%), compared with the Saramaka figure (21%), is related with a higher marital stability. However, in Saramaka more children are raised by their divorced mother than in Matawai, resulting in a comparable percentage of children raised by their mother. Close examination of the table also reveals that while in Matawai the majority of children being fostered, are raised by their
matrilineal kinsmen, in Saramaka quite a considerable number is given in fosterage to their father, who is divorced from their mother (14.7%).

Both in former and current Matawai patterns, the percentage of female sponsors is high (see table 7). Girls are almost exclusively sponsored by women (formerly 100%, currently 98.5%), comparable to the Saramaka figure of 97%. Strikingly different is the percentage of boys with female sponsors in Matawai (formerly 95.2%, currently 95.5%) in contrast to that of Saramaka (16%).

Table 7 Male and Female sponsorship in Matawai and Saramaka society

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female sponsor</th>
<th>Male sponsor</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matawai</td>
<td>Saramaka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Matawai data include all adults from the upriver area Libasei 1 born in the period 1915-1935 (n = 90). Source Saramaka data Price (1975: 120) (n = 95).

Differences between Matawai and Saramaka fosterage patterns are related to variations in other aspects of their social organization, particularly to the configuration of marriage, descent organization, conjugal residence and migration. The particular Matawai fosterage pattern reflects the strength of the principle of matrilineal descent in this society.

Female sponsors will normally delegate male tasks in the socialization process, to men:

For 19 year old Entwi who was fostered by his maternal grandmother, there were several men who assumed some degree of responsibility. His genitor, who remarried to a woman in another village, contributed to Entwi's education by teaching him some male skills. He summoned Entwi, for instance, to stay a few weeks in his wife's village to assist in housebuilding. Entwi went on hunting trips to the uninhabited upriver area together with the husband of his mother. And
**Table 8 Sponsorship and kinship**

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<td>M</td>
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<td>%</td>
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Totals

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<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
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A) Matawai adults born between 1915-1935 *Libasei* 1
B) Matawai children born between 1955-1970 *Libasei* 1
C) Saramaka adults (Price 1975: 121)

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Totals

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Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
<table>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td>50</td>
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his uncle (his MMMMZDS) asked permission from the lineage to take Entwi along with him to the coast to work on a lumber concession.

Apprenticeship is an important phase in the process of socialization. Traditionally, a boy would join a working group of men to learn squaring wood (*kwei udu*) or balata bleeding. Each boy had his own instructor who was personally responsible during the period of apprenticeship. He would also accompany the boy to town to make sure that the earned money was spent on essentials such as soap, kerosine and hammocks and not on luxury goods. In many cases, the father of the boy acted as the instructor. Data from 27 work histories indicate that 11 men were instructed by their father, while the others were instructed by matrilineal kinsmen. Particularly when the father was getting older, younger matrilineal kinsmen would assume the responsibility of instructing the boy. Recently, work patterns have changed considerably and with the differentiation of labour opportunities, the system of apprenticeship is becoming less compulsory.

**The dispersal of children**

Few children are raised outside their own village. This is a result of the preference in giving children to female lineage members and the general uxorilocal residence pattern. In fact, only 4.5% (20/464) of all tribal children, are raised outside their own village. For boys the number is three times as great (15 boys, 5 girls) (see table 9). Matawai oppose the settlement of their lineage members outside their own village. And, although children may occasionally be fostered in their father's village, the lineage will insist that they return as soon as they reach adulthood. Our data indicate that children are only given in fosterage to father's consanguines when the matrilineal kinsmen are provided with 'enough' children.

Migration has complicated the fosterage practice because of the exchange of children between tribal and migrant women. Many children of migrant mothers are fostered in the tribal villages (51/294), while only few children (11/396) of tribal mothers are fostered in the
Table 9 Distribution of children raised in their own village, in other villages and in the coastal area (n = 721)

Children raised in their own village n = 444

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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>totals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Children raised in other villages n = 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tribal mother</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Migrant mother**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Deceased mother**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tribal mother**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Migrant mother**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children raised in coastal area n = 257

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>totals</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Deceased mother**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>totals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 Fosterage of children of married and divorced mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Libasei tribal mar. 1</th>
<th>div. 2</th>
<th>coastal mar. 3</th>
<th>div. 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raised or fostered by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (A)</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (B)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (C)</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bausei tribal mar. 5</th>
<th>div. 6</th>
<th>coastal mar. 7</th>
<th>div. 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raised or fostered by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (A)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (B)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (C)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Row</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>T . M D L .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>. C M D L .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>T . M D . B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,8</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>20.75</td>
<td>. C M D . B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>8.43 S</td>
<td>T C . D L .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,8</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>T C . D . B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>T C M . L .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>T C M . B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 + 4, 6 + 8</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>. . . D L B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 + 5, 3 + 7</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>20.72</td>
<td>T C M . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
\[ \begin{align*} 
1 + 3, 5 + 7 & \quad A,B \quad 0.69 \quad . . M . L B \\
1 + 2, 3 + 4 & \quad A,B \quad 23.39 S \quad T C . . L . \\
5 + 6, 7 + 8 & \quad A,B \quad 1.09 \quad T C . . . B \\
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*} 
1 + 2 + 3 + 4, 5 + 6 & \quad A,B \quad 4.13 \quad . . . L B \\
+ 7 + 8 & \\
1 + 3 + 5 + 7, 2 + 4 & \quad A,B \quad 15.07 S \quad . . M D . . \\
+ 6 + 8 & \\
1 + 2 + 5 + 6, 3 + 4 & \quad A,B \quad 3.10 \quad T C . . . . \\
+ 7 + 8 & \\
\end{align*} \]

S = significant for P<0.001

S' = significant for P<0.005
coastal area. The differing migration traditions of the Matawai clusters are related to some remarkable differences in the fosterage practice. Downstream migrants tend to keep their children in the coastal area, while a large number of migrants from the upriver area have their children fostered in the tribal area. The majority of these children (31/51) were given in fosterage before the mother migrated to the coast. In particular, women with unstable conjugal relations tend to send their children to relatives in the tribal village. It is relevant to note that the costs of child-rearing are higher on the coast than in the village. The motives for having one's child fostered on the coast are not uniform. In many cases, the children were originally fostered in the village and went to the coast when their foster parents migrated. Apprenticeship which plays an important role in West African fosterage (E. Goody 1975: 133) is not an important reason for sending children to migrant relatives in Matawai. Most Matawai migrants are engaged in wage labour and unskilled work.

Fosterage and Marital Status

Children are in most cases raised by their own mothers, most of whom are married. This is due to the fact that the percentage of unmarried mothers in the childbearing ages is relatively small. The majority of the children of married mothers are raised by their natural parents together (84%, 369/439); only 16% (70/439) are raised by the mother and a husband who is not the father of the child. Because of the difficult position of unmarried and widowed mothers, especially in the coastal area, we might expect that these women would be more likely to give their children to be fostered by others. In the tribal area the number of children of divorced women given in fosterage, is only slightly greater than the number of children of married mothers (24.6%, 15/61 and 21%, 66/315). In the coastal area, on the other hand, there are significant differences between these two groups: 65% (26/40) for the divorced migrant women, and 24.3% (61/251) for the married migrants.

In table 10 we have summarized data on raising and fosterage for married and divorced women according to residence in the coastal and tribal
area and according to the area of origin upriver (*libasei*) and downriver (*bausei*). The major conclusions are that more children are given in fosterage by

a) migrant divorcees from downriver than by those from upriver
b) migrant divorcees than by tribal divorcees from downriver
c) migrant married mothers than by tribal married mothers from upriver
d) migrant divorcees than by tribal divorcees
e) tribal married mothers than by migrant married mothers
f) migrant mothers than by tribal mothers from upriver
g) divorced mothers than by married mothers

The percentage of children given in fosterage is the highest for those born in an extra-marital relation (72.4%), followed by children whose parents are divorced (38.1%) and finally by those whose parents still live together (19.4%) (see table 11).

The increase in the percentage

Table 11 Fosterage related to the marital status of mothers (children born between 1955-1970)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>raised by mother</th>
<th>fostered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of parents living together</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of divorced parents</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children born extra-maritally</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 63.5 \text{ 2 degrees of freedom significant for } P<0.001 \]

of children born extra-maritally from 4.5% for children born between 1955-1970, to 13.6% for children born after 1970, is largely due to the increase in pre-maritally born children (from 2.5% born between 1955-1970, to 9% born after 1970). Fosterage chances are much higher for children born in a pre-marital relation (84.6%) than for children
resulting from an extra-marital relation (62.5%). Indeed the percentage of pre-marital children is significantly higher than that of other first-born children. But also the percentage of children born later in an extra-marital relation is significantly higher than that of other later-born children^{1}.

Although Matawai are not aware of a preference for giving first-born children in fosterage, the fosterage percentage of first-born (excluding pre-marital) is higher than that of later-born children^{2} (excluding extra-marital). A possible explanation may be found in the principle of reciprocity which is sometimes used to explain fosterage practices.

**Voluntary and Crisis fostering**

The death of a father has no direct effect on whether or not the children are fostered. Usually they will stay with their mother. If the mother dies a transaction is initiated to assign the children to foster parents. The Matawai are inclined to explain fosterage in general by reference to the death of the child's mother. Actually, the number of orphans is small. Only 4.3% (31/721) of all children does not have a living mother^{3}. Of all cases of fosterage, few orphans are involved (15.4%, 31/201), and many of them have been given in fosterage before their mother died.

When we trace fosterage cases to the time of the transaction, we can distinguish two categories of fosterage: crisis and voluntary, which were proposed by Esther Goody (1973: 192) and which we will adapt for the Matawai case. Crisis fosterage is applied for cases in which children were given in fosterage after or resulting from an extra-marital relationship, a break-up of the marriage of the child's parents or after the death of the mother. Voluntary fosterage applies when there was no immediate urgency from the side of the child's parents, and the transaction resulted from the pressures of others. Table 12 shows that more children were given in fosterage before their parents divorced than after divorce (43 against 26 cases), and that in general voluntary fosterage is more common than crisis fosterage (130 against 71 cases). We will now turn to a discussion of the other party involved
in the fosterage transaction: those who receive thr children

**Table 12 Voluntary and crisis fosterage**

**Voluntary fosterage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage when their parents were still living together</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage before the divorce of their parents</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage before the death of their mother</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Crisis fosterage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage who were born in an extra-marital relation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage after divorce of parents</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children given in fosterage after death of their mother</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fosterage and social organization**

Apart from recruitment of household members by marriage and birth, the size of households can be enlarged by the practice of fosterage. In this section we will investigate the consequences of fosterage for the composition of the household in Matawai society. For this purpose we will use detailed fosterage histories of 136 women from the upstream area - the total present female adult population of four villages.

Commonly a fosterage transaction is not a single, distinct event. Women often give their children in fosterage to their parents or foster parents to indicate their appreciation for the way they were brought up by them. In general women without dependent children are more likely to receive children to foster than others. Only a small percentage of women raise both children of their own and foster children (see table 13).
A direct consequence of the practice of fosterage is that the number of children within each household is levelled. In figure 6 we present a graphical representation to compare the mean number of own
Table 13 Fosterage for women with and without dependent children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>fostering</th>
<th>non-fostering</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with own children</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without own children</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 10.7 \quad P < 0.001$

Conclusion: significantly more women without dependent children of their own, foster children, than do women with dependent children.

...children to the mean number of children raised per woman according to their age. The figure clearly reveals that the mean number of children in the households of women younger than 40 is restricted by fosterage in favour of the older women who, for the most part, are past the child-bearing age.

---

Figure 6 Mean number of own children, compared to mean number of children raised by women according to their age
Figure 7 Actual pattern and simulated model of fostering and raising chances for women according to age
For a closer examination we have calculated the probability of fostering children, raising one's own children, and raising both one's own and foster children. The common pattern for women is to begin their ‘raising career’ shortly after marriage and to continue, after their own children are grown up, to foster children of kinsmen until the age of 70 and older. In figure 7 we present a graphical representation of these probabilities to provide some insight into the process of redistribution of children and the prolonging of raising spans. The probability of raising one's own children decreases rapidly after reaching the age of 40. This is reinforced by the fact that reproduction ends quite early in a woman's life (see p. 394). The probability of fostering a child raises and remains relatively high, till the age of 70. During the reproductive period a small number of mothers raises their own and foster children simultaneously. To be more specific, 40.3% of the time during adulthood women raise their own children, during 23.3% of the same time they are fostering children and during 5.9% of the time they raise both their own and foster children. The effect of the fosterage practice on raising spans becomes clear when we compare the actual fosterage pattern with a simulated pattern in which the factor of voluntary fostering is excluded. The figures indicate that fosterage in Matawai Society is rarely due to crisis situations such as the death of the mother.

The mean number of adult years, for the sample of upriver women, is 29.0 years and 16.7 of these years she is raising children. In the simulated pattern she raises children only during 13.9 years, which means an increase of 23.1% as a consequence of voluntary fosterage.

Fosterage reduces the number of females who remain childless. As we have shown elsewhere (de Beet and Sterman 1978: 31), the percentage of women older than 45 without live birth is rather high at 14%. In fact, this value increases considerably when we include the women whose first and only child died within the first year. Our data on fosterage histories indicate that most of the childless women, will, at some time, foster children. For the childless women older than 45 with a mean number of adult years of 47.6, 14.8 of those years, they are engaged in raising one or more children.

The dispersion of children over ‘childless’ households is rather
effective. A remarkable feature of the Matawai fosterage system is that the raising spans of mothers who give children in fosterage is hardly reduced, while the raising spans of the receivers is greatly extended (see figure 7). Mothers who give birth to more than one child will often give the first child in fosterage after the birth of the next child. On the other hand, they prefer not to give their last born child, especially if it is a boy. These preferences, consciously or unconsciously, maximize the mean length of the raising span.

Our findings indicate that a large number of fosterage transactions do not result from changes in marital status, changes of residence by migration or other crisis situations. A significant factor seems to be the particular situation of the woman who receives a child in fosterage. The probability of fostering a child rises when a woman remains childless or when she becomes older and her children have grown up.

Eindnoten:

(1.) Eleven out of 13 premarital children are fostered, compared to 43 out of 129 first-born children. 10 out of 16 later-born extra-marital children are fostered, compared to 87 out of 378 other later-born ones.
(2.) When we exclude the category of extra-marital and pre-marital children, 43 out of 129 first-born are given in fosterage, while the number for later-born children fostered is 87 out of 378.
(3.) If we compare the probability of having a living mother at the age of 20, Matawai score relatively high. This percentage is 13.2% and is calculated for all 19, 20 and 21 year olds. We extended the 20 year category with adjoining ages, because of the small numbers involved. Comparable ‘probabilities of living mother at age 20’ (Keyfitz 1977: 211) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>0.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>0.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matawai (1974)</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>0.713</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Continuity and Change

In the foregoing analysis we have indicated specific aspects of change in descent group organization, local group formation and the marriage system. These changes were related to substantial economic, demographic and religious changes. In general, matrilineal descent groups tend to be delicate entities in the face of change. They seem unable to adjust to strong demographic imbalances and the pressures of economic change. Douglas, for instance, points out that

Matrilineal descent groups are at a disadvantage for recruiting by birth compared with patrilineal descent groups. Given the same hazards of disease and mortality in the population at large, matrilineal descent groups are likely to be more short-lived, more liable to dwindle and die out. This follows simply from the fact that a system in which descent is transmitted through males can offset the infertility of any particular woman by taking on more wives.... By contrast, in a matrilineal descent group, if a woman dies or is barren the group suffers an irreplaceable loss of reproductive powers (1969: 124-5)

It has frequently been observed that the increase of cash cropping or wage labour, accompanied by economic differentiation, tends to weaken matrilineal bonds as soon as men start to transfer wealth to their own children (Meek 1957: 179; Colson 1958: 347). Direct changes in group formation made to adapt to these pressures, will ultimately affect the ideological principles on which traditional group formation is based. In fact, economic and demographic factors have a more direct impact on
social organization than religious factors, which are likely to influence only the ideological level.

Matawai social organization is, however, remarkably resistant to change and the descent group ideology has been maintained with tenacity. Christian ideology, introduced by the mission, has clashed with traditional Matawai ideology. The propagated Christian model, closely linked to western ideals, is based on the conjugal family, in which the authority over both the wife and children is vested in the husband/father. Marriage is considered to be an individual tie between the partners, and monogamy is the cherished ideal. In contradistinction, the traditional Matawai model is based on the matrilineal descent group, in which the authority over its female and junior members is vested in its senior male members. Both descent groups of the two partners are involved in marriage. And polygyny was the preferred type of marriage. The mission has always considered the descent based social organization, even wrongfully characterized by them as ‘matriarchy’, as a threat to the development of Christianity among the Bush Negroes (see for instance Schmidt 1947: 11-4). The fact that the mission was more successful in bringing about changes in the marital system than in matrilineal descent organization, can be understood in terms of the specific circumstances in which Christianity was introduced in Matawai, and the way in which the Moravian mission was incorporated in village life.

Remarkable, in the Christianization of the Matawai, was its introduction by the local prophet Johannes King and his followers, who inspired by visions, contacted the Moravian mission (see further p. 179) In most societies only part of the members affiliate with a Christian denomination, adopting a life style that differentiates them from the rest, who continue to be involved in traditional religion and social organization, or resulting in a tribal division between Christian and non-Christian villages. In Matawai, however, all people joined the Christian faith, although traditional religious principles remained significant for them. By the time the Moravians had established a congregation in their village (during the 1920s for the upriver area), most people were already baptized. The foreign evangelists who came to reside in the congregations, and were assisted by local functionaries
chosen among the congregation members, were soon able to pass from insulating their congregation members from non-Christian ones, over to exerting social control. But it was easier to interfere in highly evident aspects of social organization that were ideologically conflicting with Christianity, such as in marriage relations (polygyny, partner choice, adultery and divorce) than in the more implicit aspects of social organization related to descent group principles.

Matawai soon internalized these ideas and came to consider polygyny to be in conflict with their own - Christian - ideology. They were, therefore, as prepared to combat it, as were the evangelists of their congregation. As we have indicated, marital stability increased as a result of the social control of church functionaries paralleling that of lineage elders, in trying to bring the partners towards a reconciliation (see p. 120). On the other hand, the Matawai did not always conceive of their social organization as being incompatible with Christian ideology. For example, under the influence of the mission, the customary remarriage of a widower to a classificatory sister of his deceased wife, was abandoned. This was an indirect attempt on the part of the mission to attack descent organization, which essentially failed since the lineage of the deceased wife continued to be highly involved in the remarriage procedure of the widower. And while on the instigation of the mission, marriage arrangements were begun at a later age, the involvement of the two lineages in the marriage of the partners did not change significantly. In a sense, the mission even contributed to the continuation of traditional social organization by using the traditional boundaries of village clusters for the settlement of church congregations. Furthermore, Matawai selectively emphasized those aspects of the Christian ideology that most agreed with their own organization.

Unlike in Luapula (Zambia) (Karla Poewe 1980: 118), where people who affiliated with a Protestant denomination, greatly reduced their network of economic cooperation, the cooperation patterns in Matawai did not change under the influence of Christianity. It was only in the face of economic change, when temporary migration started to loose its strict seasonal character and labour differentiation increased, that cooperation patterns became more restricted.
For a long time matrilineal descent groups, monopolizing economic resources, were able to adjust to population fluctuations by segmentation, fusion and resettlement. When new economic resources became available, and resulted in an increase of mobility, residence patterns were affected directly. The later transition to permanent migration caused changes which were not restricted to residence patterns. The enduring migration had a profound effect on demographic characteristics of both the tribal and migrant populations. Due to its influence on sex-ratios, it would affect the marriage system, while the imbalances in age and sex composition necessarily influenced cooperation patterns and the performance of rituals. This is particularly the case in some downriver villages, in which migration has so strongly truncated village life that descent groups have lost many of their traditional functions.

We have already shown that upriver lineage elders are still able to make claims on the young migrants who return to the tribal area to contract a marriage with a woman in one of their home villages. Fearing the rapid depopulation that threatens downriver villages, the elders are firm in their insistence that young women remain settled in their own villages (resulting in the temporary autolocal residence pattern of spouses), and they expect the men to clear a garden and build a house in their wife's village. The stronger the economic position of men becomes, the more effective their counter claims will be to take their wife to the coastal area. These days they are already expanding their households in town, by lodging other lineage members instead of living predominantly with kinsmen of their wives.

The lineage still tries to retain its control over its migrant members, insisting that migrant women return, upon divorce, to the tribal area. As long as particular conditions are met, descent groups in the tribal area may yet remain relatively viable units, even with a number of its lineage members living dispersed on the coastal area. Regular contacts are maintained via their tribal kinsmen who temporarily work or do some shopping on the coast. In times of crisis, migrant kinsmen are summoned, and parallel rituals are performed in the tribal and coastal area. Cooperation patterns are continued and descent groups can, with the necessary adjustments, continue to dominate Matawai social life.
Photographs
Areal view on an upriver village. New style houses with roofs of corrugated iron contrast with the traditional ones.
Traditional house built on piles, with a palm-leave roof. In the background a modern house with a roof of corrugated iron can be seen. The room under the piles of this house is used for cooking purposes. Most houses have a separate cooking house.
Communal help at the building of a new style house. The house in the background was finished shortly before.
The planting of rice on a recently cleared garden is done with a hoe. At this time the watermelons (seen in the background) can already be harvested. In the front the cassave, which was planted shortly after burning.
A woman in front of her garden.
Butchering and dividing a tapir by the river side. The pieces of tapir meat are then sent to the surrounding villages.
Attendants of a ‘giving’ ceremony (marriage) listening to the speeches from a nearby cooking house.
Playing cards at a whole night wake (*booko di dia*).
The preparation of peanut candies for a funeral festival; the sticky substance is stirred with a large spoon.
Kinsmen assist a widower who has spent the mourning period in his wife's village in carrying his goods to his own house.
Part of the mourning proceedings. The widower who has spent the mourning period in his wife's village, is returned to his own village. The relatives of his deceased wife present bottles of salt and calabashes to his kinsmen.
Libation to the ancestors. In the foreground is a tin of rum and a pile of used cloths (see p. 266-8).
Ritual washing at an obia wosu built especially for this purpose, after a case of drowning. From the large earthenware pots (aghan) herbal water is sprinkled on the heads and shoulders of the villagers. People who happened to have seen the corpse line up in another row (on the right); their heads are tied with white kerchiefs and they are given a separate treatment.
Village officials dressed in their uniforms have assembled at the ancestor pole, for the installation of a number of new *basia* in Posugunu, village of the *gaaman*.
Libation to the ancestors on the occasion of the inauguration of a headman in the village. At the foot of the ancestor pole, water and other drinks are poured on the ground.
Portrait of our late friend Petrus, captain of Makajapingo.
II Religion
7 Religion

An adequate picture of the present-day religious situation of the Matawai can not be attained without understanding the historical background, in which two different religious traditions played an important role. The traditional world-view of the Bush Negroes evolved since the runaways fled from the plantations and formed tribal groups. Although the traditional world-view was based on African religious concepts, it was only in the New World that it acquired its own particular shape and developed into a new synthesis. This point has been elaborated by Mintz and Price (1976), who emphasize the particular creative and adaptational processes in the context of historical circumstances in the forming of Afro-American societies in the New World. Each of the tribal groups developed their own unique religious traditions which, however, exhibit striking resemblances attributable to the fact that the traditions were based on the same original conceptions. Furthermore, close ties have been maintained between the tribal groups since they settled in their respective areas, far away from each other. Thus religious exchange was likely to occur, as can be documented from historical sources (1).

Since 1765 attempts to introduce Christianity among the Bush Negro tribes had an impact on their religious conceptions. Despite the persistent missionary efforts, not all tribal groups were equally affected by this new religion. Christianity was never able to replace the traditional religion. Often it was met with strong resistance and various religious movements arose from this clash. In some areas, however, as for the Matawai, Christianity became widespread and was able to make strong inroads. The introduction of this religion among the Matawai took

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
place under very special circumstances: it was propagated by the prophet Johannes
King, a Matawai himself, who, instigated by visions, affiliated himself with the
church of the Moravians in Paramaribo and tried to convert his tribesmen. It is mainly
due to the work of this prophet that Christianity came to play such an important role
in the life of the Matawai since the 1860s.

Due to this historical background the following procedure would have been the
most appropriate. First, to describe the traditional world-view of the Matawai
pre-dating the introduction of Christianity. Next, to trace the lines along which this
world-view has developed and to specify the influences involved in its development:
both from outside the Matawai world-view, like Christianity and from religious
traditions of other Bush Negro groups and from changes inspired by religious
movements. Then we would analyse the conditions under which Christianity was
introduced and found acceptance by the people. We would, moreover, have to specify
the oppositions of the Moravian church to particular aspects of the traditional religion
and to general principles of social organization. We would then be in a position to
describe the present religious situation and to draw conclusions from the dilemma
of the Matawai, who are living within two, in many ways, conflicting religious
systems.

Some factors, which are related to the long Christian tradition of the Matawai,
have hampered the outlined procedure. As a result of the prolonged contact of Matawai
society with Christianity few elders can be found who consciously remember the
period pre-dating the acceptance of the church and who are able to give a systematic
account of the changes traditional beliefs have undergone. Furthermore, a factor
which has far greater impact on our research, is that the influence of Christianity on
the Matawai has been so profound that they are shamed of their ‘pagan’ past. Today
there remain only a few older people who show an active interest in their religious
past. As other Bush Negroes, Matawai show a resistance to reveal their religious
‘secrets’ to outsiders and even to members of other lineages. We suggest that this
tendency has been reinforced in the case of the Matawai by their strong affiliation
with the Christian church. In fact Christianity has stimulated an interest in the present
as opposed to an orientation dominated
by the past. In any case, the oral tradition about religious conceptions is weak among present-day Matawai, as compared to, for example, that of the Saramaka\(^2\).

The written sources about Matawai show a similar bias. The main archival and published material at our disposal concerning Matawai history are the notes of Johannes King and the missionary reports, both of which inform us in great detail about the ways in which Christianity was introduced and the difficulties encountered from the side of the Matawai, but give only a few details concerning their former religion. The long Christian tradition had still another consequence, namely that our informants were inclined to ascribe each change that had taken place in the traditional world-view exclusively to Christian influence, when in fact other impulses towards change have sometimes played a role (see p. 238).

For this reason we were forced to change our original design. We decided to approach the present religious situation from a two-folded perspective. After a historically oriented analysis of the development of Christianity among the Matawai, we focus on some of the important concepts in the ‘traditional’ Afro-American Matawai religion, as can be observed among the present Matawai. A number of changes are reconstructed which have occurred in the immediate past.

Our use of the term ‘traditional’ needs some explanation. In this context it does not imply that the present-day world-view of the Matawai has not changed since pre-Christian times. We use the word ‘traditional’ for the current Matawai world-view because it constitutes a corpus of beliefs interrelated with principles of social organization, and because the concepts in the religion of today directly relate to basic concepts, that already played an important role in their world-view before the introduction of Christianity.

Finally, we will deal with the difficulties the Matawai of today are facing, keenly aware of their intermediate position, daily coping with life in two conflicting religious systems. On the basis of the available data we will be able to elaborate ideas put forward by a number of students to explain religious acculturation in Bush Negro groups and in the Para district. Our analysis of the complex Matawai religious situation will show that descriptions in terms of a dualistic
system, or Christianity as only an addition, syncretism or non-syncretism do not really fit the facts in this society. It is emphasized that living in two conflicting religious systems is only possible when, in both systems, adjustments are made influencing the participation in both religions. Some of the mechanisms that facilitate this will be presented in the final chapter.

Eindnoten:

(1.) We may refer to the institution of two shrines in Matawai area under the influence of a religious movement in Saramaka (see p. 238), the introduction of the Papa Gadu cult in Maipaston by Djuka (Freytag 1927: 25) (see further p. 184), the introduction of the Gaan Gadu or Gaan Tata cult in the Matawai area by Djuka (see further p. 195) and the missionary trips of Johannes King to other Bush Negro tribes (see further p. 185).

(2.) The Saramaka, for instance, have a rich religious tradition, as has been indicated by Price (see for instance 1975: 145-53). Oral tradition in general has revealed a deep interest in the past (see Price 1979).
8 Christianity

The development of Christianity has been an important factor in Matawai history. In no other Bush Negro tribal group has the impact of this religion been so strong. In this chapter we describe the history of Christianity among the Matawai. We analyse the role of the Matawai prophet, Johannes King, in the conversion of a large part of the Matawai, and that of his followers in the extension of Christian beliefs and their establishment in the upriver area. We further outline the attempts of the Roman Catholic church to infiltrate this region that was the traditional domain of the Moravian Brethren. Finally we shall illustrate the large impact of Christianity and the attraction to the Moravian church by the Matawai and summarize the organization of the local congregation.

The beginning of the mission of the Evangelical Brethren among the Bush Negroes

The church of the Congregation of the Evangelical Brethren - Moravians, Herrnhutters, or Anitri as they are called in Suriname - was long the only organization conducting missionary work in the interior of Suriname. Members of this Congregation came to Suriname early in its colonial history, with the aim of spreading Christianity among the Indians and slaves, and later also among the Maroons. Their aims were not always in accordance with those of the plantation owners who wanted to establish and maintain an effective labour force.

The Moravian Congregation was founded in 1722 by Count von Zinzendorf with the establishment of a religious community in Herrnhut,
presently situated in East Germany. The Congregation had its roots in the so-called Czech Reformation, a religious movement with a substantial following in Bohemia and Moravia, constituting the present state of Czechoslovakia. Von Zinzendorf was greatly interested in missionary work; his relations with Denmark had led to the foundation of Christian settlements in the Danish West Indies and Greenland. When von Zinzendorf visited Holland he became aware of the possibilities of beginning missionary work among the Indians and slaves of Suriname and Berbice. Several years later, in 1734, negotiations concerning the settlement of Moravians in Suriname were opened with the ‘Societeit van Suriname’ in Amsterdam. The agreement reached had numerous stipulations: those who would be allowed to go had to be Protestant; men had to be no older than 50 years of age, while the age limit for women was 30; in addition, a good physical condition was required. In 1738, the first missionaries began to work among the Indians of Berbice and in 1754 the work among the slaves in Paramaribo was initiated. The activities of the mission expanded rapidly and in 1757 a number of Indians were brought together to reside in the newly established mission post Saron, along the Saramacca river. Already in the first years following the founding of Saron, the missionaries had more or less frequent contacts with Bush Negroes, who sometimes stayed for a few weeks in camps near the mission station. In 1760, when the government was negotiating a peace treaty with the Maroons, the head of the Congregation was invited by the governor to talk over the possibility of bringing the Christian belief to the Maroons. During that same year, the Maroons, led by the Matawai chief Becu, destroyed and burned the settlement of Saron (see p. 10) and the missionaries were temporarily forced to withdraw to town (Staehelin 1913-19, II(3): 195-9; Quandt 1807: xi).

Finally, in 1765 the first missionaries settled in the area near the Suriname river along which the Saramaka Bush Negroes had established their villages. At about the same time the Brethren were given permission to work among the slaves on some plantations in the coastal area of Suriname. In this initial period, during the second half of the 18th century, the missionaries were already making a few visits through the forest to the neighbouring Matawai, or Becu-Musinga Negroes as they were called, who lived along the Saramacca river. The Matawai sometimes
stayed for a while in the villages of the Saramaka Maroons (Steahelin 1913-19, III(3): 178). It seems, however, that these contacts have had little significance in the development of Christianity among the Matawai. It is clear from an account of postholder Corsten in the year 1851, that he saw no prospects, at that time, of bringing Christianity to the Matawai. In a paragraph about their religion he writes:

Ever offering a stubborn resistance in a despicable, senseless and child murdering paganism, they do not show any willingness; indeed, they would consider it with horror if Christianity were to be taught to them. Any bridle on their deep sunken and bastardized nature evokes their annoyance; mockery and abused misjudgement would fall to the Christian teacher's share, unless barrels of rum accompanied his arrival; as long as this fire flowed maybe some of them would... promise..... or ask hypocritically for baptism, but they would never do it (our tr.).

**Johannes King and the church in Maipaston**

The transformation of the Matawai into a society in which the Christian church would become a major institution, was initiated in the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century by the Matawai prophet Johannes King. Until then direct contacts with the mission had been restricted, especially among the Matawai in the upstream area above the falls. Before 1800 only two short visits to the Matawai villages were made by the mission. The Matawai, however, were well acquainted with the purposes of the white missionaries who had come to live with the Saramaka along the Suriname river.

Johannes King spent most of his youth in the downstream area, where some Europeans had plantations, as well as near Paramaribo. His mother, Adensi, originating from the village of Ameikan, or Bellevue as it was known in governmental sources, had come to town to seek treatment, when she fell seriously ill. Her illness was ascribed to a conflict in which she and a kinsman had been involved; it was said that her uncle Amani had poisoned her. Thereafter she did not return to her village of origin,
but stayed downriver. There, Adensi married a Djuka. This man was the father of Noah Adai, who would later become paramount chief of the Matawai. Johannes King, born around 1830, also had a Djuka father.

During this period many Djuka settled in the downstream area of the Saramacca river, an area that formally belonged to the colony, since Bush Negro territory was supposed to be south of the waterfalls. At the first sign of troubles arising from this settlement of Djuka, the government proceeded to ban the Bush Negroes from this area. The command to leave was repeated again some years later, in 1849. As a consequence, Adensi and her family decided to move to the timber plantation, Maipaston, that had been abandoned by its former inhabitants. Adensi had given birth to many children and the group expanded when a number of affines came to live with them. Years later Johannes King described Maipaston in those early years, as a place of the Devil and related how he, a young man by then, had been strongly involved in all kinds of ‘pagan’ activities. In Maipaston he married his first wife, Magdalena Akuba. Shortly afterwards he also took a second wife originating from the Saramaka village of Wakibasu, situated close to the Christian village of Ganzee.

During one of King's stays along the Suriname river, he became afflicted with a serious illness. According to him the illness was due to witchcraft. It became so serious, that his kinsmen were called to bring him to Maipaston. Back in Maipaston, King began to have visions that brought him into contact with God. The first vision, which he later recorded in Sranan-tongo, is interesting in several respects. Here follows a somewhat shortened version, based on a Dutch translation made by a missionary:

While my younger brother Jacobus Vos, and Johannes Molu and Stefanus Krisjan, my brothers-in-law, were keeping guard over me, at about seven o'clock in the evening the Lord took my spirit out of my body, and brought me upwards to a place which looked like a country-seat. There I saw many dark-skinned Indians with their headman. Besides these Indians there were also many others. They all were together in a house, which looked like an open shed. Suddenly we heard a
voice, which seemed to belong to a woman, calling loudly: ‘People look what the Lord has made up there’. We all rushed outside, looked upward and saw how the sky way up there was divided into three parts. They formed three slates on which letters were written with wax, shining in the sun. Then the spirit of God took me again and brought me to the gateway of the garden of Heaven. At the right side we passed through a narrow doorway. I saw many people in the garden. They all were happy. All of them, men as well as women, were wearing white clothes. I myself became so healthy that I suddenly did not feel pain anymore, only a feeling of happiness. Close to the doorway was a large high house surrounded by a balcony. The house was stocked with books and on the balcony there were large tables, all having small cups with foods in them, each little cup having a little sugar spoon. The food was sweet as honey. Everybody present was given a cup. I tasted it and said that I wanted to wait a moment, because I could not contain my joy. So I walked down the balcony. And I saw how the whole house was stocked with books, large and small. Some of them had their backs gilded and glittered from the gold. It looked like a shop. As I walked around I reached the back of the house. Suddenly I saw a Master sitting behind the door. I was frightened, because he was dressed in a royal attire with a crown on his head. I asked myself how I could have approached such a high Lord without noticing, and immediately returned to the door of the garden.

Thereafter the spirit of God let me pass through a wide doorway. I went inside. I saw a big fire burning on stones. The house was also made of stone. And the fire was not burning inside, but next to the house. Then I saw a Lord sitting on a chair near the fire. His face was all red, and he spoke to me, calling me ‘Young man’, I replied, and he continued ‘I want to show you something, which you have to tell the others when you return to earth’. Afraid as I was, I stepped forward, where the heat of the fire seemed almost unbearable to me. But the Lord ordered a person inside the house to stir up the
fire even more. This he did, fanning the fire with the bellows Consequently the fire was flared up so high that sweat was running all over my body and I started to tremble and quiver. Then the Lord asked me ‘Young man, is the fire too hot’? I answered ‘Yes, yes’, because the sparks fell down on my feet and burned me. The Lord continued ‘do you think that if I put you in the fire for one day, you would be able to stand it’? ‘No’, I said. ‘And if you had to stay in it forever, could you stand it’? ‘No’, I replied. Then he got up and said ‘Come, I want to show you something, of which you have to tell the others when you return to earth’. The Lord had many keys in his pocket and led me to a building that looked like a sugar-mill. In the house were many large kettles, placed in rows. The kettles were large, wide and deep and the Lord said to me ‘Look, I show you the kettles in which the people would go’. The kettles were half-filled with oil, - not wholly, and because they were built in stone, you had to climb upstairs to look into them. Then the Lord spoke with the man who had to light the fire under the kettles and to fan the fire with the bellows. When he had done so, the oil in the kettles started to boil so violently that it was frightening to see. But the Lord said ‘Come, I will show you still another thing’. Then he brought me to the rear of the building, where a heavy smoke was clinging. When you approached, your breast was squeezed and you could not breathe any longer. And the Lord said to me ‘Look young man, on this place your people will be punished for the evil you do. Tell the others, when you return to earth, what you have seen with your own eyes’. When the Lord had taken me around and had shown me all kinds of horrors, he brought me back again into the garden where he had been sitting in a chair. While he sat himself near the big fire, he said ‘Let yourself be converted; for all your amusement, your dancings and what you call pleasures - all that sort of thing - will only bring you to this place’. When the Lord spoke like that, I was so very frightened that I
started to cry out loudly and trembled all over. When I saw the doorway of the garden leading to the garden of the blessed so near, I wanted to walk away from the place of the fire, but I was not able to move my feet. Then I started to cry out louder and to beg the Lord. So great was my terror, that I thought that I would never come away from this place, and I asked the Lord: ‘Lord, do I also belong to the damned’? ‘Yes, you are one of them’, he said. ‘O Lord, what can I do to prevent it’? And he replied: ‘When you have returned to earth, go to the Brethren and give your name as a member of the church, and let yourself be baptized. Then, when you die, you will go to the garden next door. But if you do not go to the church, you will be punished here, after your death. I beg you, let yourself be converted, and when you have returned to the others, tell them also’. Then the Lord got up, entered the house and went upstairs. I kept standing and watched him go until I no longer saw him. I proceeded alone, and discovered again something frightening. On the ground flour of the house into which the Lord had disappeared, I saw a kind of prison in the form of a big round cage with strong iron bars. In the cage was a tied up creature. He looked like a human being, but not wholly. His body seemed to be of iron and his head was as big as an ox-head. When I looked upstairs in the hope to see the Lord once more, a mulatto woman appeared near the window. She answered my salute and said that the Lord had retired to take a nap. On my inquiry about the frightening, tied creature, she replied: ‘My friend, have a good look at all these things. This place is called Hell. Here, the Devil resides. Did you not hear, when you were still on earth, that God had chained the Devil? The Devil has a lot of power. If God would let him go for a while, even for half an hour, he would be able to destroy the whole world’. I looked at the Devil and saw how God had tied all the joints of his body with copper bonds, and had fastened the shackles with iron chains to iron staffs, so that he was enclosed by them. The copper bonds were glowing. The whole house looked as if it
was filled with a firelight. It was horrible to see. I was so deathly frightened that I started to cry loudly. Then the woman turned away from the window and went inside the house again. I did not know where to go. I saw a staircase and climbed upstairs. I had a panoramic view over a river. I rose as if I was about to fly over the river. Then the Lord let my spirit return into my body again and I awoke. It was five o'clock in the morning. It was like I had lost my mind. Terrified as I was, I started to cry, so that everybody came rushing to me. I told them that the Lord had instructed me to speak with them about what I had experienced (our tr.).

In 1857 King entered his name, as instructed in his vision, with the missionaries in town. King told them that he had been admonished by God in his dream to let himself be converted. In a dream, he had stood in front of the church and a man standing before the church doorway, had asked him: ‘King do you know what you have to do? You have to enter your name with the church’ (BHW 1861: 145).

Not long thereafter, King started to proclaim his visions. Initially, he was received everywhere with scorn. When a number of persons in King's family died (especially many children), the death were ascribed to the anger of the spirit of a papa sneki (boa constrictor), killed by King in his youth. This snake is worshipped by the Bush Negroes as a god. King's sister, Affiba, as well as her husband, the Djuka Sopo, in whom the snake spirit manifested itself, fulfilled an important role in the religious life in Maipaston acting as mediums. In fact, many of King's close kinsmen were mediums, as he mentioned in skreki boekoe (book of horrors). When King succeeded in exorcising these spirits, he gradually obtained more influence among his kinsmen.

In that same year, 1861, a great change took place, when King instructed them to pull down the shrines of the old gods and gathered obia (traditional medicines) to throw in the river, thus severing all ties with the former religion.

Shortly before, stimulated by a vision, King made his first missionary trip. He went to the Upper Saramacca, where the majority of the Matawai resided, to preach the Gospel. This first trip in January 1860 was soon followed by another in November of the same year. Gaaman Kalkun

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
showed himself to be kindly disposed towards King’s ideas. Later King spent some time together with his wife with the Moravian Brethren in town, to be instructed for the baptism. He was baptized in August 1861. Soon he was able to respond to the summons of his visions to build a church in Maipaston. In October 1861 van Calker, the chairman of the Moravian Brethren, visited Maipaston together with Bramberg. They had become curious about the number of people from Maipaston who came to them in town. They found a church with a cross which had taken the place of the shrines of the old gods. It now appeared that King, aside from his wife, Akuba, had still another Matawai wife in the upstream area. Since Akuba was about to be baptized, and thus they would form a Christian family, the missionaries objected to King’s having a second wife, who was moreover a heathen. They succeeded in persuading him to separate from her (NB 1861: 853). During this visit they also met with Gaaman Kalkun and two headmen of the upstream villages, who had come to Maipaston. Van Calker proposed to the gaaman to move the whole Matawai tribe closer to the coastal area, so that it would be easier for the missionaries to reach them. Adai, at that time headman of Maipaston, advised the gaaman to consult first with the headman of the other villages. Kalkun, however, did not expect any difficulties, and declared to the missionaries: ‘When I want to do something, they have to do it too’. He, in fact, came to reside closer to Maipaston, but the majority of Matawai remained above the falls.

Meanwhile, King had learned to read and began to make preparations for baptism in Maipaston. Life in Maipaston became increasingly dominated by Christianity. When, for example, Sopo, a baptismal candidate by then, became gravely ill, they went to Bersaba in the Para district to ask missionary Glöckner to come to Maipaston. Sopo was baptized and recovered some time later. In September 1862 missionary Drexler paid a visit to Maipaston and baptized all the candidates who had been prepared by King. It was during this time that King, having mastered the art of writing, started to record his visions and take notes on events in Maipaston.

King still had frequent visions in which he was summoned to make mission trips to the other Bush Negro groups. In addition to visiting the Matawai along the Upper Saramacca, trips were also made to the Djuka
along the Cottica and the Tapanahoni, the Saramaka along the Suriname river and the Gran Rio and to Berlijn in the Para district\(^{(10)}\). On his journey to the area of the Djuka in August of 1864, he was accompanied by a deputation sent by Gaaman Kalkun who wanted to improve relations between the Matawai and the Djuka by formally concluding peace with them\(^{(11)}\). In Diitabiki, Gaaman Beiman warned his people against the preachings of the Gospel by King. Despite his strong opposition to the Gospel being preached in his own village, he was unable to prevent the meeting, which was attended by a great number of people\(^{(12)}\). In most of the villages people flocked to the meetings to listen to King's words (For an extended report on King's mission trips see de Ziel 1973: 74-109).

On his return, they visited the missionaries in town and related their experiences with the Djuka. Chairman van Calker was content with the results and insisted that King return soon. The journey, in which King would be accompanied by two missionaries was planned for 1866. News that Beiman had died shortly after King's visit and that this was being ascribed by the Djuka to the witchcraft of King\(^{(13)}\), necessitated the postponement of the trip (BHW 1869: 3). Van Calker still did not want to give up his plan and insisted that the trip to the Tapanahoni be made. In 1868 King together with the missionaries, Bramberg and Lehman, arrived at the Djuka villages along the Cottica, where he was harshly hampered by the Djuka. King observed that the Djuka were acting by order of the new gaaman, and decided that it would be unwise to proceed (Freytag 1927: 55-6).

The church continued to attract many people in Maipaston, and the mission decided to install a teacher to take care of the daily church routine (instruction for baptism, services, etc.), so that church life would not suffer as a result of King's absence, and to enable him to devote his energy completely to these mission trips. In the beginning of 1864, Nicolas Manille was appointed to this function. Manille was a man of royal descent, born in Africa and destined in his own country to a high position. After being sold as a slave, the Moravians christianized him and instructed him to be a teacher (de Ziel 1973: 5). In Maipaston Manille was soon involved in the preparation of candidates for baptism; Gaaman Kalkun was baptized in October 1864\(^{(14)}\). Relations
between King and Manille became strained, when Manille reproached him openly that he passed his own visions as words of God and that in this way, God's word would fall into the background. Manille was supported by the missionaries, who intervened in the conflict. In 1867 King was forbidden to use his dreams as a source of inspiration in his sermons.

Initially King's visions were viewed by the missionaries as God's hand (see, for instance, BHW 1865: 247). In a Dutch missionary journal comments made by German missionaries concerning King's visions were published. They remarked that although we are not allowed to acknowledge in these (visions) particular revelations of God, and although we consider them more to contain the not yet wholly developed, hardly awakened Christian conscience, which filled the soul of King, yet we can not deny on the other hand, that those dreams like so many voices of God, in his hands have become the means to draw the Matawai negro and his countrymen away from paganism. Therefore we have to put up with them as they occur (BHW 1862: 11-2; our tr.).

The commentary of the Dutch editor is also remarkable

We see in the almost childlike dreams of King the influence of the spirit of God, but worked out by the human and restricted intellect of the uncivilized Negro. Another conception of Heaven and Hell the man can not make for himself, and the images are taken from things he himself had seen and heard during his life: cooking houses of the plantation, Indian feather crowns, trumpets of the Moravian Brethren (BHW 1862: 11; our tr.; his italics).

The attitude of the mission towards King's visions tended to be ambivalent. King's biographer Freytag, who is generally very favourable towards him, remarks that ‘Indeed King was in danger of losing the measure of the meaning of his dreams and of taking his own fantasies for higher revelations’ (1927: 66; our tr.). In his chapter about King's skreki boekoe he notes the strange titles of these stories: The holy town of stars; Among the spirits of the ancestors; About the
wrath of God (The earth does not stand up vertical therefore the collapse is threatening); An archive in Heaven (in which the course of life and a picture of each individual is stored). Freytag comments ‘They show the peculiar world of thoughts in which he lived and his narrow link with the hereafter and the world of the spirits. But they are not all on the same level. Anyhow, King commits a mistake when he prophesizes the coming end of the world using the words of Jesus, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will remain forever’ (1927: 65; our tr.). Clearly King took the eschatological contents of the Gospel seriously, as did the Saramaka prophets before him (see Staehelin 1913-19, III(2): 37, 40, 54, 137). Most of the other Christian commentators stressed the divine origin of King's dreams, but were astonished by their miraculous character. This ambivalence was similarly manifested in the attitude of the missionaries towards King himself. King once told van Calker that a merchant from whom he had purchased a gun, had asked him to relate his dreams. Van Calker immediately reprimanded King for having become too proud, since he was only a poor heathen who had been called and awakened by God (BHW 1862: 15). King, however, continued to use his visions as a source of inspiration (see Burkhardt 1898: 56), and thus came into conflict with the mission.

Dreams have been important in many religious uprisings in early Saramaka society (see de Beet and Thoden van Velzen 1977: 103-11; Sterman 1978: 17). The meaning of dreams for religious renewal and innovation has been elaborated by Lanternari. He reports cases from Africa and the Caribbean, in which elements are contained from both the dreamer's own culture and the culture with which he had come into contact.

Figures, beliefs and myths, which have nothing to do with the dreamer's cultural heritage, are reshaped and reinterpreted in an original way. These processes are the result of unconscious psychic operations made by particularly sensitive individuals after the shocking experience of cultural clash; they occur particularly when the individuals are faced with new cultural models and new, fascinating existential perspectives, however disintegrating they may be (Lanternari 1976: 333-4).
According to Lanternari the dream itself is a source of charismatic power which enables the dreamer to transform his individual experience into socio-religious change.

In the first years of King's prophetic career, his charismatic influence among the people of Maipaston - derived from his dreams and reinforced by the appreciation of the missionaries - was great. In the course of time, the church became a Moravian dominated and established institution, in which there was no room for the personal revelations of Johannes King. Consequently, King's position in the Christian Matawai congregation weakened.

**The decline of Maipaston**

In 1870, after the death of Josua Kalkun, King's elder brother, Noah Adai, was appointed as paramount chief of the Matawai. This man was known as a strong personality. Already in the 1840s he had acted as the most important spokesman of the group of Bush Negroes residing in Maipaston, at that time still a working camp. He was frequently mentioned in the reports of postholder Corsten. In addition, he enjoyed the confidence of the Moravian church council in town as well as that of the government. It was no wonder that Noah Adai, now representing the highest political authority, soon came into conflict with his brother Johannes King, who until that time had the authority over religious matters in Maipaston. He forbade King to make decisions about church matters, without first consulting him, so that he could present them to the missionary council in town.

Meanwhile Maipaston had become a flourishing parish. The number of congregation members grew as a result of the expansion of their own baptized members as well as the great attraction on Matawai of other villages. The old church became too small. In 1874 the parish counted already 164 baptized members. A new church would be built on a place agreed upon by King with the mission. It was planned, that, as a result of its favourable position, it would be permanently settled by the missionaries. King had already began to clear fields for some years. King's efforts were obstructed by Adai's independent decision to build the new church in Maipaston. When King reproached him, Adai banished King from
Maipaston (Freytag 1927: 68). Subsequently, King retired from the religious life of Maipaston and concentrated his attention on other downstream villages.

Since the middle of the 1860s, a camp, established by Jacob Toobi at the mouth of the Pikin Saramacca, attracted many people from upriver to this area. The Pikin Saramacca was economically important for the Matawai because of its lumber resources. By the establishment of a camp on this strategic location, the Matawai were able to insure their own claims against those of the Djuka and Saramaka who had settled in the downriver area in large numbers. In 1865, King had helped Jacob to clear the bush to make a camp. In the camp of Jacob, later the village of Jacobkonde, as well as in the more upstream situated village of Muku Muku, there were people who were drawn to the church. When those resident in Muku Muku informed King that they were no longer willing to live with their heathen kinsmen, the missionaries proposed to transform Jacobkonde into a centre for all the Christians of this region. King was to be installed as head of the congregation. The people of Muku Muku were opposed to a joint residence in Jacobkonde, because, as they said, there was insufficient space to clear gardens. Clearly they did not want to be dominated by the original residents of Jacobkonde. Finally King succeeded in convincing them to establish the village of Kwatahede, built in 1874 (MBB 1927: 57-61). King also played a part in the establishment of the village of Makajapingo. Captain Baakafuuta resided in the neighbourhood of the great falls, a few days journey from Jacobkonde. When he became ill, he went to Jacobkonde where King frequently stayed. King prayed for Baakafuuta, who recovered and decided that he wanted to be prepared for baptism. In 1880, after he was baptized, he took up residence closer to Kwatahede, in Makajapingo, and was gradually followed by an increasing number of his kinsmen.

In the meantime, Adai tightened his grip over Maipaston and began to secure authoritaria control over all matters. In his role of gaaman he was confronted with people suspected of witchcraft (wisi). He purported, on the basis of Christian convictions to feel morally obliged to combat such anti-social behaviour. His actions, however, were so vigorous that he became known as the most brutal gaaman in Matawai history (a hogi tê...). We will consider some of these cases in more
detail because of their bearing upon the relationship of Gaaman Adai and his brother King. Moreover, the cases are relevant because of their historical implications in relation with the departure of a great deal of the Kwinti out of Matawai territory. Finally, they have had important religious consequences because of the belief in the persistence of the avenging spirits evoked during this period.

A few years following Adai’s appointment, accusations were laid before him against a man named Amadja, headman of Muku Muku, who was suspected of having killed several Matawai by means of witchcraft. In a letter dated July 30, 1875 Adai turned to the district commissioner and asked him to inform the governor about the case. He pointed out that he himself was a Christian and could not tolerate witchcraft in his area. He requested that the government take the case and banish the accused from the Matawai tribal territory, adding that if the transfer was not handled quickly, he would be obliged to deliver the accused to be killed by his tribesmen. The government informed him that the case should not be settled in the tribal area, and that the accused together with the evidence, should be transferred to the governmental authorities to be further investigated in town. Amadja continued denying the accusation and since they could find no evidence against him, he was released on April 24, 1876. In town it was expected that he would return only to fetch his belongings and take up residence elsewhere - for example along the Suriname river as they had suggested. Amadja, supposing his innocence would be acknowledged, returned to the Matawai area, and remained. He was then taken into custody by the gaaman and attempting to escape, he wounded one of the headmen who helped Adai with the arrest. For the second time Amadja was condemned to death. Again Adai requested (in a letter of August 14, 1876) that the government take the case. Adai declared that he did not want to grant Amadja permission to take up residence along the Pikin Saramacca. Shortly after he had been put under police supervision in town in March of 1877, he succeeded in
escaping to the Upper Saramacca. In October of 1878 the district commissioner reported the rumour that Amadja had been killed five days travelling distance from Maipaston. That the sentence had, in fact, been executed is corroborated by King, who reports in his journal further details about the sentence. He mentions that pressured by a great number of people who urged that Amadja be killed, Adai together with three Kwinti whom he had recruited for this plan - Jonas Agasanu, captain Nonu and Figranti - had attempted to kill Amadja. They beat him with sticks and shot him with arrows, until finally he fell to the ground. Still alive, Adai finally summoned still more people to bury him alive (de Ziel 1973: 72 and 118).

The involvement of the three Kwinti in the murder of Amadja has also been mentioned by the evangelist Kraag, who worked among the Coppenname Kwinti from 1893 until 1902. Investigating the cause of the death of Aketemoni, headman of the village of Kaimanston that occurred in 1896, he was told that when the Kwinti were still living among the Matawai along the Saramacca river, Gaaman Noah wanted to kill someone suspected of witchcraft. He sought people to do this job for him, but nobody volunteered. Finally the gaaman found Aketemoni prepared to seek Amadja, who was hiding. Together with two others, he found and killed him. Aketemoni then fled to the Coppenname, supposing that the spirit of Amadja could not follow him there to kill him. The two others were killed and now also Aketemoni was said to be drowned in the river by Amadja (Kraag 1980: 58-9).

King reports that Adai paid the three murderers in accordance with promises he had made and appointed Jonas Agasanu as headman (de Ziel 1973: 118). It is probable that the person called Nonu by King, was Paulus Aketemoni, who was already headman of one of the Kwinti villages along the Saramacca river before the Kwinti departed. King continues that not long afterwards God had taken revenge on the culprits. One of them, Figranti, hung himself in his house and the two
others died after illnesses. The other people involved in the murder also
died. ‘Gado srefi koti na kroetoe’ (God himself judged the case), King
concludes (de Ziel 1973: 118).
King’s viewpoint that the death of those who had been responsible for
Amadja’s murder was a punishment of God, is remarkable and bears
 testcase testimony of his personal and already deeply rooted Christian conviction.
According to the Matawai these deaths were to be ascribed to Amadja's
spirit taking revenge (kunu). Because a great number of people from several
lineages had been involved, he would even become a gaan kunu, a major
avenging spirit recognized to have a range of action wide enough to make
all Matawai vulnerable. In the oral tradition of the Matawai the story is
told as following: Formerly there was a man, originating from the lineage
of Manjabasu, who was innocently accused of having ‘bought’ wisi
(witchcraft). Therefore they wanted to kill him, but he succeeded in
escaping and hiding on an island. Finally they saw him downriver. They
took him into captivity, forced him to dig a large hole, pushed him in and
threw earth over it. They killed him and his kunu has victimized many
people.
Circa 1883 Adai was informed about another suspicion of witchcraft. As
far as we know, he did not bring this case before the government
(17). Now
a man named Bomboi was involved, originating from the lineage of
Maipakiki. The story is related that Bomboi, being popular among women,
evoked jealousy and was innocently accused of witchcraft. When people
tried to give him a beating after his involvement in adultery, he fled to the
forest, where he managed to hide for a long time. A classificatory brother
deceived him, however, by disclosing his hiding-place to the others.
Gaaman Adai decided that he should be killed and took two persons from
each village to execute the sentence. They built a large fire and he was
burned alive. The incident took place near Koofaja kiiki. By inculpating
all these persons in the murder, the gaaman caused all those persons who
would be reborn as reincarnations (neseki)
of the culprits (and the neseki of their neseki, as we will see p. 290), as well as their matrilineal descendants to become vulnerable to Bomboi's revenge. Bomboi indeed became a gaan kumu and is said to have taken revenge, like the spirit of Amadja, on almost all Matawai lineages\(^\text{18}\). Another incident involved a certain Nathaniël Mankiati, a classificatory brother of captain Petrus Baakafuuta, from Makajapingo. His first wife, Adriana, had been taken from him by Samuel Koloku, Adai's son. His second wife was also stolen from him by a man named Jonathan of Maipaston. Thereafter Samuel fell seriously ill for a long time and a year following the incident Jonathan died. Adai held Mankiati responsible for both Samuel's illness and the death of his kinsman. He was sentenced to death, in 1893. Mankiati declared his willingness to undergo the poison ordeal, a common procedure in the case of suspicion of witchcraft, whereby the suspect drinks a sacred potion (sweli). Adai stubbornly refused although he knew that if the accused was in fact guilty and drank sweli, he would surely die. He was tied, instead, to the pole of the ancestors, where he was forced to sit for three days in the burning sun without eating or drinking. On the third day it was intended that he should be decapitated and burned. Baakafuuta prevented this by loosening him, so that he could escape to town. Adai punished Baakafuuta by relieving him from his function as headman.

Mankiati, made a complaint at the government\(^\text{19}\). King sided with him and sent a letter to the government in which he proposed that he, together with a number of headmen and the evangelist of Makajapingo, would be willing to testify against Adai\(^\text{20}\). Even the chairman of the Moravian mission interfered in the case and wrote a letter to Gaaman Adai, in which he admonished him to stop living like a sinner and pointed out that not Mankiati, but he himself was wrong. He threateningly added: ‘Otherwise I am afraid, that when you must stand before God to be judged today or tomorrow, you will not receive a
blessing and will not be forgiven”\(^{21}\).

The relationship between Adai and King had reached its lowest point. King's actions, heavily relying on the support of the mission, were considered to be an interference in local affairs, and the disagreements and conflicts accumulated. Adai, being conscious that he found support among his villagers, felt confident enough to banish King from Maipaston again in 1891. King thereupon retired downstream in his camp Miwanlibi, and seldom appeared in Maipaston. On the few occasions King did show himself, he was openly threatened with a gun by Adai, who publicly declared that ‘*Johannes King's bloedoe moesoë ron na gron*’ (King's blood will be shed)\(^{22}\). The last years of Adai’s chieftainship were accompanied by the decline of the church congregation of Maipaston. In 1891 the school had been closed, because the elders were no longer willing to send their children. The *Gaan Tata* cult of the Djuka began to acquire influence over Maipaston (see pp. 196 ff), and the hope of the mission that at the death of Adai, King would be able to resume work in Maipaston and revive the parish again, was not fulfilled. Maipaston could no longer be held together by communal Christian zeal, and appeared to be torn apart in conflicting groups, each striving after its own goals. Those persons who originally had been most strongly associated with King's ideals, now lived dispersed in the upstream villages, preaching the Gospel in the developing Christian congregations.

**The Gaan Tata cult at the Saramacca river**

In the early 1890s a new religious cult was introduced among the Djuka of the Tapanahoni region, called the *Gaan Tata* cult. Shrines of the former ‘false’ gods were destroyed and *obia* were thrown into the river in favour of the new god *Gaan Tata* (Great Father) or *Gaan Gadu* (Great God) as he was called more commonly by the Djuka themselves. The cult developed a centralized and hierarchical organization, with monotheistic aspirations and the character of an anti-witchcraft movement. Leadership of the cult was in the hands of a small group of priests, who were both powerful and exacting. The cult spread rapidly among other Bush Negro groups (see Thoden van Velzen 1977: 82), and soon *Gaan Tata* took hold.
among the Matawai as well. The cult was introduced in several villages throughout the Matawai area and has been an important factor in the religious development of the Matawai. In the course of the year 1892 the cult was brought from the Cottica river to Santigoon at the lower part of the Saramacca river (MT 1895: 45). Santigoon had a population consisting mainly of Djuka, who were in frequent contact with their relatives of the Cottica and Tapanahoni regions. From Santigoon the cult spread further along the upstream Matawai villages. The Djuka of Santigoon journeyed to Matawai villages to convert them to the belief of Gaan Tata. King (BHW 1895: 12) mentions a Djuka named Kwogi who made a trip to the mouth of the Pikin Saramacca (Jacopukonde) to introduce Gaan Tata. Finally he succeeded in gaining a foothold in all the downriver Matawai villages, with the exception of Kwatahede. The scenes resembled those that could be observed previously in many Djuka villages. Old gods were thrown into the river and room was made in the temples for Gaan Tata. People submitted themselves to the priests of Santigoon, who demanded huge sums of money and large offerings of food, rum and cloths (BHW 1895: 12). The Matawai of the upriver villages on their way to the coast when they passed the village of Santigoon, also came into contact with the new cult. Everyone passing the village was obliged to pay a sum of 16 guilders to the Gaan Tata priest, as Samuel the son of Adai mentioned in a complaint to the government(23). Transgression of this obligation was punishable with death by the god of Santigoon. The new cult soon gained a wide following among the Creoles from Paramaribo, the Negroes from the Para district, as well as the Bush Negroes of the Saramacca river. Even Christians began to participate in some of the cult's rituals. In Maipaston, people also turned to the new god and observed his stringent laws. Attempts by Johannes King to convince his kinsmen that the sweli of Gaan Tata was only a lie (soso lei sani) were in vain. He was unable to remove the fear.

When Gaaman Adai became ill in 1893, he sent two messengers to Santigoon to seek help at Gaan Tata. On May 28, 1893, he died before their return. They arrived in Maipaston with a warning from Amadjo, the leader of the cult. He said that Noah's illness was a punishment of Gaan Tata and instructed them that if he died, they should not bury him, but should dispose of his corpse in the forest. Would they infringe upon this
law, Gaan Tata would strike them with illness and death. In addition, his goods should not be divided. Gaan Tata himself had to be brought to Maipaston to dispose of the estate, and to assign a new gaaman (de Ziel 1973: 124). The inhabitants of Maipaston were greatly alarmed by the news. King, who had been summoned to Maipaston by his brother shortly before his death to be reconciled with him and to reassign leadership of the congregation, took great pains to restore peace in the village. When shortly before the burial, his younger brother Jacobus Vos became possessed by a bigi gatu spirit, King exorcised the spirit by whipping him and ordering the spirit to leave Maipaston (1973: 136-7). Fear of Gaan Tata, however, remained so strong, that only a few persons dared to go to the burial ground.

Four months after Noah's death, some of his kinsmen who were servants of the church, turned against King. His sister Lydia summoned two missionaries, Staehelin and Richter, to Maipaston to accuse King. It was said that he had gone to Santigoon to call Gaan Tata and the angels to kill Noah (1973: 129). King considered Noah's death to have been caused by the anger of God, because he had made the work in the congregation impossible for a long time (1973: 130).

Meanwhile the Gaan Tata cult had gained acceptance in other Matawai villages. On February 18, 1894 the Christian village headmen of Makajapingo and Kwatahede, Baakafuuta and Jacobus Toti came to King to talk with him about the increasing influence of the Gaan Tata movement. They told him that one of the leaders of the cult in Santigoon, Kwogi had visited the village headman of Jacobkonde requesting a place near his village where he could bring the new god. Then, all Matawai could serve Gaan Tata there, since the government was planning to forbid the cult in Santigoon. Alafanti, who had been designated by Adai as his successor before his death, was willing to give the place Bookolonko to Kwogi (1973: 139). Both headmen, who viewed the spread of the cult with distrust, asked King, also in the name of the headmen of the villages above the falls, to help them to combat Gaan Tata. Afraid that they would be killed by Gaan Tata, they insisted that King come personally. King instructed his nephew Timotheus, one of the church servants of Maipaston, who at that time was married to a woman from the upstream area, to warn the headmen against Gaan Tata and to announce his intended
The missionaries in town initially viewed the Gaan Tata cult with a certain amount of esteem because of its monotheistic character. In fact they hoped that the transition to Christianity would be facilitated for the pagans who had thrown away their old gods. Soon they realized that the Gaan Tata cult formed a kind of counter-offensive to Christianity, which had been only slowly gaining some support. It became necessary to combat this cult even more than other forms of idolatry (Burkhardt 1898: 27; MBB 1896: 99). Wehle, the German missionary of the plantation Catharina Sophia who was also responsible for the mission of the Upper Saramacca, went so far as to throw ‘one of the so-called gods’ into the river in Santigoon\(^{24}\).

The government, as well, was opposed to the Gaan Tata cult, because of the large offerings of rum, money and cloth which were demanded. For this reason, the district officer Cabenda, who was residing in lower Saramacca, urged King to combat Gaan Tata in the upriver villages.

King left his residence Miwanlibi on April 26, 1894, for a trip along all the Matawai villages. In the report of his journey\(^{25}\) King mentioned that he performed a service in Jacobkonde, and urged the people to turn away from the new god Gaan Tata and to seek the living God. King, knowing that he had the support of the government, threatened the people with punishments by the whites to underline his words.

However, the two brothers Adolf Mongi and Napoleon, who was the priest of Gaan Tata in Jacobkonde, were not impressed by King. They abused him and prevented him from throwing the Gaan Tata obia into the river (BHW 1895: 14).

At Pikin Lembe, in the upstream area, King arranged a meeting with the headmen and elders of the upper villages. He asked them to explain why they had chosen Gaan Tata as their god, and warned that God would punish them. If they did not hand Gaan Tata over immediately, he would accuse them at the government. The headmen replied that Gaan Tata had come to them as a severe master, they did not really understand why, and now they did not know what to do. While they did not want to serve him they felt that they had to (BHW 1895: 15). Gaan Tata seemed to have rapidly gained a strong influence here in the Upper Saramacca. They told King that complying with Gaan Tata’s command they had thrown all the old
gods into the river. Having placed their confidence in him, they felt cheated when shortly thereafter some people had died. They argued that they no longer wanted to serve Gaan Tata and complained that they suffered greatly from such false gods.

We transport wood to town, sell it and buy cloths, rum and beer. Then we bother ourselves, day in and day out, to bring all these things home and when we arrive in our village, we have to offer a lot of cloths and drinks to our gods. One part, we have to carry away to offer it in the forest, another part to the river, another to the big stones and the trees in the forest. In vain we throw away all these things. We do not have a profit, nothing, nothing at all, only evil comes over us (BHW 1895: 16; our tr.).

King, who had just heard that a man in Abookotanda was punished for adultery by being whipped until he bled, took the opportunity to rebuke them and to stress that Gaaman Adai had already prohibited these things. He visited headman Anasi of Abookotanda, who related how Gaan Tata had promised that if they would dispose of the old gods and serve him instead, he would guard them from adversity. However, they had to observe stringent rules. Women were not allowed to sit in the same boat with men, during their menstrual period. They were forbidden to cut mope trees and moreover they were pressured to throw away all the gods, whom they had served for so long, into the river. Gaan Tata took up residence in the house of the former god papa gadu (see p. 246). Anasi begged King to pull them out of the hands of Gaan Tata and to teach them the road to God. He did not want a single remnant of Gaan Tata to remain in the village. Johannes King and his nephew Timotheus Jau, who had joined him on this trip, set fire to the hut where they had prayed to Gaan Tata (26.).

Many of the villagers of Abookotanda were just preparing a trip to Jacobkonde to serve Gaan Tata. Thus King had arrived just in time to dissuade them from their plan. Now many people registered with the church (29 of Abookotanda and 29 of the villages near Pikin Lembe (27.)) and they begged King to ask the missionaries for an evangelist. King could well be content with the results of this trip.
On February 23, 1895, the missionary Wehle embarked on a trip to the Upper Saramacca. Originally he had intended to go with King, but he had found him in bad health at his place of residence. This trip was also intended to wipe out the Gaan Tata cult. In Jacobkonde, which had become the centre of the cult in the Matawai area, he advised the Christians to leave the village if Gaan Tata would get the better of them (BHW 1895: 123). Wehle corroborated King's observations of the increasing influence of Gaan Tata in the upstream area. Wehle was not very communicative about his actions against Gaan Tata during this trip, but a report of visits to other villages in the downriver area around 1895 suggests the kind of actions which he was likely to have employed upriver. When he arrived in a village with signs of ‘idolatry’, he spoke with the people about the true God and asked them why they did not want to turn away from this ‘misery’. If they did not give him a ready answer and remained sitting quietly and undisturbed, Wehle considered it time to act. With the aid of his Christian boatmen he pulled down the local shrines and set them on fire. The winti men, thus confronted with the powerlessness of their own gods (since Wehle was not punished) were forced to justify themselves (MT 1895: 44).

The actions taken by King and Wehle contributed to the decline of the influence of the Gaan Tata cult along the Saramacca river. The cult, however, continued to play a role in Matawai religious life. Still in the 1930s Gaaman Asaf Kiné, for example, maintained close relations with Santigoon and brought people from other villages to make offerings to Gaan Tata. In the annual reports of the 1930s, various indications can be found that people from the upstream area often put their faith in Gaan Tata.

Also in the oral tradition, cases of religious dependence on the priests of the Gaan Tata cult in Santigoon are known.

When Thomas Alen of Maipakiiki died in 1923, his bongola (an oracle consisting of the hair and nail clipping of the deceased, tied to a plank, carried by two bearers on their heads), was consulted. It was revealed that his death was a punishment from Gaan Tata. When he had gone to town to sell his balata, he ‘bought’ witchcraft to kill another person. On his way back
to the village he became ill, punished by Gaan Tata (whose main taboo is witchcraft). Shortly after his arrival in the village of one of his wives, he died. To settle the case, all his property was brought to Santigoon. In addition, his two wives had to spend the mourning period under the supervision of the Gaan Tata priests. Accompanied by some maternal uncles of their former husband they went to Santigoon, where they stayed a whole year until the mourning period came to an end. Before their return the bongola was carried again and one of his wives was assigned by the spirit of the deceased to his ‘brother’ Jonathan Mujeeifutu, the other to his ‘brother’ Petrus Ianwooko; both had been engaged in an adulterous relation with them. When the women returned, both were pregnant and each of the brothers had to pay a fine to the spirit of the deceased, consisting of the usual tin of rum and cloths. With this paiman (fine) a great dancing was held in the village of Maipakiiki.

In the 1970s the Gaan Tata bundle was still carried secretly in some downstream villages (Makakiiki, Asanwai and Bilawata) and Santigoon remained the centre of the Gaan Tata cult along the Saramacca. In 1972 news spread among the Matawai of a new anti-witchcraft movement, which had begun to gain a large following among the Djuka of the Tapanahoni, its area of origin (Thoden van Velzen 1977). At that time, however, the deeds of the cult leader and prophet, Akalali, were not yet well-known in the upstream area. Among the Matawai migrants in town, the supernatural powers of this prophet were the subject of lively discussions and heated debates. It was said that even officials of the Surinamese government came to consult him. By 1975 inroads were made into Matawai territory, as had earlier been the case in other Bush Negro areas (Thoden van Velzen 1977: 114). During this year the Matawai gaaman negotiated with the cult leader, to cleanse the Matawai area from witchcraft. His proposal met with opposition on the part of the upstream villages, opposition that was based not so much on Christian principles, as one would expect but on practical grounds (29). When the upstream villagers were informed about the high costs that had to
be paid by the villages communally, they argued that it was a government matter and that the Surinamese government (lanti) should pay. In addition, they were not certain that there was any witchcraft to be found and were afraid that they would then have paid the prophet for nothing, ‘soso lasi u to go lasi’ (we only would lose). The gaaman disappointed by this reaction, decided to cancel the large scale cleansing plan, in which Akalali would have come by boat with a large following. Instead he invited Akalali to come personally by airplane to Posugunu, the gaaman's village to cleanse himself, his wife and his sister, without any other Matawai present. The relations between them became thereby so close, that Akalali was invited to attend the feast celebrating the 25th anniversary of the gaaman's accession to office. The Matawai did not doubt Akalali's supernatural powers to ‘see’ witchcraft, which they considered to have been given to him by God (Gadu da en di kont).

**Christianity and the appointment of political functionaries**

From the onset of their missionary work among the Bush Negroes in Suriname, the Moravian Brethren have had the support of the government. The government played an important role in the attempts to introduce Christianity throughout the Matawai area. They have always tried in political successions to give support to those candidates, who showed a favourable attitude towards Christianity and who were well-disposed towards the promotion of missionary work among their tribesmen. With the banishment of paganism, the government expected to get a stronger hold on the political life of the Bush Negroes. The government systematically interfered in Matawai political successions by trying to appoint Christian candidates. To support this point we will detail some of the complications which arose concerning political successions.

Already in 1858, some years before the radical change took place in Maipaston, the government had persuaded Gaaman Kalkun to send his nephew Johannes to Beekhuizen, the mission school of the Moravian Brethren in town. The purpose, according to the government secretary, was ‘that the Bush Negroes would become attached to our government and that the children who were educated in town would bring over and
multiply the seeds of civilization and religion under their people\(^{(30)}\) (our tr.). Kalkun's nephew was chosen because he was considered to be the future successor of Gaaman Kalkun. As has already been mentioned, Kalkun later proved to be kindly disposed towards the mission under the influence of the missionary journeys of King. The gaaman had even settled farther downstream to be closer to the colony and within the ‘action radius’ of the missionaries. He was also among the first Matawai to be baptized. However, when Kalkun died in 1867, his nephew Johannes was no longer alive. Shortly before his death, Kalkun designated Zacharias Alafanti (figure 1) as his legitimate heir. The government passed over him in favour of Adai, who had been baptized and had close relations with the mission. The latter was appointed in 1870. The fact that Frans Bona, appointed as gaaman of the Saramaka in the same year, was a Christian had similarly turned the scale in his favour\(^{(31)}\).

After Adai's death in 1893, when the question of the succession had to be settled, the opinions were so divided that governor van Asch van Wijk personally came to Maipaston to arrange a meeting with the Matawai notables. This council meeting held on February 1894, however, was boycotted by most of the headmen. Only two attended: Petrus Baakafuuta, the Christian headman of Makajapingo, and Jacobus Toti of Kwatahede. In addition Adai's son Samuel Koloku and Johannes King were present. Jacobus related on this occasion, that in December 1892 he had visited the upriver villages together with Adai to designate Alafanti as his successor. He said that Adai had repeated this wish during his illness. Contrary to the customary procedure that a person belonging to the same lineage becomes the successor, Adai had succeeded Kalkun. In order to redress that injustice and to prevent his enemies, Baakafuuta and King, from being appointed, Adai had designated Alafanti, a pagan lineage member of Kalkun. The governor, however, preferred the Christian headman Baakafuuta. King was the sole supporter of the governor's proposal. The others feared the anger of the deceased gaaman, since he had been involved in a conflict with Baakafuuta before his death (see p. 194) and had relieved him of his function. Adai's son Samuel accused King of desiring Baakafuuta's appointment only, in order to become the leading person behind the scenes. King in turn suspected that Samuel would, in fact, rule if Alafanti would be appointed. The governor, who noticed
that King did not have much authority, was at that time unwilling to consider an eventual appointment of King as *gaaman*.

Some months later, in April 1894, a group of notables, among them Alafanti, Samuel, Jesajas and Matheus, went to town to defend Alafanti's claims with the governor. The governor let them know that he could not agree to it, because Alafanti's residence was too far from town. Alafanti hastily counseled with his companions and replied that he intended to be baptized and to take up residence closer to Maipaston\(^{[32]}\). However, by the beginning of 1895 the matter had still not been settled.

A new meeting attended by all the headmen was arranged in Maipaston. King, who had in the meantime made his trip to the upstream area and strongly impressed the people of these villages, had gained much more authority. The headmen no longer opposed his appointment, and the government agreed with them whole-heartedly\(^{[33]}\). The temporary district commissioner reported that during his stay in Maipaston it appeared to him that King had acquired more authority than Baakafuuta. After taking the oath on November 1895\(^{[34]}\), King celebrated his appointment as *gaaman* in the backroom of the church together with the missionaries.

Not long after his appointment King became ill. He feared that he was the victim of Alafanti's witchcraft. He began to doubt his double function as political and religious leader and turned to the governor to request permission to resign his office. The district commissioner proposed Baakafuuta for the position, but Benjamin, member of the Colonial Parliament, concluded that it was preferable to follow the customary law of the Bush Negroes and appoint Alafanti (Benjamin 1916). Despite the fact that Alafanti was known to support traditional practices and opposed Christianity, he was ordained as *gaaman* in 1898. Three years later he died.

The government and mission continued to interfere in the appointment of later *gaaman*. As is evident from the foregoing cases of succesion, their interference only served to contribute to the confusion in the political life of the Matawai. We suggest that this confusion is related to the difficulty of keeping `church` and `state` apart in such a small-scale society as the Matawai.
Figure 1 The succession of Gaamanship among the Matawai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth -</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Musinga</td>
<td>±1750 -</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Becu</td>
<td>1780 -</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bojo (Kodjo)</td>
<td>±1810 -</td>
<td>1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Afiti Jongman</td>
<td>1830 -</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Josua Kalkun</td>
<td>1855 -</td>
<td>1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Noah Adai</td>
<td>1870 -</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Johannes King</td>
<td>1895 -</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Alafanti</td>
<td>1898 -</td>
<td>1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Koso</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Asaf Kiné</td>
<td>1924 -</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Alfred Abone</td>
<td>1950 -</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Jan Musinga  
b Baakafuuta  
c Martinus  
d Pompeia
After the death of Alafanti in 1901, it was not until 1924 that a new gaaman was officially appointed by the government. Until 1916 Baakafuuta, who was, as we have already indicated, highly trusted by the government because of his close affiliation with the mission, fulfilled the temporary function of paramount chief. Baakafuuta considered himself to have the right to this title, because of his direct kinship ties to the former Matawai chief Musinga (figure 1)\(^\text{35}\). The Matawai of the upriver villages, however, strongly insisted that the gaaman pau (chief's staff) had to remain in Afompay, in the lineage of Alafanti.

It is not exactly clear why it took so long before appointing an official successor to Alafanti. We do, however, know from oral accounts, that the Matawai appointed and inaugurated pretendents, but that these persons had never been recognized and officially installed by the Surinamese government. About 1913, Koso\(^\text{36}\), who was said to have been designated by Alafanti's carry oracle, was appointed as the new gaaman. He was inaugurated in the Matawai area, but only held this function for a short time, because he died a few years following his appointment. This was before he had been officially recognized as chief by the government. Koso's death was related with a conflict in which he had been involved with Baakafuuta. According to the Matawai Koso died, because of the wrong decision he took in the council concerning this conflict. 'A bangula di sondi' (he confused things)\(^\text{37}\).

After Koso's death, Baakafuuta acted once again as tribal chief. The next development took place when a certain Martinus was indicated as his successor by Koso's spirit. Martinus and his direct kinsmen had just deserted the village of Afompay and had settled in the new village of Fiumangoon, close to Kwatahede, because of the greater working possibilities downstream. Because Martinus was still quite young, he was discouraged from filling the position and was urged to ask his ‘elder brother’ Kiné to take his place. The fact that Kiné belonged to another lineage segment, that had developed into an independent lineage, was for the Matawai not considered insurmountable. However, for the government and the mission, Kiné was not considered to be the most suitable candidate, because of his obstinate attitude towards Christianity. However, soon the mission was able to get a trip on the situation.

Sprang, the resort leader of the Moravian mission in the Matawai.
area, was surprised that there were only three officially recognized headmen in 1923. As long as there was no legally recognized gaaman, no headmen could be appointed. Sprang, who was informed that the government still objected to Kiné's appointment, noticed that the governmental pressure on Kiné to become christenized, was beginning to have an effect. Kiné was taking bible lessons and would soon be baptized. The mission too was suffering from the confused situation among the Matawai. In October 1923 Kiné was brought to the governor by Sprang and the evangelist of the upstream area in order to settle the matter rapidly. As Sprang declared, ‘we also very much miss in church matters the support of a tribal chief’(33).

Immediately after Kiné's appointment in 1924, a large number of headmen, who were recognized by the Matawai but had not as yet been inaugurated by the government, were officially installed. The government showed a clear preference for Christian and baptized candidates. One Christian headman after another was appointed. The government's appointment of Nicodemus as headcaptain in Boslanti contributed to the development throughout the 1920s of Boslanti and Mombabasu into a real bulwark of Christianity in the upstream area. Nicodemus was a stringent and fierce opponent of the traditional religion, in his own as well as in other villages, and appeared to be able to inspire others toward Christian ideas. Also in Pijeti, the former village of Maipakiiki, where public profession of the traditional religion persisted longer than in other villages, the mission was able to reinforce its grip through the appointment of the Christian headman Emelius in 1928. Moreover, the Moravian mission seized upon Gaaman Kiné's desire to be head of the church in his territory as well as tribal chief and established a church in Posugunu the residence of the gaaman.

Finally, in the appointment of the latest gaaman both the government and the church played a decisive role. After Kiné's death, in 1947, headcaptain Nicodemus who was supported by the mission temporarily filled his place. As successor to Asaf Kiné a lineage member of him, Pompeia, was designated by the tribal council. This man was already in his seventies, but what was more important, he was one of the most fervent opponents of the Christian church, with a reputation of persistent attacks upon the church. Soon Pompeia was inaugurated in the village.
and went to town for his official appointment. The government, however, willingly seized upon the fact that Pompeia was already quite old, and postponed his appointment in town as a result of illness. The Matawai ascribed his illness to the ancestors who for one reason or another did not concur with his appointment. The district commissioner organized a general council in which the government declared that candidates should not be sought from other lineages, and they urged them to keep the function of gaaman within the lineage of Alafanti. In addition, it was stated that the government preferred the appointment of younger men who could retain their function longer. In concert, it was decided to appoint Abone (figure 1), who conformed to the above mentioned requirements. In 1950 he was officially appointed. The government, however, demanded that he would return to his original religious community of the Moravian Brethren, which he had left because of his former marriage with a woman of the neighbouring Roman Catholic village. The attempt to get a grip on political appointments was so strong, that the government in appointing Abone already considered who would be the future successor (39). This question has recently become an actuality with the death of gaaman Abone in July 1980.

The introduction of the church in the upstream area

After the death of Johannes King in 1898, the centre of missionary activities gradually shifted to the upstream villages. Maipaston was abandoned around 1904 and its former inhabitants dispersed. In the new village of Asanwai or Commissariskonde, where, a large part of the people of Maipaston settled, a new evangelist was no longer appointed. The residents of this village visited the church of Kwakugoon, which had originally been a police post for controlling goldminers and balata-gatherers. Since 1888 an evangelist had been established in Kwatahede. In addition, Martinus, a former church functionary of Maipaston and a relative of Johannes King, had been active in this village as a congregation leader until his death in 1918. In 1917 this parish became the main station of the mission along the Saramacca river. In Makajapingo, the Creole Eduard Bern was appointed as evangelist in 1899. Jacobkonde, which at that time had 30 baptized members and was frequently visited
by missionaries, became an independent parish after it had been shifted to the new village of Njukonde.

After King's last trip, Christianity rapidly started to gain followers in the villages above the falls, the area that is also called ganda liba. When captain Majoo of Mombabasu was baptized in 1893, there were only a few other Christians in the area. By 1899, already 80 out of the total estimated population of 300 of the six upstream villages had been baptized. The two southern most villages, in particular, Mombabasu and Abookotanda, numbered many Christians (BHW 1899: 174). This was due to the fact that two former church functionaries of Maipaston who had been prepared by King, had settled in these villages. Jacobus Vos, a younger brother of Johannes King, resided in Mombabasu. He had accompanied King both on his trip in 1864 and in 1890, and had taken a wife in Mombabasu before 1894. She was baptized by Wehle in 1895 (BHW 1895: 126-7). Probably because of his marriage, Jacobus was appointed by Wehle as local congregation leader. In Mombabasu he held Sunday services and prepared people to be baptized. However, he did not remain active there for long. The German missionary Voullaire met him and his wife in Jacobkonde in 1899 and found that he was deaf (BHW 1899: 291).

Timotheus, a nephew of King, enjoyed much more influence. This Timotheus Jau, as he was named in Maipaston, or Djemesi, as people used to call him upriver, had, as a boy, also accompanied King on his missionary trips. He had taken a wife in Abookotanda before 1888 (MBB 1888: 97). As we have already indicated, he was drawn by King into combatting the Gaan Tata cult. As a result of his fearless actions against the gods, he was soon able to gain support for his faith among the lineage members of his wife, thus following in King's footsteps. In the oral tradition knowledge of Johannes King is therefore strongly coloured by Timotheus' personal attachment.

Formerly there were places along the river that you could not pass straight away, especially places where the river was deep and at the rapids. These places had their own spirits to which you had to sacrifice rum and pimba doti (kaoline, ritually used white clay), before you could pass. But is was
**Pepe Johannesi** (Godfather J. - King had actually been 'Timotheus' godfather and it was by this name that he became known upriver), who broke down the power of these places and lifted the taboos. He took a boat and while standing upright with the Book in his hand, he pacified the water by reading, or by immersing the Book under water. Another part of the ritual was the measurement of very deep places in the river, like those at Mabo, by tying a bottle to a roll of hammock rope. Only a small part of the rope was left over. He broke down the powers by praying to God, as Djemesi told us, who had seen this with his own eyes.

Timotheus' son William, who had been a bible reader *(voorlezer)* in the church of Boslanti for more than forty years, informed us about the ways in which Timotheus brought people into contact with his beliefs:

> It already started in Abookotanda. Sometimes he took his Book, sat down and read in the doorway. Passers-by asked him what he was doing. Some of them laughed at him, until, after some time, a number of people sat down to listen. In the beginning mainly women, but later on also men, came to sit with him. My father read to them and told them about the visions of Johannes King. He explained all things to them. And gradually it started to look more like a church.

In the beginning there was opposition to Christianity among many people. Older people, who spent their youth in Abookotanda, remember many persons who resisted and they proudly relate how the church started to gain hold among a small nucleus of people, mainly members of the matrilineage of captain Dadi (Anasi) from which Timotheus had taken his wife. Very early many persons also went to the downstream area to be baptized there. There was a lot of mobility around the turn of the century. Men went to French Guiana, which they called Amana, to take part in the river transport, or to the Pikin Saramacca to work in lumbering. Some used the opportunity to let themselves or their kinsmen be baptized in Maipaston or in Jacobkonde. Several old people of the upstream area, spent a number of years during their youth in Jacobkonde to attend
prepare for baptism. But many older people were baptized without previous religious instruction. They became supporters of the new belief and upon returning to the upstream area, tried to convince kinsmen and friends to come to the church. Meanwhile Timotheus waged war against ‘idolatry’.

Sometimes a person came to tell him secretly that another had a poto or agban (big earthenware pots, that were carried on the head as oracles to find out the cause of illness). Then he went to such a person, speaking politely and patiently with her: ‘Sister, I heard that you are hiding an agban in your house. But I say, such things do not help you at all. Do you want to give it to me’? The woman feared that she would be killed and said: ‘I do not want to touch it, but if you want to take it, go ahead’. In the absence of the woman he fetched the pot. He carried it along to the river side, then took his boat and threw the agban in the water at a place where the river was very deep. Sometimes the pot kept floating and spinning around. He had to beat it with his paddle under water. People eagerly awaited his return and wondered that nothing had happened to him. But there were also people who threatened him when he begged them for their amulets (obia). About all these kinds of things he admonished people in the ‘church’ and he pressed them to put their faith only in God.

William continues describing the initial period.

At first we made a kind of church of laths with a floor made of clay. Later we built a house on low piles. There we came together. Each brought along his own little bench and kerosene lamp, men clothed in kamisa and bandja koto, women in koosu, the traditional attire.

The missionaries who had previously only visited the downstream parishes, were inspired by the great number of upstream villagers who came downriver to be instructed and baptized, and started to visit the upstream area as well. Shortly after 1900, the missionary Jensen frequently journeyed in the upstream area and baptized many people.\(^{40}\)
Meanwhile captain Dadi had died and was succeeded by Manuel, who shifted the village from Abookotanda to Boslanti, closer to the village of Mombabasu. More than his predecessor, Manuel, who was Timotheus' father-in-law, felt himself attracted to Christianity and was willing to support this religion actively. Until this time the decision to become a Christian had been largely an individual matter. Now the eventual establishment of a church upriver became a public question, forcing supporters and opponents of Christianity to vigorously debate the matter and determine a common stand. The way in which the contrasts were made manifest was typically determined by traditional Bush Negro ideology:

After captain Dadi's death guns were fired, that were said to be heard even in the villages along the Suriname river. He died a heathen. It was Djemesi who brought the church here. With his father-in-law, Manuel, to whom Dadi had given the captain's staff, he agreed that he would teach the children. This agreement was kept secret. Once my father, Abaito, went to Kaabusandu, upriver, to make a boat, and took both his wives and me with him. We intended to spend the night there. When we had made camp, a boat came. It was *basia* Hendi, who gave my father, the other *basia* of Boslanti, the news: '*basia*, the badge of captain Manuel is lost, come as soon as possible'. The following morning we returned to the village. The investigation was in full swing. All means were used. They tried *naki-naki*, slaughtered a chicken, consulted an *aghan* (various divination techniques, *fii-fii*, with which they try to seek out the cause of illness and adversity). But they did not find it. Now the case was that (the spirit of) Dadi had come back to the captain's staff, because he was angered that Manuel had introduced the church in the village, or as they say: '*a tja di keeki kon pot di konde*' (he brought the church polluting the village), without informing the others about it. Finally when they had prayed to his spirit and had admitted that it was true, after three days of investigating, we suddenly heard some women start to sing *adonke* (traditional...
ritual songs). They said that the badge was found in the shrubs at the back of a house. Now they discussed what to do. Many people declared that now that the church had been introduced already, they could no longer prevent it. To appease the spirit of Dadi and the other ancestors a great fine was paid, consisting of a number of large tins of rum, which was offered to him and with which a dancing was held, lasting for three days. Although many people had objected to the church, we now accepted it.

This story was told by Paulus, who spent his youth in his father's village Abookotanda and was himself closely involved in the introduction of the church in the upstream area.

It is important to specify some of the implications of these events. For the Matawai, the establishment of a church congregation with its own rules, organization and ideology, was a public affair, concerning the whole community. Decisions in such vital matters could not be taken individually, without consulting the village council; not even by a village headman. Moreover, the case illustrates that significant and contrasting viewpoints are generally not made explicit in public discussions, but are revealed with the aid of supernatural means, by mediums and divination. Only decisions taken communally in a village council in which the ancestors are also consulted are, in principle, considered legal. Because generally the most widely diverging viewpoints have been smoothed out well before public decisions are enforced in a public council, former opponents tend to acquiesce to the decision. It is for this reason that after the introduction of the church, they have never reverted to the matter, despite the feeling on the part of some individuals that the mission interfered excessively in their lives. Ironically, the ancestors who were pivotal in the traditional religion and were always considered to be highly interested in the well-being of their kinsmen, became crucial in the decision involved in the introduction of the church. And we will show that the ancestors would always retain an important role in certain crucial matters concerning Christianity.

The result of the agreement to accept the church was that Timotheus was now officially permitted to teach the children and to hold church
services and captain Manuel asked the missionaries via Timotheus for an evangelist. The missionaries knew the manner in which the decision had been taken. They reported that the question of an evangelist coming to Boslanti had been left to the medicinemen\(^{41}\). In 1919 the first evangelist, the Creole Krolis, settled in Boslanti, and in the same year a new parish was established north of the falls in the Kwinti village of Paka Paka. By this time almost everyone in Boslanti and Mombabasu had been baptized. In the cluster of villages of Maipakiiki, Alenbaka and Pikin Lembe, with a total population of 150 to 200, Voullaire found only five persons who resisted baptism (MBB 1919: 178), while in the two other villages of Posugunu and Malobi, with a total population of 150, only eleven heathens remained (1919: 177). In addition to the evangelist, Timotheus would play the most important role in church life in his function as preacher (\textit{voorganger}). A group of people connected with the family of Timotheus' wife\(^{42}\) supported Krolis (SZ 1944(5): 3) and formed a nucleus from which the first church notables could be recruited.

Timotheus had always been viewed by the missionaries as an exceptional man. According to them he was very energetic, intelligent, and was able to read and write. He knew his catechism by heart and was highly gifted (BHW 1919: 108). He was, however, considered to be handicapped by his own conduct. King referred to him as a heavy drinker (de Ziel 1973: 130) and Voullaire mentioned that the misfortune of his life was due to rum and women (BHW 1919: 108). He wondered that Timotheus, more than all others, was able to convince his heathen tribesmen of the truth and the blessing of Christianity (BHW 1899: 174). Later, he seems to have changed for the better, in the eyes of the missionaries, who were themselves abstinent. Voullaire observed that he restricted himself to one wife, did not drink anymore, and worked faithfully and exclusively preaching the Gospel. His opinion is affirmed among the present-day residents of the upstream villages, who assert that it is due to the work of Timotheus that the upstream villages joined the Christian church in the course of time (BHW 1919: 108). The influence that he gradually gained in Boslanti, can probably be ascribed to the long period in which he functioned as bible reader in the church. In 1927 the former postholder among the Djuka, W.F. van Lier, met him on a visit to Boslanti
and attended his sermon. It was a personally coloured sermon in which he admonished the parish to attend church faithfully and pointed to the transience of things.

All things of this world are idle. Today they are beautiful, tomorrow they are withered like a flower in the garden. Only one things is forever, that is our Lord Jesus. He has no end. He alone can give peace and blessing. No one of the ‘gods’ we serve, can give that to us. I, Timotheus, can witness it. Which idolatry dance was there, that I did not take part in. But that was all idle. It was the good that I sought, but I found only more evil. Look at me and come to Jesus. I admonish you to leave the things of this world. I am not afraid to call you to order. No, I have no fear. I was in darkness, but now I am in the light. The heathen things did not give me any profit. The profit that I found was when Jesus’ voice said to me: I died for you, you do not have to fear death. Well, what more must I fear? No, Timotheus does not fear anything, nothing indeed. Well, beloved brethren, listen to Jesus’ voice. He needs you. He calls you, today still. He wants that you come to him. He has organized a great party for you. Come and let’s eat together. Well, do not linger any longer, but come. Do not think that you still have time, but come immediately. Remember the five virgins, who supposed that they had time enough to go out and look for kerosine in their lamps. The moment they came to their senses, the bridegroom had already gone (van Lier 1927: 13-15; our tr.).

When Timotheus died at the beginning of the 1930s his position of local preacher and bible reader (voorganger) was taken over by his son William.

During the 1920s, Boslanti had become the stronghold of Christianity in the upstream area, from where attempts were made to convert the last heathens and to expand their influence on other villages that were still bound to the old religion. Some people were not willing to let themselves be brought into the church, because they had two or more wives and were reluctant to give them up. Those who applied to be baptized, shrunk from it when they heard that they had to abandon their
Circa 1924, Boslanti was supported in its fight against traditional religion by the village of Pikin Lembe. The headman of this village had made a clean sweep a year earlier and had delivered all his gods to the visiting chairman of the Moravian church. Now he took strong action, together with the headman of Boslanti, by smashing the apiusi drums during the New Year's dancings in their villages in 1925.

In Posugunu, where preparations were made to found a congregation, the last shrines and ancestor poles were destroyed by the villagers of Boslanti, in 1924. During this incident a woman, who was possessed by four spirits, declared that the village was now polluted, and had to be deserted in order to escape the anger of the ancestors. Immediately the woman left the village, together with two others. Later she could be persuaded to return. Gaaman Asaf Kiné, who felt himself to be excessively restricted by the church of Boslanti, wanted to establish a church of his own and act as its head. Because his opinions concerning Christianity were not always in agreement with those of the Moravian mission, the church founded in Posugunu in 1926, never acquired a role in the life of the villagers equal to that of the church in Boslanti. In 1934 Asaf Kiné confessed to Nelson, the evangelist of Posugunu, that until then they had always partly followed their tribal customs and partly served God, but he promised that from then on they would serve only God. He argued that it was therefore necessary to sacrifice to the ancestors, who had been retarding the progress of the church. Nelson, however, looked askance at the subsequent dancing parties held in various villages, and considered them to be a sign of reverting towards the old religion.

Again in 1926, the parish members of Boslanti, together with the evangelist Meilise, tried to combat the traditional religion. This time they seized the two ancestor poles in Maipakiki, that were worshipped and feared by members of the whole Matawai tribe (see p. 238). The two ancestor poles had been established by Napoleon, an uncle of the priest Olensi, in order to serve two avenging spirits. The destruction of the poles had taken place with the consent of some of the villagers, but in the absence of Olensi, whose hostility to the Christian church only increased. As a result of fear of the supernatural vengeance that...
had been incurred by this attack on the traditional cult, the village of Maipakiiki was abandoned and a new village, Pijeti, was established. When Pijeti was to be inaugurated, the evangelist of Boslanti was invited. The appointment of the confirmant Emelius as headman, further raised the hope of the mission that Christian life in this village would find full advantage(47). The priest Olensi, however, persisted in his reluctance(48), and was able to keep the missionaries uncertain for some time by his promise to let himself be baptized. Finally, in 1932, he was baptized (SZ 1959(6): 43). Together with the former headman of Posugunu, who also played an important role in traditional religion, he is thought to be the last Matawai to be baptized.

**The introduction of the Roman Catholic church**

During the 1920s the Roman Catholic church appeared in the Upper Saramacca where the mission had been dominated until that time by the Moravian Brethren. Father Morssink, who in Catholic circles became known as the apostle of the Bush Negroes, played an important role in the process (see Morssink 1934). He had worked mainly among the Saramaka and the Djuka, but on his journeys to the Suriname river he also frequently came into contact with Matawai. In 1925 Morssink was instructed to go to Bilawata, because the leader of this village had already made a number of visits to the fathers in town requesting a school and church in his village. This request came out of disagreements with the evangelist and inhabitants of Njukonde, resulting in the fact that the people of Bilawata no longer wanted to send their children to school in this village. During Morssink's visit it appeared that almost all inhabitants of the village were willing to go over to the Roman Catholic church. Morssink ends the report of his trip noting that ‘a considerable gap has been made in the powerful stronghold of the Moravians among the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca. Deo Gratias!’ (our tr.). Morssink grasped this opportunity, at the precise moment that the last Matawai were baptized, to promote the establishment of the ‘true’ church at the Saramacca river. Already in the year 1926 father Morssink bought an old shop building in order to set up a church in Bilawata. Morssink tried to gain a foothold along the Upper Saramacca in the
following way. In the first place he tried to insure that Sebedeus, who was considered
the leader in Bilawata, would now be officially assigned as headman, so that the
parish would be independent of Njukonde. Secondly he wanted to penetrate into the
upstream area to establish a Roman Catholic parish. On both points he met with
opposition from the Moravians.

Gaaman Asaf Kiné, who originally had declared to the government that he preferred
to appoint Sebedeus as headman of Bilawata, and who under the pressure of the
Roman Catholics had even suggested to consider his eventual appointment over more
villages (50), was gradually more and more influenced by the Moravian evangelist of
his village, the Creole Meilise, who was adamantly set against the Roman Catholic
church. Morssink received a letter from Kiné, in which he was forbidden to go to
the upstream area. However, he came to meet with Kiné and examine the case further.
At the meeting, the gaaman declared that the evangelist had written the letter and
that he was amazed to hear its precise contents. Finally, in 1933, Morssink was able
to induce the government to appoint Sebedeus as headman, despite the advice of the
Moravian Brethren to the contrary (51). In addition to the people of Bilawata, some
inhabitants of the village of Misalibi, situated in the same area, changed over to the
Roman Catholic church, joining the church in Bilawata.

Although Morssink's journey of 1929 was intended basically to ask the gaaman
about his attitude towards the appointment of Sebedeus, he used the opportunity to
visit some persons in the upriver area, who had earlier given indications that they
were interested in the Roman Catholic church. The gaaman did not want to have any
contact whatever with the Roman Catholics, but Morssink found some support in
the villages of Mombabasu and Maipakiiki (Morssink 1934: 65). The Moravian
evangelist, Gessel, considered this trip to be an impudent attack on the work of the
Moravians. According to him Maipakiiki was the real aim of the trip; here it was
said that Morssink organized a meeting, and asked those present to accept his doctrine,
while handing out drinks and other gifts (52).

Through several such trips to the upstream area during this period, the Roman
Catholic mission was able to get a firmer grip on some elders. Curious about the
rumours that were spread concerning the new church
downstream, some elders had attended the church services in Bilawata, contacted the mission and made agreements with the missionaries on their own account. As a consequence a group of people of Pniël, originating from the former village of Mombabasu, seceded in 1939 and settled in a new village Padua, between Boslanti and Pijeti, that was supported by the Roman Catholic mission. At the same time the residents of Bethel, who were involved in various conflicts with the neighbouring village of Posugunu, turned to the Catholics requesting the establishment of a school. In both villages, a Roman Catholic church was founded and teachers were sent from town. Asaf Kiné, who had originally given his consent to the founding of Padua, began to resist, also under the pressure of some headmen, who feared that their villages would break up. It seems evident from Kiné's letters to the government on this matter that the evangelist Meilise had a great influence on the gaaman. Kiné declared that: 1) the people who were negotiating with the father, withdrew from the public authority and no longer acknowledged his own authority; 2) they openly opposed his orders, and 3) they provoked him. And Kiné continued: ‘I can not support “Rome” along with the already established Moravians, who have frequently sacrificed their lives, and moreover, I will not be able to justify all those insurmountable difficulties that will come, before God and people’ (our tr.). He therefore ordered the Roman Catholic teacher of Padua to leave the Matawai area immediately. A meeting following this incident, held under the leadership of evangelist Meilise, failed to bring the parties together. Nathaniël, leader of the Catholic movement, was fined for clearing the forest on the place where Padua was established, he was, however, repaid by the gaaman in order to insure that the fine would not be interpreted as purchase money, as the Matawai explained us. The gaaman, who was called to town on this matter, argued: ‘Since some decades the Moravians are performing missionary work under the Becu- and Musinga Negroes, also called Matuari Negroes. And the results are such, that the whole tribe is now baptized and that all are convinced Moravians. One of the former paramount chiefs Johannes King himself was an evangelist of the above named parish. And in this way there have been established some flowering mission posts along the Saramacca river like Kwatahede and Posugunu, headquarter of the gaaman’ (our tr.). Kiné declared that
he had been opposed to the new religious faith and its propaganda from the start, considering it to be superfluous, and expecting only confusion and discord in the small tribe, that numbered only some 700 people (53).

Shifts in religious affiliation were for the most part a question of opportunism rather than one of religious conviction. Circa 1914, for example, one headman declared his willingness to go over to the Roman Catholic faith in due time. He had heard that due to the war in Europe, the Herrnhutters did not have enough money at their disposal to maintain churches and schools along the Upper Saramacca - a reasonable supposition as the Moravian mission was mainly a German affair. This was reinforced by the fact that he was no longer paid for various services such as the transport of evangelists. Partly due to the fact that since about 1922 Catholics were also involved in the Surinamese government, the government purported neutrality in the conflict between the denominations and voiced the opinion that the Bush Negroes and their headmen should be free to choose. In actuality, they opposed the Roman Catholic mission and asked the father to refrain from actions on behalf of the Roman Catholic faith.

The last conflict took place in 1951 when a large number of people from Makajapingo shifted to the Roman Catholic church (54). This occurred after the Moravian Brethren had informed them that they were not willing to start a school in Makajapingo. Because of the troubles between the villages of Makajapingo and Paka Paka, the people of Makajapingo did not want to send their children to the school in Paka Paka, which was moreover considered to be too far away. With the help of the teacher of Bilawata and some residents of that village, the Moravian church was torn down, in order to build a new Roman Catholic church with the material so acquired. And as could be expected, the conflict between the two religious missions flared up again in all its intensity.

In Moravian missionary circles the activities of the Roman Catholics in the Matawai area were considered to be a threat to their own work. It was indeed no accident that the Catholics, especially at the beginning, turned to those people who were known to be strong opponents of the Moravian church. The annual report of 1927 mentions that the Catholic teacher of Bilawata travelled to the upstream area to talk with
Olensi, one of the most influential local priests in Maipakiiki, and to persuade him to join the Roman Catholic faith\(^{55}\). The thrust of the Roman Catholic mission was directed to the villages of Bilawata and Maipakiiki, both centres of the *gaan kunu* cult, which with all their mediums, priests, shrines and close associations with traditional religious practices, had been able to resist the pressures of the Moravian mission for the longest time.

Competition with the Roman Catholic church often strengthened the support given by the followers of the Moravian church. For example, in 1927 the amount of contributions had risen significantly. Many people who never had paid their contributions began to pay. And the feeling of unity in belonging to the Moravian church increased and strengthened among congregation members of the upstream parishes. Under the leadership of evangelists, they were prepared to combat paganism and Roman Catholicism alike.

Confrontation between representatives of the two churches did not always pass without incidents. In 1929, on a visit to the upstream area, the Roman Catholic priest walked through the village of Posugunu and stopped before the school. The evangelist teacher began to sing the ‘Luthersong’, causing the priest hastily to return to the boat\(^{56}\). The annual reports of the Moravian mission are filled with complaints against the Roman Catholic mission, claiming that they were excessively tolerant towards several aspects of the traditional religion of the Bush Negroes, and accusing them of bribing the people with gifts\(^{57}\). For example, the Roman Catholic mission, unlike the Moravians, did not prohibit the use of the *apinti* drum (see p. 328). In this way the Roman Catholic villages became centres for traditional rituals, at times visited by their non-Catholic tribesmen.

Soon after the shift of religious affiliation of several Matawai, Roman Catholic churches and schools were established in some villages. Mostly Creole and Bush Negro teachers were recruited, and a local organization, in many respects analogous to that of the Moravian mission was set up\(^{58}\). But the conception of the Roman Catholics concerning their missionary task diverged somewhat from that of the Moravian Brethren. They considered their role to be more limited. They were less inclined to intervene in that which they considered to be the internal
affairs of the Matawai. They expected only that those who were baptized by them would attend church and underline their faith in general ways, by rearing their children in this belief, letting them be baptized and sending them to Catholic schools. The Roman Catholic mission became weary of conflicts with the Moravians, and began to show deference towards them, considering them to be more dominant. Soon also the Creole teachers left and made room for Matawai teachers. Especially after 1960 interference on the part of the Roman Catholic church with the Matawai has declined rapidly and nowadays the Roman Catholic villages are visited only once or twice a year (on those occasions the children are baptized as well).

The decline of the Roman Catholic activities is somewhat related to the large number of people who have left the tribal area to migrate to the coast. Although it would be erroneous to state that originally people in the Roman Catholic villages were more prone to migrate to the coastal area than those of Moravian villages, in fact, the migration process has been speeded up by a specific concomitant factor. As the Roman Catholic village populations were restricted in size, schools in these villages had to be closed in the early phase of migration. In fact, not enough children remained to warrant a school. In the case of Padua and Bethel, a temporary solution was found by pooling the children of both schools. But in villages such as Bilawata and Makajapingo, where schools were closed, the process of migration was accelerated by parents seeking school facilities for their children in the coastal area. When the school in the upstream area was also closed, some people decided to change their affiliation again to the Moravians, so that their children could attend the Moravian school. Since 1960, marriages between members of the Roman Catholic and Moravian churches, which had previously been prohibited, were once again permitted. In this way, the artificial social separation, which had been set up by the missions between their respective villages, has been lifted. There remains, however, a permanent core of people resisting the decline of the Roman Catholic congregation.
The organization of the church congregation

All Matawai residing in the villages south of Kwakugoon are baptized members of one of the two churches. The number of congregations with a resident evangelist or teacher has declined to three, all of which belong to the Moravian Brethren. These are Njukonde, Posugunu and Boslanti. The church congregation of Kwakugoon has a mixed population of railroad labourers and includes the two downriver villages, Makakiiki and Asanwai. In the other villages with church buildings (Kwatahede and Paka Paka) irregular services are held by a local bible reader (voorlezer) and a few times a year by the visiting preacher. Visits by a priest in the Roman Catholic villages, Bilawata, Makajapingo, Bethel and Padua, are irregular.

Although the changes accompanying the spread of Christianity were gradual, the Matawai are strongly inclined to consider the arrival of the church as a turning point in their history. Their historical perspective is divided into two periods: fosi ten (formerly or the time before the church) and disi ten or keeki ten (this time or the time of the church). Especially, in the area south of the large falls, ganda liba and in the congregation of Boslanti, the attraction to the church has been strong. However, despite the role of Matawai, such as the prophet Johannes King in the second half of the nineteenth century, and of his followers in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Matawai church did not develop in the direction of an independent church similar to those flourishing nowadays in African states. From the outset the work in the local congregations has been controlled and regulated from the centre of the Moravian church in Paramaribo. The focal point of this organization is the church council (kerkbestuur), headed by the chairman (preases). In this council, general decisions are taken concerning the mission in the interior. The responsibility of the mission is assigned to a pastor, who aside from his own congregation in town serves one of the districts (resort) in the interior. These formerly European and these days mostly Creole confirmed preachers, make regular visits along the villages. The church council also assigns evangelists, mostly Creoles and Bush Negroes, to reside in the congregations. The way in which the local congregation is organized is laid down in the

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
regulations of the Moravian church in Suriname. The evangelist has a central position in the parish, one that is reinforced by various other functions and tasks which he performs. Until recently the evangelist frequently taught school six days of the week and preached in church on Sundays. His other tasks include morning services and the regular bible lessons for those who want to marry in church or become confirmed. Most evangelists who work along the Saramacca river are outsiders: Creoles, Saramaka and Djuka. His position as an outsider in the village often enables him to mediate in village affairs and to communicate with the church council in town about village matters without immediately becoming involved in a conflict. He controls the daily activities of the congregation, observes that the rules of the church are maintained, collects the contributions and registers the vital events of the church members. The evangelist maintains contact with the resort leader and with the church council in town. The resort leader visits the congregation a few times a year to baptize new-born children, bless marriages in the church, confirm new candidates, conduct Holy Communion, etc.

Within the local congregation the evangelist is supported by the church committee members (kerkeraad), helpers (dienaren) and major helpers (hoofddienaren), who are assigned these functions from the ranks of the confirmants. Moreover, each congregation has some local bible readers (voorlezers), who are able to hold church services in the absence of the evangelist. The helpers perform a number of tasks such as ringing the bell before church, clearing the church plaza (each Saturday performed by a group of female church notables), keeping order during the service, and collecting money in church. As a result of their obligation to report to the evangelist about offenders against church rules, they become important chains in the system of social control. One of the tasks of the evangelist is to combat, what is called in missionary circles ‘paganism’. Although nowadays the non-Christian world religions are recognized as valid religious systems, the traditional religion of the Bush Negroes is still seen as the Devil's contrivance. These local church functionaries sit in a local congregation council presided over by the evangelist. In these councils, offences against the rules of the church are dealt with and decisions are taken concerning the punishment of individual church members.
The evangelist has, in such cases, a number of sanctions at his disposal to punish congregation members: 1) church discipline first degree, in which the individual is reprimanded by the evangelist; 2) church discipline second degree, in which the person concerned is excluded from attending Holy Communion, and 3) church discipline third degree, in which the person concerned is excluded from all rights and duties. In the interior another sanction exercised in some cases is *baka bangi*, in which the person concerned is only allowed to attend sermons on the back seat of the church, and is thus shamed in front of his fellow congregation members. The Matawai generally fear church punishments, believing that one who dies during such a sanction, would not be admitted to Heaven.

The Moravian headquarter in Paramaribo also regulates institutions such as medical care and education, that traditionally accompanied missionary work. In addition, the Medical Aviation Fellowship, an air service maintains connections between medical centres and town. Although the mission has always ideally endeavoured to attain an integration of all aspects of social life (religious, economic, medical and educational), attempts to support economic activities have been restricted. In the 1930s, the mission tried to promote economic relations with the Moravian mission affiliated enterprise, Kersten & Co., but these remained restricted to incidental contracts\(^{(60)}\). During the 1970s, following the increased flow of migrants to town, the church council in Paramaribo felt that it was important to pay more attention to the problems of labour opportunities within the tribal areas. In 1973 they began an agricultural experiment in the upstream area, aimed at providing school leavers with work that would keep them in the villages\(^{(61)}\).

From the outset the congregation of the Moravian Brethren has attempted to implant a new life style based on the ‘Christian order’, that would radically change life in the Matawai villages. The ‘Christian order’ is a set of rules and conventions containing a model for a new kind of society in which Christian beliefs could easily be incorporated and accepted. The traditional Moravian conception emphasized the communal aspect of the congregation. The order included a new chronological schedule, the basis of which was provided by the Christian ritual calendar\(^{(62)}\) and the regularity of church activities. It introduced,
as we indicated, a new organization with a number of hierarchical positions and functions, which exerted their influence outside the congregation as well.

Already in 1861, during the first visit of the missionaries van Calker and Bramberg to the village of Maipaston, an attempt was made to introduce a Christian time schedule based on Moravian church activities. Sunday was reserved for the church and it was forbidden to go to the gardens on that day. A special service had to be held at the first Sunday of each month and a short thanksgiving service every afternoon. King, who at this time had not yet learned to write, was instructed to register all cases of death and birth with a cross on the calendar, and to remember the names corresponding with each sign. During the same visit, King was confronted with the objections of the missionaries to traditional social customs. We have already pointed out that King was urged to leave his second wife. When he came to the missionaries with the request to baptize some of his sister's children van Calker's response was: ‘One thing disturbs and troubles me about baptizing them, and that is the custom that still exists among your tribesmen, that the maternal uncle has more authority over his children than their own father’. He explained to King that this was a heathen custom which was in conflict with the ‘Christian order’ (NB 1862: 855-6). In a subsequent chapter we will return to the way in which the Moravian mission tried to change life among the Matawai and trace some of these changes.

The core of the congregation is formed by the communicants; their marriage is blessed in church and they are allowed to participate in the Holy Communion. A person who becomes confirmed changes from the category of a baptized member to that of a communicant or confirmant. In most congregations the category of adult baptized members is larger than that of confirmants, but in the congregation of Boslanti the ratio is reversed. In 1974 this congregation numbered 155 communicants (including 35 church functionaries), 74 adult baptized members and 171 children. Adults are obliged to pay a yearly contribution of Sf 2.50 for men and Sf 1.50 for women.
The parish of Boslanti is known for its strong involvement in church affairs. The large number of communicants is only one indication of this. It should be mentioned that the religious lessons which are required are a rather heavy burden on people who are not accustomed to read. Moreover, during that year, men must abstain from their usual work period on the coast. Church services are well attended. On the basis of a series of observations over a period of nearly two years we estimated that the Sunday morning meetings were attended by 60 to 70 per cent of all adults present in the area. The percentage of men attending those services was somewhat smaller than that of women. On the basis of observable behaviour, such as church attendance, individual reading of the bible and praying at all kinds of occasions, it is difficult to evaluate the way in which Christian beliefs are experienced by the Matawai. It is clear, however, that most people have strong convictions and often speak with horror about the ‘heathen customs’ of the non-Christian Saramaka.

In the upstream area the church has acquired a special significance as a symbol of a new community, that brings together into one congregation people who are otherwise divided by kinship and locality principles. The terms ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ are used within the church context to refer to all those belonging to this church congregation. Indeed, may matters that would otherwise be discussed on the local level of the lineage (localized matri-segment) and village, now tend to be dealt with in the church congregation.

Sunday life differs markedly from the other days of the week. Sunday morning is dominated by the church service. The first bell signalling the nine o'clock service is rung by a helper at seven in the morning. The bell is repeated every half hour to warn the people that they have to prepare for the service. A quarter of an hour before the service, boats begin to moor and from all directions people crowd into the church. Men, who otherwise wear the traditional breech cloth, enter the church in trousers and shirts, and sometimes even jackets and scarfs. The occasionally worn shoes make a particularly unconventional impression. For women, the service is an opportunity to show off their most beautiful town dresses, and kerchiefs tied around their heads embellished with biblical sentences in cross-stitch embroidery. Some become almost
unrecognizable because of their sleek-haired wigs and profuse make-up.

The first rows of the church are occupied by schoolboys and school-girls, flanked by a number of male and female church functionaries, who make sure that the children behave quietly. The adults occupy the seats right behind them and are also divided, men on the left and women on the right. For singing services, the choir is placed on the balcony at the rear of the church. There are also always people sitting outside the church, in particular mothers with toddlers will sit on a stone near the church, where they are still able to follow the sermon.

After the first singing, the evangelist usually starts with tidings about the school and the parish. The first Sunday of every month a so-called children's service is held, in which the sermon is given in Dutch. Only some of the young people are able to understand this sermon fully. On other Sundays, sermons are given in Sranan, which does not pose a problem, since all people, except the very old, have been taught in this language at school. After a theme from the Old or New testament is treated in the sermon, the evangelist commonly chooses another theme to elaborate, that refers to events in the tribal community or in Suriname. A church service given on the occasion of the Harvest Festival related the story of a Saramaka, a heathen, who planted in his garden the food he had just offered to his god. ‘Such an offering, applied to one’s own benefit, is not a real offering’, the preacher commented. During the strike in Paramaribo of 1973, the theme of the sermon was ‘disobedience as a source of all evil’ and explicit reference was made to the death of the young Djuka, who was shot down by the police during these turbulent days. A few times a year the resort leader holds a service and will demonstrate his knowledge of local events by frequently referring to village affairs that undermine church rules.

In this chapter we have stressed the way in which the church acquired a grip on Matawai society by establishing a rigid organization with a pyramid-like structure in which responsibilities are delegated from higher to lower levels, and by its encompassing approach in which several church affiliated institutions also cooperate. In this way the relative autonomy of the Matawai is affected and threatened time and again. But, as we will make clear in the final chapter of this section,
attempts to control the relationship of the Matawai with the coastal society are not accepted without resistance.

_Some explanatory notes on the movement of Johannes King and the conversion of the Matawai_

Voorhoeve and van Renselaar (1962) have attempted to explain the many prophetic movements that arose after 1880. They argue that the Bush Negroes felt deprived in these years: they compared their own situation with that of the former slaves who after the emancipation in 1863 could reach a level of relatively higher welfare. De Beet and Thoden van Velzen (1977) have criticized this interpretation on two points.

First the authors have overlooked evidence of prophetic movements before 1880 or even prior to 1863. Secondly, for the period after 1880, Voorhoeve and Van Renselaar have overestimated the prosperity of Creoles and disregarded the affluence of the Bush Negroes. In fact, as we will show, movements arose at a time when the Bush Negroes were better off economically than the Creoles’ (1977: 103).

The prophetic movement of Johannes King is considered to be one of the cases that does not support Voorhoeve and van Renselaar's argument. The starting-point for an explanation of the movement, that was initiated in the late 1850s, must be sought in particular historical factors that are related to the position of the group to which King belonged. Both the reports of postholder Corsten, who resided in Saron and the diaries of Johannes King, throw some light on this period. From both sources, the pariah character of the group of Adensi and her relatives to which King and his brother Adai belonged, becomes apparent. They roamed around in the plantation area downriver without their own place of residence. They lived in conflict with the Matawai of the upriver area (Freytag 1927: 13) and although some women of the group married with Djuka men, the relations with this tribe were also tense. They were finally banned from the area near the plantations of Haarlem and Mao, and settled in 1849 in Maipaston, a working place of the lumber
plantation Sonette that had recently been abandoned by the slaves who returned to
the plantation. Evidently King became acquainted with Christianity during this period.
One of his sisters had even visited the mission school for a while. Following his
marriage to a woman from the Saramaka village Wakibaslu, situated near the Christian
village of Ganzee, he must have been in frequent contact with the Christian Bush
Negroes of this village (Freytag 1927: 17).

Life in Maipaston during these early days was later described by King as quite
secular. He pointed out that his kinsmen in Maipaston were not involved in spirit
possession and did not know about obia, considered to be the central concept in the
religion of the Bush Negroes. The situation changed when the Djuka affines
introduced and propagated the papa gadu cult; a large part of the population became
possessed by papa gadu spirits and Maipaston became a centre of this cult.

As Maipaston was situated near the plantation area, many slaves and freemen came
to the village to trade with the Bush Negroes. It was a turbulent time in which ideas
were exchanged between the various groups who came to live in the downstream
Saramaka area. The contacts with government officials also began to increase.

It is relevant to note that the attitude of the government towards the Bush Negroes
and particularly towards the people of Maipaston, changed radically in the 1850s.
In a letter of August 14, 1850 postholder Corsten complains about the behaviour of
the Matawai and asks for reconsideration of an earlier request for some soldiers to
protect him on his post. In another letter from the same year (March 7) he notes that

The family Adai and the Djuka, a man from the Saracreek and a freeman
who are linked with the family by affinal ties have at present permanently
settled one and a half hour upstream from Saron, at a working place of the
lumber plantation Sonette that has been deserted. They persist, as they did
earlier in Mao, with a lazy and raffish life; they do not cultivate gardens,
and make trouble with the slaves of Berlijn; they cheat and rob everyone
they can victimize. The application of the two here mentioned acts among
the Matawai of the upstream area have led to fights, and I expect as a
consequence of their
A year earlier, in 1849, the group to which King and Adai belonged was banned from Rosevalley in the plantation area, under threat of forceful removal by the police. It seems, however, that a few years later, when Kalkun claimed the gaaman staff, the attitude towards the group in which Adai had manifested himself as leader, had changed. It was suggested by the government that Adai would be a more suitable candidate for the function of gaaman of the Matawai. One of their reasons was that he was living closer to the colony. Now they tried to induce the other Matawai to come to live in the downriver area, with the ultimate aim ‘to civilize them by economic activities and regular labour’.

Several other governmental sources provide further evidence of overtures towards the Bush Negroes during this time. In 1856 Adai was requested by the government secretary to bring a message to Gaaman Kalkun, informing him about the government's intention to abolish a number of restricting rules. In particular the obligation to have a pass to visit town was removed. The aim of the proposal was to bring the Bush Negroes in closer contact with civilization. We already mentioned that in 1858 a nephew of Kalkun was sent to Beekhuizen to attend the school. It was hoped that more children would follow, and that in this way the Bush Negroes would become attached to the government and the educated children would ‘multiply the seeds of civilization and religion among their people’.

It is clear that the forthcoming emancipation of the slaves played a role in this change of attitude, since the colony would become increasingly dependent on Bush Negroes for the supply of lumber. During this period the possibility of exporting lumber to Europe was also being explored (Benjamins and Snelleman 1917: 366).

We argue that King's role as prophet and religious innovator emerged out of this particular situation, in which religious orientation was in flux and in which a large degree of integration into the Surinamese society was promised to the Bush Negroes. King's response was to direct his fellow tribesmen towards the dominant religion of the colony. His movement was a reasonable response to the rapprochement of the
government towards the Bush Negroes.

As a result of King's work, a large part of the Matawai was christianized before the turn of the century. Although people living in the upstream area had long maintained a resistance to Christianity, many people of the downstream area had come under its spell. In 1894 the Gaan Tata cult, with its monotheistic aspirations, began to gain influence in the upstream villages. In his struggle against this cult, King recovered his prophetic élan and his preaching led to a new conversion movement, now in the upstream area. As had been the case 30 years earlier in Maipaston, the Matawai of the upstream area were at this time in a state of religious confusion.

Some of the ideas presented here to explain the Matawai's conversion to Christianity are convergent with the theory developed by Horton concerning African societies. Horton's basic idea is that traditional African religions adapt to the weakening of the boundaries of the microcosmos, dominated by ancestor religion and lesser spirits, by the transformation of fundamental aspects of their religious system, in which the concept of the supreme being is far more elaborated. In this way the religion is adapted towards a situation in which macrocosmic features begin to emerge (see Horton 1971, 1975). For the Matawai in the upstream area the microcosmos of the local community, dominated by spirit cults, was opened towards the macrocosmos first by the Gaan Tata cult in the 1890s acting as a catalyst to change the religious orientation and subsequently by Christianity. We have already illustrated the factors that contributed to a reinforcement of the links with the wider society in Maipaston during the late 1850s. The new economic possibilities available to the Matawai during the 1890s, that included working periods for men from the upriver villages in the downstream area in balata and gold fields, as well as their involvement in river transports in French Guiana and along the Marowijne river (Franssen Herderschee 1905: 53), caused a new orientation, that also affected the upstream area. According to oral accounts, groups from different villages went to French Guiana around the turn of the century.

After King's visit the spreading of Christianity proceeded very rapidly, as we already indicated. In the process of conversion towards Christianity, the same kinship principles have operated as in the process
of lineage segmentation and the break-up of villages. Thus, although individuals had their own particular reasons for adopting the new faith, a clear pattern emerged in the conversion of a larger part of the population. As in the cases of conflict or varying opinions, people tended to side with their closest lineage members, i.e. members of their matrissgment. In this way the first headmen and other notables who were converted were able to play an important role in the subsequent conversion of their lineage members.

The role of the Moravian mission in the extension of Christianity and in the establishment of the church, can not be underestimated. From the beginning of the process, they supported the early converts and took over the initiative in forming the congregation. Thus they were able to get a firm grip on the Christian life of the Matawai. In general the Matawai conversion to Christianity transformed their ideology and widened their world-view. One would expect the introduction of Christianity into a tribal and enclosed community to stimulate modernization, leading to the weakening of traditional social organization or migration. However, as we will show later, in the upriver Matawai area, where Christianity received its most fervent support, lineage organization is less disturbed and migration is less developed, than in the downriver villages where Christianity had to compete with Djuka and Saramaka cults and where the individual identification with Christianity is less strong. In fact the Moravian church, with its strong sense of community and its strict congregational organization, led to the reinforcement of the local community, especially in the upstream area.

Eindnoten:

(1.) The Chartered Society of Suriname was established in 1862 by the West Indies Company, the town of Amsterdam and van Aerssen van Sommelsdijk, who together supervised the colony of Suriname (see de Groot 1977: 3).
(2.) After the peace treaties with the Bush Negroes the government appointed the so-called postholders (posthouders), who resided near the tribal areas of the Bush Negroes to control their movements and to insure that the peace treaties were maintained (see de Groot 1977: 16).
(3.) Corsten is here referring to the former Matawai custom of drowning a child immediately after birth, when it was born with a caul. Such a child was considered to be reincarnated by the water spirit Wata Mama, and had to be returned to the gods of the river.
(4.) LA ISIB 1852.
(5.) see Freytag 1927: 18-9.
(6.) Archives of the EBG: 248.
(7.) Although it is generally accepted that Johannes King was the first Matawai to be baptized, Apé, a former headman of the Matawai village of Ameikan had already been baptized during the 1840s. Apé had become so hated among his tribesmen as a result of suspicions of witchcraft and poisoning, that people decided to kill him. He fled to Maipaston, at that time still a working camp, and later went to town to be baptized. Here he was given permission to build a house on the burial ground of the Moravians. However, he frequently stayed in the Wanica area, and complaints were lodged against him both by the Matawai Gaaman Afiti Jongman and by Adai, who at that time lived with his relatives in the downstream area. Postholder Corsten advised the government to take the accusations seriously, since he himself was frequently confronted with the consequences of poisoning (LA BIB, November 13, 1847).
(8.) We have to bear in mind that during this period the great majority of Matawai were still residing south of the great waterfalls, which were considered by the missionaries to be insurmountable barriers that would severely hamper their missionary work. The possibility of establishing a mission post so deep in the interior among these Matawai frightened them. They remembered the unhealthy living conditions which they had encountered during their missionary work among the Saramaka along the Upper Suriname river, in Bamby. After having been active for almost half a century the mission post had to be closed, because the mission council in town decided that the small success of their missionary work (as measured by the 83 Saramaka who had been baptized between 1765 and 1813, and of which only 56 were still living in 1813) was not worth the great number of missionaries (15 during this period) who lost their lives (Staehelin 1913-19: III(2): 233-4).

(9.) Johannes King left a great number of manuscripts. For the most part, these works can be found in the archives of the Moravian Brethren (Evangelische Broedergemeente) in Utrecht and Herrnhut. Many travel records have been printed in Dutch, German and English missionary periodicals and bear testimony to the impression made by King's conversion and activities within international missionary circles. Some of his notes concerning the conflicts with his brother and his mission trips have been printed in 1973 by H.F. de Ziel under the title 'Johannes King: Life in Maripasuton'. In the introduction this book also gives an overview of the literature about Johannes King. The most important works are: Freytag's biography about Johannes King (1927), Lichtigeld en Voorhoeve (1958), Voorhoeve (1958), Steinberg (1933) and van der Linde (1956). Moreover, to these can be added Schneider (1893) and Burkhardt (1898). A compilation of the Skreki Boekoe, in which King reported his visions, is currently being prepared.

(10.) Johannes King made the following missionary journeys:

- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca January 1860
- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca November 1860
- to the Djuka at the Cottica 11 August - 14 Sept. 1864
- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca 14 Oct. - 21 December 1864
- to Berlijn (Para district) May 1865
- to the Djuka at the Marowijne, Tapahoni and the Aluku at the Lawa 22 July - 1 Nov. 1865
- to the Loango (Saramaka) at the Gaanlio 14 Oct. - 10 Dec. 1866
- to the Cottica Djuka (his aim was to reach the Tapanahoni) February 1868
- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca 17 November - 10 May 1871
- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca 18 December - 9 Jan. 1890
- to the Matawai at the Upper Saramacca 26 April - 19 May 1894

(11.) During the initial period when Bojo was gaaman of the Matawai in the 1820s, the relations between the Matawai and the Djuka were very bad. The Djuka, who settled in temporary camps on the Saramacca river, downriver of post Saron, were regularly mistreated by Matawai when they passed by; their camps were set on fire and their property was destroyed. This relationship changed when Gaaman Bojo's boat capsized near post Saron, on his way back from town. He was forced to turn to the Djuka for help, and was reproached for all the abuse the Matawai had inflicted upon them. He admitted that it was true, and was finally given four boats, food and clothing to continue his journey upstream. When he came home he told his tribesmen not to bother the Djuka anymore and warned that any offense would be severely punished by him. Goods were sent to the Djuka to thank them and since then the relations improved (King in de Ziel 1973: 86-89).

(12.) When the Matawai arrived in Dittabiki, Gaaman Beiman hospitably welcomed the delegation and was willing to conclude a peace treaty with them. He inquired whether the only message they brought was the treaty proposal and insisted that he was prepared to listen to anything except matters regarding the church, because as he said: ‘I have my obeah and if I become involved in church affairs the ancestors and gods will kill me straightaway. There shall be no
church in my village’ (de Ziel 1973: 24). The captains took offense at his refusal and insisted that he had to listen to the message of God, even though he did not want to affiliate with the church. On the condition that the meeting be held in another house, he finally gave his permission. Indeed Beiman himself kept aloof from the preaching and sent his son to represent him. At night his son came to Adai and explained that the chief had not attended King's public preaching out of fear that his gods and ancestors would punish him if he would listen to the Gospel in his own house, just as they had punished his sister's son, who was thought to have been killed by them after he had thrown his gods in the river and had gone over to the church. He suggested that Adai come secretly to his house to bring him the message personally. Adai consented (de Ziel 1973: 25). When most of the people in the other villages also flocked to the meetings to listen to King's preachings, the chief called Adai and King to explain his stand on this matter before they would continue their journey. He told them that he had not prohibited anyone from attending the meetings, even throwing his gods away and going to town to be baptized, if he so desired, but on the other hand he remained strongly opposed missionaries coming to baptize his people or to establish a congregation in his area (de Ziel 1973: 27-8).

(13.) We have to bear in mind the Djuka's suspicion that King had practiced witchcraft in the death of Gaaman Beiman, and the failure of King's trip of February 1868, when we consider the words of Beiman's successor at his friendly visit to the missionaries in July of the same year. The chief declared himself willing to accept the missionaries in his land. But he insisted that he did not want the Matawai, like Johannes King, to come to preach because, he claimed, these people were less significant than his own tribe (BHW 1869: 3).

(14.) A written account in German of the baptism of Gaaman Kalkuncan be found in the archives of the ZZG 339, Utrecht.

(15.) LA GR 1325: February 18, 1892.

(16.) LA GR 1325: February 18, 1892.

(17.) Unfortunately we could not recover the documents referred to in the Gouvernements Resolutie of 1895 about the case of Nathaniel Mankiati. In this document a letter (20) is mentioned dating January 23, 1885 in connection with Adai's actions. It could refer to his action towards Bomboi, but also towards the punishment he meted out to Alamu and a number of other Kwinti, that resulted in their flight to the Coppenname, that took place at the same time.

(18.) A comparison of Freytag's description of Noah Adai's action in a witchcraft case (1927: 10) and a text of Johannes King (in de Ziel 1973: 72, 118), in which the same case is mentioned and which Freytag must have used in his work, reveals significant discrepancies. It appears that Freytag, who, as he himself mentioned, was familiar with oral traditions, probably conflated the case of Amadjatowhich King in his text was referring, with the case of Bomboi, which played such an important role in the oral tradition. As a consequence of this he mentions the role of the three Kwinti and Albertina in the burning at the stake of Bomboi, while they were in fact involved in the case of Amadjat.

(19.) LA GR 1325: February 18, 1893.

(20.) LA GR 620: January 23, 1893.

(21.) LA GR 1325: February 18, 1893.

(22.) LA GR 620: January 23, 1893.

(23.) LA GR 7627: October 26, 1893.

(24.) LA GR 7627: October 26, 1893.

(25.) King kept a journal of this trip (Archive EBG 244), parts of which have appeared in a missionary journal (BHW 1895).

(26.) Archive EBG 244.

(27.) Archive EBG 244.


(29.) This tendency to base oneself on practical rather than ethical arguments in religious matters is quite general. One of the main reasons given for the preference of the Roman Catholic over the Moravian church in the time that the Roman Catholics began to infiltrate the Matawai area, was that while they had to contribute provisions for the schools and churches of the Brethren, they themselves were provided with the materials and given financial support by the Roman Catholics.

(30.) LA ISIB 1859.

(31.) Also in the case of the succession of Frans Bona, the governmental officials clearly preferred a Christian candidate (LA BIB: March 16, 1871 and ARA LA 525/34: January 25, 1887).

(32.) LA GR 5869: August 19, 1895.
(33.) Probably King's request in his letter of February 25, 1894 to the chairman of the Moravians, in which he asked him to urge the governor to install a gaaman, who would be able to expel the Gaan Tita cult from the Saramacca, had achieved its purpose. Because King in his letter added that all the Matatai headmen were afraid of Gaan Tita, and were unable to do anything to oppose the cult, (Johannes King in de Ziel 1973: 198), it is clear that King thought that he himself would become gaaman.

(34.) I Johannes King,

Paramount chief of the tribe of the Becu and Musinga Negroes, promise solemnly, as far as is in my power.

1) to the Queen of the Netherlands, here represented by the governor of Suriname, as my ruler and to all authorities who are appointed by her as my government, to grant all due honour, obedience and help;
2) to abstain from all unlawful actions;
3) to promote the welfare of the people of the villages under my rule;
4) to govern with justice;
5) to live in peace with my neighbours and other Bush Negro tribes;
6) not to use violence towards anybody without the authorization of the government;
7) in conflicts which might arise between my own and other tribes or between persons, to adhere to the decision of the governor and and the authorities he appoints;
8) to grant free permission to the Christian teachers to conduct religious teaching and to protect and assist them, as well as, in general, the residents of this colony who visit the villages inhabited by my tribe;
9) to protect criminals who seek refuge, from maltreatment and all unlawful actions, to arrest them and to deliver them to the district commissioner of Saramacca;
10) to grant the gold-concessionaries and balata bleeders in the Upper Saramacca, if they want, the necessary help to pass the waterfalls, without claiming extraordinary sums for the rendered services, but asking a moderate and reasonable compensation;
11) not to seek political contact with alien powers;
12) not to permit strangers to take up residence with me, except by permission of the governor;

13) If I am wronged by an inhabitant or another person not belonging to my tribe, to lodge my complaints with the government-secretary, who is charged with the supervision of the Bush Negroes and Indians, and to immediately send those who do transgress their regulations, to the district commissioner of Saramacca;
14) to behave myself precisely according to the intentions of the governor that are already known to me or are to be made known. I affirm this declaration on oath and I sign it in the presence of witnesses, on this day, Wednesday, November 13, eighteen hundred ninety five, JOHANNES KING (our tr.).

(35.) Petrus Baakafuuta, who was captain of Makajapingo during our fieldwork and namesake of his grand uncle, defended the rather confused claims of old Baakafuuta by pointing to the two gaaman staffs which, according to oral tradition, Mama Tjoa, the original ancestress of the Matawai, had taken along with her, when she escaped from the plantation. The staffs which originally had been designated as gaaman and captain's staff, were via Musinga and Becu given to later office holders. It is possible that the staff, that was later meant for headcaptain, was in old Baakafuuta's possession. According to genealogical data Musinga was the MMF of Baakafuuta (see also GR 856: February 2, 1894). After the death of Baakafuuta the function of headcaptain was given to the Christian, Nicodemus Schmidt of the village of Boslanti. Boslanti, at that time, was the largest village as well as the Christian centre and had taken over the role of the former villages of Ameikan and Makajapingo.

(36.) Gaaman Koso, according to the genealogies we compiled, did not belong to the lineage of Alafanti (also called be pisi), but to the other lineage (baaka pisi), which had always resided together with them in Afompai and Posugunu. Our informants, however, stressed that he also belonged to the be pisi, because as they rationalized ‘it always has been the lineage of Alafanti, thus be pisi, who have been performing the function of gaaman, except Kiné’. In Koso's time, the former matri-segments of the lineage of Afompai had sufficiently developed into two distinct lineages, that marriage relations between them began to be tolerated. In fact, one of Koso's five wives was a woman of the Alafanti lineage of his own village.

(37.) A group of men from the village of Makajapingo went to French Guiana to work in the river transport, there joining some Matawai from the upriver villages who had already been working
there for some years. The latter felt threatened by the newcomers and fought to keep them out of the area. When both working groups returned to the Saramacca river, the conflict erupted again, this time violently. The upriver people argued that the *gaaman* had wrongfully chosen the side of the ‘Matawai’ (as the residents of the upstream villages call themselves, chauvinistically excluding the downriver residents), and thereby invoked the wrath of the ancestors.

(38.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1923.
(39.) In Posugunu at the council in which the assignment of *Gaaman* Abone was discussed, the district commissioner also tried to ascertain his future successor. He asked about Abone's sister's son, and was informed that his only sister's son at that moment was a school boy. The commissioner proposed to assign him as Abone's successor. Not long thereafter the boy was sent to a school in town, to become prepared for his future political task. When he finished school, he was consciously chosen to act as a middleman between the Surinamese government and the Matawai, by appointing him as a kind of district functionary (*onderbestuursopzichter*). As all the Matawai verified during our research, he was indeed ‘someone who was able to talk with the *bakaa* (whites).

(40.) ZZG 141 (1909).
(41.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1919.
(42.) The group included the women of her matrilineage, as well as Timotheus' brothers-in-law, sons, sons-in-law and also the husbands of his wife's sister's daughters.
(43.) Jaarverslag Boslanti 1921.
(44.) Jaarverslag van het Surinaamse Zendings Genootschap 1924.
(45.) Jaarverslag Posoegroenoe 1938.
(46.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1926.
(47.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1928.
(48.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1927.
(49.) In the beginning the colony was a Protestant concern and for a long time the Roman Catholic church was excluded. Only in 1785 were they given permission to found their own community, but they were not permitted to deal with slaves. Not long before emancipation, in 1863, the Roman Catholics began their missionary work among the Indians and Bush Negroes, concentrating particularly on the Indians. Initially the Roman Catholic church had little interest in the Matawai area, which had become the domain of the Moravian church, although somewhere around 1880 Mr. Schaap made some journeys to Maipaston, which was in that time the centre of the Protestant mission in the Matawai area. In 1930 the situation changed and the Roman Catholic mission became a real threat for the church of the Moravian Brethren. Both denominations became involved in violent competition that lasted until the end of the 1960s.

(50.) In questions concerning the appointment of village headman, the Moravian and Roman Catholic mission would fight out their internal struggles. In a letter to the government secretary on April 7, 1928, to ask if a decision in the appointment of Sebedeus of Bilawata had already been made, father Morssink mentioned that in November of 1926 *Gaaman* Asaf Kiné, together with Sebedeus, had visited the Roman Catholic mission to talk about the appointment. The *gaaman* wanted to appoint Sebedeus as headman, so that Bilawata would become independent of Njukonde. He even suggested to the government to appoint him over the neighbouring village of Balen, and over the Kwinti village of Heidoti, where the headman had just died in 1926. The district commissioner whose advice was asked, responded negatively to the proposal. He confirmed the government's unfavourable opinion of Sebedeus, which was shared by the Moravians, and also pointed out that the three villages had never shared a headman. According to him the headman of Njukonde could continue to the the de facto head over the neighbouring villages of Balen and Bilawata, and a separate solution had to be found for the Kwinti village of Heidoti, in which appointment the Moravian mission tried to interfere (GR 214: January 27, 1927). Similar advice was received from the head of the Moravian mission (SB 135: October 11, 1928). Clearly misinforming the government, they claimed that the population was small and proposed that the captain's staff be withdrawn for Heidoti. The government then decided to reject the proposal to appoint Sebedeus over three villages.

(51.) Letters concerning Sebedeus' appointment, archive of the Bisdom Paramaribo.
(52.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1929.
(53.) LA GR 5314: October 9, 1940.
(54.) In Makajapingo a group of kinsmen of the former headman Baakafuuta, continued affiliated to the Moravian church.

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
It is noteworthy, that Olensi later is mentioned as one of the leaders in the separation movement of the Roman Catholics in 1939, and assisted in clearing the new village of Padua (letter from the Archives of the Bisdom Paramaribo 1940; GR 5314: October 9, 1940).

Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1929.

Moravian Matawai considered the way in which the fathers had come to the area with boatloads full of goods and drinks, as a form of bribery. Probably they also exaggerated. People belonging to Roman Catholic villages preferred to speak of it in terms of generosity rather than of bribery, and they readily admitted the eagerness with which they had accepted the goods of the Roman Catholic mission. The political parties, conscious of the value of the Bush Negroes as potential supporters wooed them at election time by sending boatloads of food and drinks to the villages and handing out T-shirts with symbols of their parties, all of which accompanied speeches made by a number of vigorous adherents among the migrant Matawai; the policy was referred to by the Matawai as meki popokai (propaganda making).

The local organization in Roman Catholic parishes resembles that of the Moravian congregation, although it generally has fewer offices and different functions. The tasks performed by helpers (dienaren and dienaressen) in the Moravian congregation, are performed by persons designated as sexton (kosters and kosteressen) in the Roman Catholic villages. But because of the departure of all Roman Catholic teachers, who were also conducting church services on Sundays, these villages have become wholly dependent for their Sunday services upon some of the sextons, who have thereby attained a more autonomous position that the bible readers (voorlezers) of the Moravian congregation, who are occasionally given the chance to conduct services.


Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1933.

In Boslanti, three boys who had just left school, joined in this experiment. After a short agricultural training period in the coastal area, they started cultivating peanuts on an abandoned garden near the village. They were sponsored by the Moravian mission in town, who had set up this experiment. But when the first year's yield was disappointing, the boys abandoned the project and joined their age-mates in the coastal area to search for work.

The calendar of the Christian (Moravian) holy days includes the Christian New Year, Holy Week, Good Friday, Harvest Festival and Mission Day. Also the first of July - Emancipation Day - is celebrated in church. These annual celebrations are an important part of church life. Particular attention is given to the celebration of Easter, on which occasion the congregation assembles at sunrise on the cemetery to place a cross on the graveyard and sing liturgies. In general, church attendance on these days is very high.

The strike of 1973 was initiated by the customs officers but grew to be a general strike. A summary of the events and the street disturbances, can be found in Dew (1978: 165-8).

For criticism on the ideas of Horton see Fisher (1973), Fernandez (1978) and van Binsbergen (1979).
Traditional Religion

Afro-American religions of the New World exhibit a large variety related to the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the areas of origin as well as to the specific historical conditions that influenced the development of religions. A focal point of most Afro-American religions is the belief in possession, but specific manifestations are often strongly influenced by the dominant world religions of the former colonies. Herskovits, for instance, pointed to the resemblance between the Roman Catholic belief in saints and the belief in spirits. He argued that this facilitated the emergence of syncretic cults in those colonies which were dominated by the Roman Catholic church (Herskovits 1937). The problem of continuity and discontinuity in Afro-American cultures and religions was a major theme in the pioneering work of Herskovits. From the viewpoint of acculturation studies, the involuntary migration of slaves from different tribal origins to the Americas provided a unique experiment. This was clearly recognized by Herskovits who developed a comparative method with the aim of determining the degree to which a society reflects ‘Africanisms’. As has been observed by R.T. Smith, he was more interested in the symbolic level and in religious phenomena than in social structure (Smith 1963). Religion was considered to be a cultural focus which was more stable than, for instance, social organization. Various authors have stressed that continuity was particularly observed in the domain of religion. Religious concepts and ideas were better maintained or could better survive as recognizable ‘African’ forms than features of the economic and social organization which were more easily reshaped by the requirements
of the plantation societies (see Bastide 1960: 179). A clear statement of this argument has been presented by Mintz (1970: 181-2).

The millions of enslaved Africans could only bring with them certain parts or aspects of their ancestral cultures - whatever they could carry in their minds. One includes here speech characteristics (pitch, intonation, timbre), folklore heroes and motives, religious beliefs or values, artistic skills and preferences, and the like. But the slaves had only harshly limited opportunities to maintain anything like the full content of their original cultures. Even more limited was their capacity to transfer cultural materials that depended upon some kind of social organization - not simply a religion, but its priesthood; not simply iron-working, but a guild of smiths; not only a regal tradition, but a royal lineage.

Recently the orientation in the study of Afro-American religions and cultures shifted to the creative and adaptive aspects in the development of socio-cultural institutions. These ideas have been elaborated by Mintz and Price (1976) (see also Price 1972, 1975; Price and Price 1980). According to them, West African religions shared a number of:

fundamental assumptions about the nature of causality and the ability of divination to reveal specific causes, about the active role of the dead in the lives of the living, about the responsiveness of (most) deities to human actions, about the close relationship between social conflict and illness or misfortune and many others (Mintz and Price 1976: 23).

The instrumental and creative character inherent in West African religions has, according to these authors contributed to the rapid synthesis of cultural forms and to the forming of new Afro-American religions.

The Afro-American religions in Suriname illustrate the particular importance of the early formative period in the development of religious
systems. As has been emphasized by Price (1976: 20-1) the common characteristics in the religions of the Maroons and in those of the Creoles of the Para region are so evident that they can be considered as variants of a local Afro-American religious system.

We are keenly aware of the restrictions and trappings which descriptions and analyses of the religious conceptions of the Matawai have, when they are phrased, from sheer necessity, in the terminology of comparative religion. Distortions will arise from a language still so heavily dominated by western cultural and especially Christian conceptions. We have attempted, in our analysis of Matawai religion, to avoid a terminology, in which the beliefs of the people concerned are called into question. In fact the anthropologist's own belief or disbelief in the models operating in the society which he studies, are irrelevant.

In general terms Matawai religion(1) consists of two domains, which are closely interrelated. As a system of beliefs it provides the community with intellectual or cognitive models to explain, manipulate and control the world(2). As a set of rituals it provides standard practices in which people try to demarcate, stress and blurr the transitions and boundaries of the human and non-human world which are developed in the cognitive models. Ritual behaviour is couched in symbolic idiom. Apart from its cognitive components with their referents to different levels of existence, it also contains strong emotional aspects because of its bearing on significant existential questions. The supernatural world becomes visible, audible and tangible through these rituals such that the participants are transformed by their communal religious experiences.

The cosmology of Matawai religion thus provides models in which different levels of existence are related. These include both the relation between man and the various higher powers (i.e. their cognitive development of a pantheon), and the way in which these are rooted in man (i.e. the cognitive development of the concept of the multiple soul). The different levels of existence (gods, descent group and the aspects of the multiple soul of the individual) are linked with each other in the ancestor cult, the concept of kunu, spirit possession, reincarnation and manipulation by means of witchcraft and sorcery.
The traditional religion of the Matawai is seen to be sufficiently similar to the religion of the Creoles and Para Negroes in the coastal area, which is generally described in terms of *Winti* (Herskovits and Herskovits 1936; Pierce 1973; Wooding 1972). For this reason this term is also used by Green to refer to Matawai religion (1974; 1978). We agree that these religions show considerable resemblances, and can, as we have already indicated, be considered as two subsystems of Afro-Surinamese religion. We have refrained, however, from applying the term for Matawai religion, for although the Matawai may use this Sranan term for spiritual agencies by which persons are possessed, they clearly prefer their own term of *Gadu* (God), with which they are able to refer to beings in different hierarchical positions within the pantheon. Moreover, it seems arbitrary to characterize a religion on the basis of one of its elements.

**Cosmology**

Matawai cosmology can be described as consisting of a number of pantheons, each of which centers around a specific class of deities, as Köbben (1968: 72), Thoden van Velzen (1977: 101) and Vernon (1980: 13) have done for the Djuka. However we prefer to analyze it in terms of a single pantheon. We base this analysis on the Matawai who consider the relation between the different levels and classes of deities as interconnected. Green has elaborated an adequate analysis of Matawai cosmology and the concept of *kunu* (1974; 1978). Since we agree with the main points of his analysis, we will restrict ourselves to a short review of this aspect of Matawai religion. There remain, however, some divergencies in our respective interpretations. Some of them have to be ascribed to the fact that Green collected data concerning religious concepts in the downstream area, where traditional belief was more manifest. Thus Green was able to escape the difficulty we faced when we sought coherence in traditional concepts in the upstream area, which was strongly dominated by Christianity. At the same time his data may show some recent Saramaka influence in this area, as Green himself suggests (1974: 243).

Hurault's scheme of hierarchical levels in Aluku cosmology
(1961: 193), in which each level of existence is connected with a level of power
(kaakiti) and in which a creator god is conceived at the top, followed by lesser gods,
ancestors, humans, animals and finally by plants and inanimate things, is
fundamentally in agreement with Matawai conceptualization, although some Matawai
tend to give prominence to ancestors over lesser gods. We must note that as a result
of the fact that each lineage has its specific historical linkage with certain ancestors
and lesser gods whose prominence may vary, conceptualizations differ according to
the descent group from which these concepts are investigated (see also Green 1974:
236).

The Supreme Being of the Matawai, who is known as Kediampo (his name in the
ritual language of Koomanti), Gaan Gadu (the Great God) and Masa Gadu (God the
Master), is considered to be the creator of the whole world. Since then he has retired
way up in the sky, kept aloof from the affairs of man and delegated his power to
interfere in human affairs to the lesser gods and deities, who are responsible to him,
but act more or less autonomously. This god can be traced back to his West African
origins in Pre-Christian times (see Herskovits and Herskovits 1934: 351). Despite
his general protective attitude toward man, he is held responsible for droughts and
famines, with which he punishes communities for the transgression of his divine
laws. Nowadays communication is restricted between man and this god. He has no
cult of his own, no shrines and no cult objects, although he is regularly addressed in
prayers directed to the collective ancestors, who he precedes in gadukonde (land of
the gods) as Prime Cause. He must be addressed first because he has made the world,
it is said.

The former more elaborate cult for Gaan Gadu, in which priests addressed him
at his special shrine, the Gaan Gadu pau, can be traced back to a Saramaka religious
movement of 1844 initiated by Tiopo, in which the cult in this form was instituted
(Schmidt 1846 and 1847). This shrine was in use in Matawai territory together with
another shrine for the collective ancestors, called Owru nenge pau (which, for
example, was mentioned by the Moravian evangelist Gaander, 1911). At present, as
a result of the long Christian tradition, this traditional Supreme Being is assimilated
with the Christian God, known as both Masa Gadu en Masa Jehova. Individuals
regularly say prayers to this God. Before planting
rice, prayers for an abundant harvest are directed to Masa Gadu instead of to the lesser god Goon Mama, as was previously the custom.

While the Matawai admit that they share this creator god with other Bush Negro groups, they also acknowledge a lesser deity which is closely linked with their own tribe. The Saramacca river, which is called Matawai lio is associated with a deity. In fact they refer to the river as a god, whom they call Gadu u di lio (God of the river). This God settled on the Pikin Saramacca, the larger tributary in the north, which together with the great falls in the south, mark the Matawai part of the Saramacca river. Most shrines of the river which were associated with specific water deities were broken down by the actions of the prophet Johannes King (see p. 210) and their former supernatural powers were neutralized, but those of the Pikin Saramacca, considered the most powerful, have remained until this time. This God of the river is mainly concerned with the banishment of certain forms of anti-social destructive behaviour. He punishes persons who transgress his laws, which are characteristically phrased in terms of taboos associated with him. Matawai river, they say, has a taboo (kina) for witchcraft (wisi), bad feelings (hogi ati) and for cursing (siba). These rules date back to the time of Gaaman Adai, who took an oath at the Pikin Saramacca, that persons who would use witchcraft etc. would not pass the Pikin Saramacca, but would shortly have to die.

Just as saying prayers and offering libations to the specific deities at the great rapids and dangerous places were presumed necessary to pass them without harm, so people had to address the God of the river before crossing the boundary between tribal and coastal area. Because Paramaribo and the coastal area were dangerous places, teeming with people trying to harm each other by witchcraft and other supernatural means, withholding their riches from the Bush Negroes who were able to get a share of it only through hard work and a lot of suffering, it was believed that Matawai who went to the coast to sell lumber or make a shopping trip would likely return with a grudge in their heart. On their way to the coast they would stop at the mouth of the Pikin Saramacca to address the God of the river with a prayer in which they declared their intention to seek work at the coast and asked for his protection when they went a di wotu sembe dendu (in the midst of the
others). On their return to the villages they would address him declaring that they had not returned with witchcraft but, as they said, with a pure heart. Indeed he who returned with witchcraft would be killed on his journey home or soon after his arrival. Nowadays the God of the river still has his own cult and his revelations which are made known through the agency of his medium, are considered to have relevance for all Matawai villages along the river. When, for example, in the 1960s his medium revealed a new taboo forbidding women from washing themselves in the river during menstruation, this pronouncement was considered so important that the matter had to be settled in a tribal council at the gaaman.

More than with the creator god, who remains for the Matawai the Prime and also Final Cause, and the God of the river, who protects the Matawai as a tribal group from anti-social behaviour by acting as a punishing agent, communication is sought in daily life with the ancestor spirits and a host of gods and deities of non-human origin. These ancestors are the souls of former living persons who after death, at the conclusion of the funerary rites, become spirits (jooka), residing in the afterlife (gadukonde), together with other gods and deities and presided over by the creator god. In gadukonde the ancestors are hierarchically organized. The spirits of the recently dead owe deference to the more important and long deceased ones. In councils in which founding ancestresses of the lineage, and especially forbearers who led their kinsmen out of slavery during runaway times, former elders, religious specialists and functionaries all sit, the life of the living kinsmen is closely observed. The ancestors’ help and protection is actively sought by addressing them as gaan sembe at the ancestor shrine.

The ancestor shrine, faaga pau, is the only public shrine which has withstood the challenge of Christianity, masqued as it is as a flagpole. Each village has its own ancestor pole, at which all important collective rituals are held, including not only the affairs of one of the lineages residing in the village in the case of illness of one of their members, but also general village affairs as the inauguration of a village headman.

Ancestors have considerable power over their living kinsmen. They can harm or bless them, punish them with illness and death or protect
them against any adversity. Their intervention in human affairs, however, is not capricious. As long as they are honoured and respected and, on the other hand, as long as their living kinsmen dwell in harmony with each other, they will not cause harm. Otherwise, they will trouble their kinsmen with illness and adversity as koto sembe (ancestor spirits) or become avenging spirits (kunu).

Some ancestor spirits, who have been killed or mistreated during their lifetime, will become avenging spirits (kunu) after death. They will take revenge on the matrilineal kinsmen and descendants of the person who provoked them (pii di kunu) during their lifetime, by threatening them with illness of by actually killing them. According to the principle of collective responsibility operating within the lineage, persons can be punished for acts committed by their living or former lineage members. But such a kunu can also be provoked by a person who commits suicide (by taking poison e.g.) with the explicit purpose of taking revenge on another person and his family, with whom he was in conflict. This method of kunu provocation is accredited to Saramaka, but unknown among the Matawai where suicide is practically unheard of (4). A practice, akin to suicide whereby a kunu is provoked among the Matawai is cursing oneself (siba), invoking supernatural powers to intervene in a conflict and kill oneself, enabling the invoker after death to become a kunu for the person and matrilineage with whom he was in conflict (see further p. 311).

Aside from taking revenge on the kinsmen of his provoker, the avenging spirit selects from his own or from the provoker's lineage, a person whom he possesses. After the necessary ritual, the tormenting spirit which afflicts the person is brought under control and transformed into a guardian spirit, enabling his medium to reveal to his lineage members the motivations behind and justification for the action of his god (gadu), as the avenging spirit is called. Prayers and libations at the ancestor shrine are necessary to ward off any further adversity, thereby cooling the heart of the avenging spirit. In these rituals the lineage of the provoker becomes heavily dependent upon the lineage of the avenging spirit. Within the lineage of the provoker it calls for solidarity as well as avoidance of anti-social behaviour which would provoke intervention on the side of the kunu again.
Each lineage then is related with a number of kunu, both from human and non-human origin (which we will consider later), by which it is marked off from other lineages. And although kunu are considered never to loose their power\(^{51}\), regularly new ones are provoked by hunting accidents, siba etc.. Mediums of each of these kunu which can operate independently from each other, are made subservient to the medium of the major kunu of the lineage, which has been put under control long ago. Mediumship of a common kunu of human origin (also called jooka kunu) lacks some of the more dramatic cultic elements which characterize the mediumship of kunu of non-human origin. The trance of the latter involves the use of ritual language and a rich variety of dancing styles characteristic for the kunu involved. It also has shrines of its own and obia with which it is associated.

More developed are the cults centering around two kunu of human origin originating in the 19th century, in a time when by the expansion of economic opportunities outside of Matawai territory, mobility increased and the world view was altered. At the same time tribal territory was intruded upon by Saramaka and Djuka who settled downriver, and Matawai religious identity was affected by the introduction of the Gaan Tata cult by the Djuka (see p. 195). The two gaan kunu (major kunu) which were provoked, were considered to cross the lineage boundaries within which common kunu usually struck. They had a range of action which was tribal-wide and operated, like the God of the river, to mark the Matawai as an ethnic group (see also Green 1974: 264).

As we have already indicated (see p. 191-4) these kunu were provoked when persons accused of witchcraft, were brutally killed by Gaaman Adai, who implicated a great number of people in the sentence. By taking persons from each lineage (see also Green 1974: 263), he made all their lineages responsible for the death of the victim. Thus they became vulnerable to his revenge actions. Indeed the main plan of these gaan kunu after death was to wipe out all lineages who had shared in the murder. One of these persons who was accused of witchcraft, wat Tata Bomboi, who originated from the lineage of Maipakiiki. After being betrayed by a classificatory brother in 1883 he was caught and burned at the stake downriver at Koofaja kiiki. Nowaday's this god is the centre of a vigorous cult. He selected his medium from Maipakiiki, in particular
from the women of his own matri-segment, by possessing them. The first of them
was said to have travelled along the river, going into trance and summoning people
to pay heed to his warnings (see also Green 1974: 267). His present medium, a woman
from Pijeti, a village where the former residents of Maipakiiki settled, has become
quite influential due to the of central role of the cult in both religious and
socio-political life. Regularly the gaan kunu is consulted, via his medium, in the
inner room of the medium's house, which serves as a hidden shrine for this god.
Matters involving both her own lineage and others are laid before the god. Through
the agency of his medium the god corroborates or rejects revelations of the various
common village mediums and indicates which ritual actions have to be taken in cases
of illness and adversity. More particularly, acts which are considered to be
transgressions against the gaan kunu himself, have to be ritually settled through his
medium.

The motivation behind most historical moves of villages to new sites, secessions
of lineages or matri-segments moving from the upstream to the downstream area and
migration of individuals to downriver villages to join their matrilineal kinsmen or to
settle themselves in their father's or husband's village, has been the attempt to escape
the vengeance of kunu. However, these attempts usually proved to be of no avail.
New adversity would likely to be ascribed to the same kunu because, in principle,
kunu is not bound by locality and lineage members are not able to escape his revenge
by a change of residence. The only protection against such revenge can be found
from the side of the gaan kunu. The result is that occasionally an individual, whose
lineage has become nearly extinct due to the actions of a kunu and who feels himself
highly threatened, will seek protection by settling in the village of the gaan kunu's
medium, thus becoming a kind of client.

The medium of the gaan kunu also has a significant role in local and tribal politics.
The god's advice is sought for councils and important political decisions. Also
candidates for political functions cannot be appointed without the consent of the
gaan kunu, who plays a crucial role in the selection of a new candidate. Only he is
able to ascertain if the proposed candidate is reincarnated (nasi, see also p. 282).

directly or indirectly from persons who were originally involved in the

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sentence of the ancestor who became a *gaan kunu*. If so, he would not be chosen since he would be particularly vulnerable to the vengeance of the god, who would be ready to kill him as soon as he was appointed. Moreover, an individual who is appointed as *gaaman* will be inaugurated both in his own village and in the village of the *gaan kunu*'s medium.

Formerly the *gaan kunu* also had a public shrine, an ancestor pole, where he was worshipped. This worship was officiated by a male priest originating from the same matrilineage as his female medium. At this shrine offerings in rum, cloth etc. were made as payments for particular transgressions or as thanksgiving (*tangi*) for his intervention in certain matters. With the destruction of this shrine in 1924 in Maipakiiki (see p. 216), an end came to the public worship of the *gaan kunu*. No public shrine was erected in the newly established village of Pijeti. The still vigorous cult of the *gaan kunu* has since gone underground.

The sentence of another man accused of witchcraft, Amadja of the lineage of Manjabasu, who was buried alive in 1878 took place under similar circumstances as that of Bomboi and resulted in the birth of another *gaan kunu*. Although his revenge plan seemed to be more restricted (see also Green 1974: 272-3), this *gaan kunu* also developed into a central cult. The first mediums which were possessed by this god came from the downstream village of Bilawata.

Since the death some years ago of the last medium, chosen from the village of Santigoon (but belonging to the same lineage), no new medium has been selected by the god. In Bilawata the now dilapidated *gadu wosu* still bears witness to the cult's role in the past, which was far more central and public than in Pijeti. In this house the paraphernalia of the god are kept. Bottles of beer and other drinks are set for the god and most particularly the sacred bundle (*bongola*) of the god is stored. The *bongola* was owned by a male priest and used, like the *Gaan Tata* bundle in Santigoon, for divination.

We should note that we have not fully elaborated the concepts of *kunu* and *gaan kunu*. Only those aspects are mentioned which are relevant for our further description. For more specific data we refer to Green (1974), although we do not fully agree with the conclusions concerning the generality of the extension of the range of action of *kunu* towards
In the lower strata of the hierarchy of deities the Matawai distinguish gods like *koomanti* and deities such as snake- and forest gods who have become the centre of more or less established mediumistic cults from lesser deities like water gods without such a cult. But we have to bear in mind that they also conceptualize these gods as top ranking in the hierarchy of lesser gods, each associated with its own domain in which the world is divided, i.e. the air, the water, the forest and the cultivated area.

The *koomanti* gods occupy a position apart among the lower gods. They can be traced back to Africa and are said to have helped the Bush Negroes in their guerilla war against the white colonizers. *Koomanti* gods will either seek out an individual to act as their medium by possessing him or are sought by the individual, who after a training period will become a medium. Only men are possessed by this class of deities, in contrast to the mediumship of human and non-human *kunu* where female mediums are more numerous.

Especially for *djebi* the older form of *koomanti*, who is associated with the jaguar (*hogi meti fu matu*) men become mediums after voluntary training. Initiation involves mastering the ritual language, seclusion and a number of particular taboos that restrict his relations with menstruating and childbearing women. This ritual language which is used during trance, has to be interpreted by a ritual specialist who is well versed in this language. *Koomanti* mediums are also ritually prepared with *obia* (*loango*) to make them resistant to strikes of a machete or bullets of a gun.

These days the *koomanti* cult is waning, especially upriver. In 1974 the only medium of *djebi* upriver, a man in his sixties, had recently died, while another *koomanti* medium (out of three), a man in his forties, had migrated to the coast. Even downriver, where *koomanti* and *djebi* are more numerous, there are no Matawai specialists to initiate new ones. They are highly dependent upon specialists from other tribal groups, i.e. the Kwinti along the Coppenamer river.

A number of factors contributed to the waining of the *koomanti* cult. To begin with, the *koomanti* cult, which was originally introduced from the eastern tribes, never became a full blown and thriving cult in
Matawai as it did in Djuka. Furthermore cults such as *koomanti* and *papa gudu* (which we will consider next) with strong dramatic and expressive character, have been weakened by the Christian mission's strong opposition towards any manifestation of Matawai religion. It is indeed possible that due to the relatively small size of the Matawai tribal group, factors such as migration, which was especially radical for the isolated villages, and opposition on the part of the mission, have had a much more profound effect on cult life than in tribal groups with a more centralized and numerous population.

Moreover there are indications that the changes in religious orientation which Price signalled in Saramaka society, have also operated in Matawai. Sketching a society of a century ago which was characterized by a high level of physical violence and a prevalence of direct revenge as a means of social redress, with its central male values of power and force, Price indicated how the religious ‘tone’ was altered because of the changing relationship with the outside world. ‘The focus of religion shifted from power, as seen for example in *gaán-obiás* (the magical forces to which Saramakas credited their military victories and ability to survive in a hostile environment) to morality, represented by, among others, the *soí-gádus* (oracle-deities used widely in divination)’, contrasting the stress of these deities on ‘good living’, with the former stress of *gaán-obiás* on the adherence to taboos (Price 1975: 43).

Finally we make mention of the justification given by Matawai men for their disinclination to prepare for *koomanti* mediumship. They argue that because they regularly go to the coastal area, taboos associated with ritual preparation for mediumship and *obia* are likely to be violated (see also Green 1974: 246). Indeed the powers of these *obia* are so strong that any contact with a newborn child would threaten the life of the child. So violation of these taboos (e.g. through contact with a menstruating woman or food prepared by a menstruating women) would weaken the power of these *obia*, and endanger their life.

Other more or less elaborate cults are centered around a number of deities who, like the avenging spirits of human origin, may become avenging spirits (*kunu*) when these deities are provoked (*pii*). There are the more common snake gods (*papa gudu*, also called *vodu* or *daguwe*) who may be provoked if, during the clearing and burning of a garden plot
the giant snake (*boa constrictor*), considered as the deity's earthly abode or temple, is accidentally killed. Less frequently provoked is the god of the water snake (*wata wenu*) by the killing of an anaconda. There are the gods of the forest who dwell in anthills and termite mounds (*akantamasi*), who may be provoked when their dwelling is disturbed or destroyed. Still other forest gods (*ampuku*) may be provoked when a hunter wandering through the forest disturbs their dwelling place in a rock formation.

Like *kunu* of human origin, these deities will take revenge by afflicting the matrilineal kinsmen and descendants of the provoker. In addition, by possessing a medium selected from this lineage and revealing the reason of his anger, he becomes the centre of a cult in which the lineage of his provoker is indebted into regular worship. But whereas *kunu* of human origin may be linked with the lineages of both the provoker and the victim in which he possesses a medium, *kunu* of non-human origin are necessarily linked with the lineage of the provoker. Some may even be linked with more than one provoker's lineage. *Papa gadu kunu*, for example, tend to become linked with two lineages when the snake is killed during the clearing of a garden plot worked by both husband of wife. This god will then possess a medium in the lineage of both the husband and the wife, thereby victimizing both lineages.

Around each of these classes of deities (*ampuku, akantamasi* and *papa gadu*) specific cults have developed, with their own ritual language, shrines, dancing styles, ritual paraphernalia, obia, etc.

The forest spirits are generally considered to be indifferent rather than malevolent to man, and can be manipulated by ritual specialists and persons practicing witchcraft. *Ampuku* and *akantamasi* are most particularly susceptible to being bribed by food offerings to help a witch with his immoral practices.

Of more recent origin (see p. 299), another class of deities, *bakulu*, small dwarflike creatures bought in town by witches, are especially expert in their work with which they are instructed. They are extremely malevolent and apart from directly afflicting the person who was pointed to him by his master, they are capable of becoming avenging spirits (*kunu*) for the lineage of the appointed victim, even bringing harm into other associated lineages (see p. 300). Like *papa gadu kunu*,

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the bakuku kumu are likely to possess more than one medium, even selecting a number of mediums in the same lineage.

On a still lower level the world is populated with a host of lesser deities, divided according to the domain over which they reign. There are the numerous gods of the water (wata gadu) who are sometimes collectively addressed despite the fact that they are associated with specific locations along the river. Head of the gods of the water is Wata Mama, a mermaid type of goddess. Both lesser water spirits (tone) and people who are born with a caul and are considered water people (also called tone)\(^{(6)}\), are reincarnations of this goddess. The gods and spirits of the water will hunt other beings in their domain in the same way as piranha hunt other fish. Most of these lesser spirits are considered to be indifferent to man as long as they are not provoked, but the Matawai are inclined to acknowledge the existence of both good and evil water spirits.

Then there are the gods of the forest, the matu gadu or busi gadu ruling over the forest and watching closely that the natural balance is not disturbed. One of these gods is Matu Mama, the goddess with long hair who dwells in specific parts of the forest which the Matawai call gadu wosu (gods house). The Matawai distinguish various vegetation types in the forest according to the species of trees which grow in them. They prefer to cultivate primary forest (pau matu, or lala matu), with its great diversity of tree species and its greater soil fertility, over already cultivated forest (kapee). However, their choice is restricted in this matter. In the rocky landscape called gadu wosu, with large stretches along the river, no gardens can be cleared. Whoever would dare to fell trees there would be killed by Matu Mama.

Finally there are the gods of the cultivated area, goon gadu, who are held responsible for the fertility of the gardens. Formerly prayers were said to Goon Mama, before sowing rice, a ritual which has been replaced by a prayer to the Christian God. And annually around the turn of the year harvest rituals called goon gadu pee were performed which included food offerings and spirit possession (see p. 282).

Although no real mediumistic cults have been instituted in relation to these lesser gods, people have sometimes been possessed by these gadu, during which they learned specific obia. In this way, for example,
an *obia* was acquired with which pollution taboos of the river could be ritually lifted. This *obia* was revealed to an ancestress of the Baaka lineage of Posugunu. The story is told that this woman, who drowned in the river and stayed under water for a whole day, was rescued by a water spirit by whom she had been possessed and who revealed to her this sacred *obia* during trance. Since that time this *obia* has been transmitted in her lineage.

**Multiple soul**

In life man has three souls, collectively called *jeje*. These are aspects of his consciousness, each of which is uniquely linked with the world outside him. Although people do not seem able to present systematized and generalized ideas about these concepts, much can be inferred from the observations and explanations of incidental behaviour which has a bearing on these concepts.

The concept of the *akaa*, or in older terminology *okaa*, is most clearly defined. The *akaa* is a life force which is strongly connected with the individual during his whole life, and which, if duly honoured by the person himself and respected by others, will protect him against illness, bad luck and any harm. This *akaa* is present at birth, stays throughout life, and leaves at death. As we will elaborate later, if the corpse is properly buried, the *akaa* will return after death to the world of the living, acting as a ‘supernatural genitor’ (Price 1975: 51) at the conception of a newborn child. Each person's destiny then, as we will see, is to reveal himself and be remembered by his living kinsmen. Because the *akaa* develops its protective power in relation to the individual in the course of his life, children, whose *akaa* is still feeble, are not able to return to the living when they die.

The *akaa* is localized in the head, especially in the fontanel (*ahume*) where its presence is indicated by the beating. Before birth, the child grows in the womb and is regularly fed via his fontanel by the semen and blood of his parents contributed during their frequent intercourse. The *akaa* always stays with its bearer. Dream experiences are the experiences of the *akaa*, leaving the body during sleep and wandering around to meet with gods, deities or other agencies of the
other world. Information acquired in these dreams contains significant keys for the future behaviour of the individual. Because the separation of the *akaa* from the person's body is dangerous to his health, it is not good to awake a person suddenly during his dreams. Actual separation of the *akaa* and the person leads to unconsciousness and other symptoms of illness. In particular when a person suddenly happens to meet with a dangerous situation, when he is threatened by an animal in the forest, falls in the river and nearly drowns, looses track in the forest during hunting and gathering, or is suddenly frightened, he is bound to loose his *akaa* on the spot. Measures are taken to return the *akaa* to his owner. When a small child falls down or gets frightened and starts crying, people are ready to comfort him by putting some sand on his head to return the *akaa* which has left his body. Also, when a person is found in a state of unconsciousness after a hunting incident, a ritual specialist will return as soon as possible to the fatal place in the bush to fetch the person's soul and replace it to the man's head before further treatment is possible. Finally, when a person falls in the river and nearly drowns, his *akaa* is immediately fetched by a ritual specialist who returns to the landing place near the river, catches the *akaa* in a calebash with the help of his rattle (*tjaka*), hastily covers it up with a white cloth and finally puts it again in the head of the owner, who is protected against its loss by a white cloth firmly tied around his head.

A person's *akaa* is conceptualized as an aspect of the soul which has an identity apart from the person involved and with whom the person daily communicates. During early childhood a person's *akaa* is so strongly dominated by the soul of the ancestor who reincarnated in him, that he is likely to refer to the idiosyncrasies of his ancestor. For the Matawai this is proof of the child's memory of his former life. As the child grows to maturity and gains more experience, the association with this ancestor weakens. Illness in a young child may be ascribed to the ancestor who reincarnated in the child and wanted to reveal himself to be remembered. However, in later life, illness or bad luck are more likely to be ascribed to the person himself who did not heed the special wishes and idiosyncrasies of his *akaa* or angered his *akaa (mandi)* by improper or neglectful behaviour. This belief leads to many kinds of
ritual behaviour by which an individual pays homage to his akaa. When he drinks rum in a council, for example, he will pour some rum over his hands as a libation offering to his akaa, analogous to a libation offered to an ancestor spirit. He will also wear particular dresses or colours to please his akaa. Some people credit man with two akaa, using the older term okaa, and ascribe a person's destiny to the struggle between the two powers within him: the bad soul (hogi okaa), tries to kill him and on the other hand the good one (bunu okaa), tries to prevent this.

According to the Djuka, one of the means applied by witches to sicken or kill others is tai akra (tying a person's soul) (van Lier 1940: 226). Similarly, the Matawai acknowledge that other living people are able to harm a person's akaa, causing illness in a person. In most cases the person concerned is not aware of this. In the case of twins, for example, one child is able to unconsciously afflict the child born directly afterwards, the agosu. In fact his soul is responsible for pinching (pindja) the sibling. In order to treat the patient, people direct themselves to the akaa of the twin to beg him to release the other. There are also cases in which a person consciously will harm another, because he is said to act so with evil intentions or with a grudge in his heart. Thus, when a person publicly calls a child, using the personal name (gaan ne) of his supernatural ancestor with such evil intentions, the child will surely be affected.

In most ritual contexts references are made to the akaa. Men, who take leave to go work in the coastal area are ‘clothed’ by others, who by tying cloths belonging to themselves onto the man and thereby giving him something of their own soul (there is indeed a strong association between cloth and akaa), try to protect the man against any dangers he might encounter on his way to the coast. Notice that for this ritual tying of cloths the term tuwe koosu is used, the same term which is used for other offerings to the ancestor spirits, libations of rum and water (tuwe daan, tuwe wata) or food offerings (tuwe njanjan). In most rites of passage the giving of cloths is intended to please a person's akaa.

As the akaa may be used to provide guidance to the person himself in a dream, it can also be used to reveal information to others as an oracle. Questions are set forth concerning illness to this oracle, for
which someone's *akaa* is caught and put in a calabash (*akaa kuja*).

Another soul concept which is less elaborated is that of the shadow, called *somba*. A common representation of a man having three souls (*jeje*) is expressed in terms of his shadows. When a man walks he sometimes has two shadows, one in front and the other behind. Man is not alone in possessing an *akaa* and a *somba*. Animals, trees, guns, machetes and even *obia*, i.e. powerful magical medicines, are accredited with these aspects of a soul. The shadow is a powerful aspect, deriving its strength from the cosmological world. Because shadows differ from each other in their degree of power, the potency of a shadow can be weakened by his being ‘overshadowed’ by a shadow whose power is greater. An example of this is apparent in the prohibition against the use of machetes and guns by the father of a newborn child whose shadow is still considered to be weak. Also the prohibition against the use of guns when powerful *obia* are applied for the treatment of certain illnesses, insure that the potency of the *obia* will not be weakened.

The human soul which may reveal itself as a shadow is considered to be an easy prey for the manipulation of spiritual agencies. Measures are therefore taken to protect those in close contact with the non-human world, from danger. For this reason there are only two moments of the day considered proper to bury a corpse: eight o'clock in the morning or four o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun does not cast a shadow. This is done in order to prevent the possibility of an individual's shadow falling into the grave, thereby causing his death. For the same reason, the time of the ritual separation of a person from an ancestor spirit, is set late in the afternoon. This prevents the patient's shadow from being ‘overshadowed’ by the ritual specialist, or caught by the ancestor spirit.

The concept of *somba* must be related to the inclination of the Matawai to consider cosmological powers as hidden, only to be revealed occasionally, and with their tendency to elaborate the conception that things are related which are mirror images (*sipee*). We will argue that the Matawai concept of *somba* can best be considered as the opposite or mirror image of the *akaa*, which remains hidden while the shadow will reveal itself. The Matawai were not sure what happened to a person's shadow after death. We can only infer that loosing one's shadow or being
overshadowed by a stronger shadow leads to the death of its bearer.

Finally there is a third soul aspect with which man is credited during his lifetime, called *jooka*. While this aspect remains largely inert during the lifetime of the individual, it is strongly involved with the accumulation of his life experiences. After death, when the *jooka* becomes a spirit, it attains its own identity and is most extremely connected with the now deceased person, who the *jooka* represents as a moral and social being toward his living kinsmen. At the time of death, when the life forces of *akaa* and *somba* leave the body, the heart stops beating, leaving a lifeless corpse which, like other material aspects, is called *kakisa*. The *jooka* hovers around the corpse. Funerary rites are performed in order to separate the spirit from the corpse and to enable him to join the ancestor spirits in the afterlife, or to enter God's realm, as taught by the missionaries. According to most Matawai traditional and Christian afterlife are merged. They do not bother to separate the specific details of each tradition. Formerly, immediately following death, when separation had not yet been effected, and the *jooka* still dwelled in and near the corpse, it would be contracted for divinatory purposes, i.e. to seek out the cause of the person's death and to settle his legacy. For this purpose hair and nail clippings of the deceased were fabricated into an oracle (*bongola*), which was believed to respond to questions put to the oracle by guiding the movements of two men who would carry the oracle on a plank on their heads.

After burial the *jooka* wanders around restlessly between the cemetery where the corpse is buried and the *dede gangasa* in the village where his kinsmen perform their funerary rites. Although the kinsmen have parted from the spirit explicitly warning him to remain there and not to bother them anymore, the spirit is still pleased in the village; being given light and being addressed in the *dede gangasa*. At the same time the kinsmen and former marriage partner of the deceased are ritually protected. Actually, the whole cycle of funerary rites and mourning rituals which are performed are intended to both separate the spirit (*jooka*) from the world of the living, and to redefine the lineage which is disturbed by the loss of a kinsmen. The *jooka*, spirit of the deceased, is feared because of his ability to bring illness and harm to kinsmen
because of unjust behaviour during his lifetime or neglect in ritual observances after his death. In this function the term koto sembe is more commonly used for this jooka, especially in the period immediately following the death. Because illness and adversity in the living may be ascribed to this koto sembe spirit, the separation between living and dead and the attempt to reaffirm and improve the relations between ancestors and living kinsmen, lies at the core of most rituals concerned with these afflictions.

After the separation is completed, the jooka spirit is considered to have joined the other ancestor spirits in the afterlife. Conceptualization of this afterlife is, as in most African religions, relatively unelaborated. The ancestor spirits, now called gaan sembe, reside in a domain called gadukonde, which parallels village life and the social structure of the living. In gadukonde they reside with their closest kin, presided over by former elders and functionaries, i.e. the ancestors who died before them. They communicate with each other in councils and also communicate with other spiritual agencies of the pantheon. They remain highly interested in the well-being of their living kinsmen, in the reproduction and survival of the lineage, and in the observance of rules and norms which were instituted by them. Matawai acknowledge that there are both good ancestor spirits and those with evil intentions. Communication with these ancestors looms large in Matawai religion, both in ritual prayer, offerings and in spirit mediumship. By taming avenging spirits (kunu), who reveal themselves in possessing people and turn such persons into mediums who make revelations to their lineage, a new balance is brought about between the ancestor spirits and the living.

**Mediumship**

The repression of mediumistic cults in Matawai society by the Christian church has not succeeded in eliminating communication between the community and the supernatural world, which is maintained by a variety of mediums consulted in all kinds of matters. As we have already indicated, Matawai mediums may be possessed by four kinds of spirits: firstly by avenging spirits of human origin, generally called kunu but
also known as *koto sembe kunu* or *jooka kunu* (the spirit of an ancestor); secondly by avenging spirits of non-human origin, by snake gods (*papa gadu kunu*) and forest gods (*ampuku kunu* and *akantamasi kunu*); thirdly by a *koomanti* god; and finally by a tormentor (*bakulu kunu*), a lesser spirit which can be manipulated in witchcraft practice. The spirit selects his medium by possessing him, which is referred to as *kisi sembe a jedi* (to come in someone's head). In the case of a *kunu*, the spirit is most likely to choose a member of the offender's lineage, but he may also prefer a member of the victim's lineage. The *baluku kunu* will select a person from the lineage of the victim who was originally pointed out to him by his master, the *wisiman*. In general, spirits have a clear preference, in selecting their medium among persons whom they love.

The spirit reveals himself for the first time by a persistent screaming sound which causes strong headaches. During this phase the spirit remains inarticulate and does not reveal his name. He is said to call in the head (*ta bai na en jedi*). Sometimes the presence of the spirit is only indicated by various symptoms of illness, which are considered to be caused by the touch (*panja*) of the spirit. In this stage the spirit is said to be in the patient's body (*ta de na en sikini*).

When the spirit becomes manifest for the first time, a number of people are called together, mainly elders and mediums of established avenging spirits, who may help to interpret the utterances of the spirit from the mouth of the patient and to become acquainted with his identity. We may clarify this by an example:

Aseni, one of the elders of Boslanti, was called late in the evening while he was attending a funerary wake (*booko di dia*) to come to Sita who was troubled by a spirit. The spirit revealed to him: 'I am the one, who was killed when the house burned down'. Aseni concluded that it was evidently the spirit of Sita's father who wanted to possess her. This explanation is related to the circumstances surrounding the death of her father, Feedi. One morning Feedi stood up early, still before dawn, to return to his own village. In the dark he tried to discern the amount
of gasoline left in the barrel which stood under his wife's house. While thoughtlessly lighting a match to look into the barrel, the gasoline caught fire. In a few minutes the house was on fire and he himself was badly burned. His wife escaped just in time and in her anger accused him of trying to kill her. He was brought to the hospital in town, where he died.

During the boat trip taken by his widow to attend the funerary rites held in his village, a heavy rain broke out. It continued raining during the whole voyage, suddenly ceasing when she went ashore to walk to the place where the rite was held. This break continued till the moment she reached the place. For the Matawai this was the first evidence that her husband's spirit was teasing her, and would eventually become an avenging spirit.

In this stage an avenging spirit is considered to be very dangerous. As long as he is not brought under control (seeka) by a cleansing ritual and is not yet ready to speak, he may kill the person whom he possesses.

Some avenging spirits are, however, more difficult to bring into harness than others. The spirit of the snake god (papa gadu) is less dangerous than others because, in most cases, he only seeks a mouthpiece (ta suku buka), while the spirit of ampuku is likely to cause trouble. Illness caused by these spirits tends to be more serious and persisting. Even more dangerous are the spirits of ancestors (koto sembe kunu) and the bakulu spirit who does not listen to prayers and who is therefore thought to kill rapidly. A religious specialist (basi) who himself is often an established spirit medium, has the task of bringing the spirit under control (seeka), partly by activating him to speak. Nowadays there are only a few specialists left, who live in the downstream area. In the 1920s there were at least four specialists available to treat these cases, two of them lived in the upriver region. Presently some people also turn to religious specialists in the Para district or to Saramaka or Djuka. For initiation in the koomanti cult, the Matawai as we already indicated, are dependent on religious specialists of the Coppename river, because there are no Matawai able to perform the appropriate rituals. If it is revealed through a medium
or through another method of divination that the spirit is a bad one, people will try
to exorcize him (*puu en*) or (*wasi en puu*), washing him away, as long as he has not
revealed his identity. In particular, *ampuku* or *bakulu* spirits, which are sent by a
witch, are bad spirits. This was traditionally and is still performed by the same
specialist. In the upstream area some people reject the advances of a spirit because
of their affiliation with the Christian church. They may go to the evangelist or to the
minister to ‘exorcize the Devil’. In such a case he prays to God to liberate the man
or woman from the Devil. The spirit is then believed to choose another person as his
medium.

After the patient has been ritually washed with the *kunu's* specific herbal water,
the spirit is called by beating the *apinti* drum. The spirit will yell out loudly (*bai*),
using ritual language and will announce his name. During this initiation, the future
medium is given specific food taboos and is instructed in the dancing style of his
spirit. He also learns how to worship his spirit through offerings and how to wash
with herbal preparations. Ritual washings, for *koomanti* and other spirits, are organized
on the days which traditionally, before the introduction of Christianity, were
designated for this purpose: *piki saba* (Wednesday) and *dimingo* (Friday)\(^9\).

To provide more insight into the way in which avenging spirits reveal their identity
and into the succession of different stages in the process of transformation of an
avenging spirit into a guardian spirit (see Thoden van Velzen 1966a: 47; van Wetering
1973: 16) who can be consulted, we will consider two cases in greater detail. Each
emphasizes a different stage of the same process.

Shortly after her elder sister Lona was chosen as a medium by a snake
spirit (*papa gadu*), Suliki was frequently troubled by a spirit who wanted
to possess her, without yet announcing his identity. Some months after
the first signs of the spirit, both sisters visited their father's village, where
they spent some weeks being treated (*seeka*). Although the religious
specialist of this village was able to induce Lona's spirit to speak, he was
less successful with her younger sister. She was plagued by a persistent
headache which lasted for a long
time. It was believed that her situation was dangerous, in as much as she could be killed by the spirit. A month after their return in the village, a lineage member revealed a dream which she had. According to the dream it was the spirit of her younger brother Jonas, who had drowned in the river about ten years earlier, who was teasing her and was becoming an avenging spirit. The young man had suffered from attacks of epilepsy and was not considered accountable. Often he entered the houses of his sisters to search for some food or tobacco and would even penetrate into the sleeping room, which was considered to be a strictly private domain. Once, when he was caught by Suliki, she cursed him in her anger (siba) and her curse was explained as the cause of her brother's death. More people were inclined to associate the possession of Suliki with the death of her brother. Shortly before the dream was revealed, Jules a man belonging to the matri-segment of Suliki, who lived with his wife in the downriver area, came to spend some days in his own village. In his drunkenness he accused his sisters of withholding food from him, adding ‘be careful that I will not become a kunu for the family, like saigi Jonas did’. After the revelation, the lineage members hurried to gather in their part of the village to pray (begi) to Jonas on three subsequent occasions. In these prayers it was stressed that neither the lineage nor Suliki herself had done him any wrong. They also turned to other ancestors to induce Jonas to leave his sister alone ‘Don't kill her, but settle yourself’ (na kii en, ma bai na en jedi), they begged him. They promised him an offering of rum and cloths, which would be given to him when Suliki recovered. To demonstrate their intentions an empty rum tin and a number of cloths were put on the ground. Someone even carried his new plastic shopping bag, adding that this bag too would be for him.

In the next case background information on the kunu precedes a description of the final stage of the process.
Suzi, a woman from the village of Pijeti who lived already some years in Paramaribo was troubled by a spirit who was not willing to reveal his identity. When the medium of the *gaan kumu* was consulted, it was explained that she was possessed by an avenging spirit of an ancestor, her mother's father. The medium also indicated the procedure which had to be followed. Suzi's grandfather Poobe originated from the village of Sukibaka. He had many children in different villages of his own and also fostered children of a later wife. One of Poobe's foster sons, Monki wanted to marry one of Poobe's daughters and impregnated her during the betrothal period (*kiia*). The lineage members of his first wife, arguing that it was Poobe who was ultimately responsible because he did not rear his children well, beat him. Outraged and ashamed about the fact that he was beaten because of this affair, Poobe went to the forest, where he cursed himself (*siba*). It was believed that his death was caused by the curse. The Matawai suggested that there were indications that he had already taken revenge on his wife's lineage in Pijeti where several cases of illness and death had occurred. Now they wanted to loose no further time in preventing further accidents, by praying to the avenging spirit. Some notables from Suzi's lineage turned to Poobe's lineage members in Sukibaka to ask for assistance in their attempts to cool the avenging spirit's anger. For this purpose the medium of the *gaan kumu* specified a number of cloths and bottles of rum which were bought. Suzi was called from town. Also the village headman of Sukibaka who resided in the downstream village of Balen, well-known for his competence in religious matters, had been summoned. Already the day before the *pee* (ritual dancing party) was to be held many people from Pijeti were assembled in Sukibaka to be cleansed with medicines (*koto sembe deesi*, see p. 268). The next morning the cleansing rituals proceeded and at day break Suzi was ritually prepared with *obia* near the ancestor pole (*faaga pau*). At this occasion the *basia* directed himself to the ancestor spirit and addressed
'Well uncle, you have brought us here together in the village. Look at all the people of Pijeti. God has blessed you, you have so many children. But when you had the children, they blamed you and they beat you. And when that happened, you were so grieved, that you uttered a curse. Many of your children died. Therefore they have the feeling that they were not in the right, when they beat you, but that the right was on your side. Now they are in distress, and they hurried to us, to your own kinsmen, in order that we would pray to you for them. Now we address you and beg you. If you still were alive, you would be able to revoke these siba words yourself, but now I will take them back as basia, because these words must be revoked. No one of these people must die or become ill. Let there be an end to the conflict between you and them, which was provoked when they fought with you. Look, we have put the rum, which we owe you, 16 litres of rum we have put before the ancestor pole and 10 pieces of cloth. For they did an injustice to you, as you did to them'.

Libations of water and rum were made. Meanwhile people from other villages had arrived to attend the dancing party. Inside a house food was offered to the ancestor spirit (tuwe njanjan) with the words: ‘Look how the people of Pijeti give food to you in order to pay you’. All participants were given dishes and food and drinks were shared together. Soon the beating of the apinti drum announced the pee. Women of Pijeti pushed forward and started the dance. Suzi danced while going into trance. Again and again other mediums surrounded her and tried to stimulate the spirit to speak. Between some elder women she was led to the ancestor pole, where women of Sukibaka were singing adonke (traditional songs for the ancestors) to the spirit, while other mediums continued questioning the spirit. However the kunu still was not able to answer. The dancing continued for a long time. Early in the morning the headman and basia of Sukibaka went to Suzi to consult her spirit. Now the spirit declared that the matter was settled and that after
she would be ritually washed with the specified herbs, she would be ready. Everyone in need could come to consult her. He was not longer troubling Suzi.

Two days thereafter the lineage of Sukibaka assembled to divide among themselves the cloths which were collected by the lineage of Pijeti and to drink communally the last bottle of rum left from the 16 bottles that were gathered for this occasion. One bottle had been used to prepare the obia with which the washing was performed; another was poured out as a libation to the ancestor spirit; two bottles were sent to the medium of the gaan kunu; the remaining eleven bottles were drunk during the dancing. Aside from some older lineage members who were given cloths, cloths were sent to the medium of the gaan kunu, and to two other mediums of the Sukibaka lineage who were living downstream.

From these cases it is evident that spirit possession is not an individual affair. In some cases a great number of people may participate in possession cults. Also the interdependence of different lineages and the need for cooperation in rituals has been illustrated. However it must be noted that due to the repression of the Christian church, these large public rituals have become rare (see p. 344).

When the kunu has been brought under control and is established in a medium, a process which is referred to as seeka sindo na en jedi (has taken a seat in his head), others may consult him. Formerly each village had its own shrine, which was called kunu wosu, gadu wosu or obia wosu, in which the ritual objects were stored and offerings of beverages and cloths were placed for the kunu. Only a few villages in the downstream area still have such shrines (see p. 244), while in the upstream area almost all external signs of the traditional religion have disappeared. In these villages only hidden shrines remain. The backroom of the house of a medium is used to store ritual objects and to place offerings. The spirit is said to use this place to rest when not active, i.e. does not possess his medium.

Mediums will be consulted in the case of many different types of human affairs such as planning to go to the coast for wage labour,
choosing a partner, appointing a village official, but most especially in the case of illness and emergency (*fuka*). The consultation itself is described in terms of *nango suku sondi* (to find out things) and *suku di libi fu ju* (to find out your fate). Usually an individual will go by himself. Sometimes, however, one of the lineage members is asked to explain the matter the evening before the consultation when the medium does not become possessed. The next day the proper consultation takes place in the backroom of the medium's house in the presence of some elders and in most cases of a village headman or *basia*. Formerly there were specialists who were needed to interpret the words of the medium often pronounced in ritual language. They would explain the meaning not only to the client but also to the medium after his trance, since he himself does not know what the spirit has said via his mouth in the state of possession.

Because cults, like *koomanti*, involving the use of a ritual language have declined and the number of mediums has diminished, ritual specialists are no longer needed to interpret and translate the revelations of the medium. In fact for mediums of spirits of human origin, any elder may nowadays act as interpreter. After the medium has been washed with herbal juice, the spirit is summoned by calling him by the name with which he originally revealed himself, that is to say, with the name of the ancestor in the case of a *koto sembe kunu*, or with a name like e.g. *pinde kioo* (the spickled man) in the case of a snake spirit. Then the spirit starts to speak. Via the mouth of the medium he reveals the cause of illness and adversity. This may, for example, be due to an ancestor (*koto sembe*) whose anger has been provoked by the client's neglectful behaviour, or due to an ancestor (*neseki*) who reincarnated in the client and wants to reveal himself expressing grievances about mistreatment during his lifetime. The temporary infecundity of a client is frequently ascribed to the fact that after the delivery of her last child the placenta has been buried upside down. A woman's menstrual disorder may be due to the fact that the woman has prepared cane juice during her menstruation period, which was drunk by a man having an *obia* with this taboo. The medium will also indicate how the case has to be settled, specify the character of the offering which will cool the heart of the grieved ancestor, the quantity
of rum to be poured out at the ancestor pole, etc.. He may also specify the ingredients of the medicines to be used in the cure. The spirit is rewarded for the divination only if his instructions prove correct, in other words, when the client has recovered.

In 1974 the four upstream villages with an adult population (age 25 and up) of 203 counted 18 mediums, 14 women and 4 men. 10 of them were mediums of ancestor spirits, 4 of snake spirits (papa gadu), only 1 of a bush spirit (ampuku), and 3 of koomanti spirits. Only one of them was a medium of two different spirits. Both the percentages of Matawai female mediums, 12% over 25 years old (N=115), and of adult men, 4,5% (N=88) are low when compared with Saramaka percentages compiled by Price. In the upriver Saramaka area 41% of the women and 7% of the men are kunu mediums (Price 1973: 89). These values are also low when compared with those of the Tapanahoni Djuka (11.). The regularity with which they are consulted varies and is dependent of the occurrence of illness in a certain period. Furthermore gossip in the village affects the process of divination by directing its attention to one or a restricted number of spirits. Mediums of a papa gadu spirit are consulted quite regularly, averaging from once in a month to two or three times a week, while for a well-known lineage medium of an ancestor spirit the consultation frequency is somewhat higher. Although the revelations of the mediums are not equally trusted by everyone, people are generally indubious when a medium predicts impending death. Even for sceptics - those who speak slightingly of mediums ‘they only speak nonsense’ (ta taki bangula) - it becomes impossible to ignore the pronouncements of a medium when it concerns their own lineage.

In some cases it is considered advisable to consult a medium of another village or lineage instead of a medium in one's own lineage, especially when the illness is thought to have been caused by an act of transgression against the avenging spirit (misi a di kunu). If the medium indicates that one's illness is due to such a transgression against the kunu in one's own lineage, the person is referred to the medium of the kunu in his own lineage with whom he must settle the matter ritually.

In most cases of illness, in the upriver area, the medium of the gaan kunu is consulted. The pronouncements of this medium have authority
over those of common lineage mediums. Moreover transgressions against this god 
(*misi a di gaan kunu*) are considered to be more serious. Cursing, for example, which 
has remained unnoticed and weakens the power of the *obia* of the *gaan kunu*, has to 
be ritually settled with his medium. Especially in a case where it is revealed by this 
medium that the person concerned has been reincarnated directly or indirectly from 
an ancestor who during his life played an active role in the sentence of the *kunu*, the 
client has to fear for his life or settle the matter with the medium of the *gaan kunu* 
as soon as possible.

*The spirits of the dead: rituals of affliction*

In order to delineate the specific relationship which exists between ancestors and 
their living kinsmen, we will concentrate on some afflictions caused by the ancestors 
and follow their course. We have already dealt with the early phase, in which a 
medium is consulted, by whose revelation a specific ancestor is designated. We now 
turn to an analysis of some later phases in terms of the ritual complexes which are 
essential in the further treatment procedure.

After death not all ancestors become permanent avenging spirits (*kunu*). Some 
ancestors or spirits of the dead (*koto sembe*) will only incidentally injure others to 
signify dissatisfaction evoked by the neglectful or incorrect behaviour of their 
kinsmen. The spirits of the deceased warn their kinsmen by touching them (*ta panja 
den*). When people regularly get troubled by fever in the afternoon, it is a result of 
having been touched by an ancestor spirit. They have to be ritually washed with 
herbal water to remove the hand of the spirit of the deceased from their shoulder (*fu 
puu di koto sembe mau*).

Firstly let us give some examples of the way in which ancestor spirits can signify 
their dissatisfaction with the behaviour of their kinsmen.

When Selita's house caught fire, her baby child was badly burned. After 
the incident Selita's mother's sister, possessed by the avenging spirit of 
her lineage, explained that the fire was due to Selita's ‘uncle’ (MMB) 
Sandi who had died a
few months earlier. His spirit was searching the house for the money his three ‘nephews’ (ZS) had borrowed from him and had not returned before his death.

Generally ancestors remain strongly involved with the activities of their living kinsmen, as is apparent in the following case:

For three months Poca had been seriously ill. Members of the other segment of his lineage knew only too well the cause of his illness. It was said that he had evoked the anger of the spirit of his sister by the unfair way in which he had divided her legacy. He had appropriated not only her house, but also all her money for his own use. Thereby he had robbed the other lineage members, who usually would have been the recipients of the equally divided inheritance. While taking his sister's house, Poca gave his own house to a young boy of his lineage. This house was in such a bad condition, that the boy had to pay other people to repair it for him and cover it with a new roof of plaited palm fronts. The planks, Poca had sawed himself in his own village and the plates of corrugated iron which he had bought with the very money of his deceased sister, he had taken with him to his wife's village, where he gave them to his daughter's son. With envious eyes they witnessed how one boatload after another with soap and kerosene passed to his wife's village. Now they observed how the lineage members of his wife came to settle the matter ritually with old Majana, Poca's ‘sister’ (his MZD), who should have been the recipient of the plates of corrugated iron and who had blamed him for this behaviour.

Finally a case is presented which testifies to the belief that any neglectful behaviour towards the ancestors will surely be punished by them:

Within a short period of time Apalai met with various accidents. When he was sawing planks together with Manus, a piece of wood fell on his leg. He barely avoided breaking his leg and did not recover for some time. Some months later, while going upriver
to hunt for a few days, his camp caught fire, and again he just barely managed to escape. Subsequently he was troubled by fever. Some women of his lineage had dreams from which they inferred that these happenings were signs with which the spirit of Apalai's deceased mother was trying to let him understand that she was angry because he had failed to organize a ritual dance after her death. When his mother had died a year earlier, Apalai, because of lack of money for sufficient rum, had not celebrated the end of mourning with the usual ritual dance. The medium to whom his kinsmen propounded his case also confirmed this diagnosis and determined that three consecutive ritual prayers had to be performed during which they would beg for his life and the promise of payment would be held out to the ancestor spirit. Some time later, when he recovered, the payment was made. Rum was poured out as a libation to the spirits of the deceased and was shared communally during a ritual dance. Apalai was ritually separated from the spirit of his deceased mother who had harmed him.

We will now analyse and describe some frequently returning rituals involved with illness and death, i.e. the prayer to the ancestors (begi) and the ritual washing to separate the patient from the influence of the spirit of the dead (wasi djafu paati). These rituals of separation and reunion give us a good starting point in an understanding of Matawai conceptions concerning the relations between a lineage and its ancestors. Because the rituals are daily phenomena in which many persons are mobilized, they enable us to clarify the nature of the network of social relations in the village community.

The prayer to the ancestors (begi) is a ritual element which is more or less considered to be standard procedure in the treatment of an illness the cause of which has been attributed to the action of ancestors. After consultation, the prayer to the ancestors is the first step towards recovery. It is a frequently held ritual that is even common in the upriver villages where opposition to it by the church is the strongest.

Especially when an avenging spirit is involved, the ritual prayer
is held at the ancestor pole (faagu pau) and will be attended by almost all lineage members or the whole village community. Prayers are said to the ancestors, most commonly referred to as gaan sembe, elder people, or gadukonde, land of the ancestor spirits or land of the death. Three consecutive sessions are held, in the morning, in the afternoon and on the morning of the following day. Three, in fact, is regarded as the right number (en na wan soivi maaaka) or the holy number. The patient, for whose life prayers are said, usually is not present. Lineage members of the patient will address themselves to the ancestors. However, in the case of a patient who had been cursing (siba) (see p. 303), a transgression which is considered to be extremely grave, the patient must revoke his words (jula buka), and will therefore also be called to attend the meeting. To become appeased the ancestor spirit has to be given offerings of rum and cloths. At this meeting, however, the offerings charged by the kunu are given only in promise. He is addressed and shown the offerings of rum and cloths, i.e. an empty tin of rum (a tin contains 16 litres of rum) and a pile of some ten cloths are presented (tja go naki) at the ancestor pole. Promises are made to the ancestor that, when the patient recovers, he will pay his debt (paka paiman). Then these offerings in promise will be replaced by a full tin of rum and newly bought, unsewn cloths. The term kua-kua koosu that is used in this context is derived from the sphere of food preparation. Here, raw, unprepared food (kua-kua) is set against food that is cooked (boi-boi) with the help of fire. Similarly, cloths as they are bought per Dutch ell (69 centimetres) in town, kua-kua koosu are set against nai-nai koosu, cloths that are sewn and have been used already. A libation of water is poured out (tuwe wata) from a calabash onto a small plank or piece of wood, and in this way the ancestors are called in. Then, a libation of rum (tuwe daan) is presented. Words are directed to the ancestors not to kill the patient, but to let him live until his hair is white. Other important ancestors, former headmen and basia or ancestors who have become avenging spirits, are called upon. Sometimes the person who makes the libation will also speak to the ancestors, but it is considered more respectfull when a person, while speaking himself, lets another make the libation for him. Those directing themselves towards the ancestors are ritually protected by taking a sewn cloth
from the pile and putting it folded over their knee. These folded cloths are called *pau*, lit. tree or wood, and are analogous to the branch with which a path can be blocked against evil spirits. The cloth provides protection: nothing will happen to them (*fu hogi an mu miti den*), as they say. The prayer is supported by the other participants with rhythmic hand-clapping. While pointing to the offerings, they say to the ancestor: ‘Look, here is your payment, a tin of rum, ten cloths and one bottle of rum to propitiate you’, *fu koto ju ati,*\(^{(12)}\) (to cool down your heart). The prayer is concluded by drinking together (*bebe makandi*) a bottle of rum, which strengthens the mutual link between lineage members and their ancestors.

Two different terms can be used to describe communication with the ancestors: *Fan*, which means speaking, is also used in common parlance. *Da tongo*, giving the word, is only utilized in quite formal ritual contexts. Usually the tone used in communications with the ancestors is somewhat matter of fact. This is especially true for prayers to the ancestors which are not held at the ancestor pole, but rather in front or under a house and which attract less people. The phases of the less elaborate rituals, generated by small cases, are much clearer. In this case also, prayers are held to the *koto sembe* at three consecutive meetings: ‘We beg you, if it was you who touched this man, because we found that you touched him, please let him go, how much he may owe you’. Some time later, when they see that the patient is recovering, a new session is held, in which gratitude is expressed (*da tangi*) to the ancestor, libations of rum are presented to him (*tuwe daan*) and rum is drunk together (*bebe makandi*).

When the patient is wholly recovered he finally is separated ritually from the ancestor who touched him. This ritual is called in full: *wasi djafu paati ku di koto sembe*. Like the ritual praying it can be considered a ritual complex consisting of a number of sub-rituals, each of which can be performed separately. It includes the ritual washing (*wasi*) with herbal medicines (*koto sembe deesi*) by which the patient is loosened from the influence of the ancestor. The other element is the definite cutting (*djafu*) of the ties between patient and ancestor (*koto sembe*).

The sub-ritual of *wasi* is a standard procedure in the mourning
ritual, in which it forms a part of the final mourning rite, puu a baaka, (pull out of black). In this ritual they try carefully to loosen the ties between the ancestor and his matrilineal kinsmen and between the widow and her former husband. In this case, only two sub-rituals, i.e. wasi and lembe (sprinkling) are performed. The complete ritual complex, is held in case of illness attributed to either koto sembe or to an ancestor who reincarnated in the patient (neseki). The whole ritual complex also forms a part of the ritual of the widow's remarriage, thereby cutting the ties she had with her former marriage partner. Furthermore, the ritual is performed in cases in which the temporary infecundity of a woman is attributed to the fact that the placenta of her last born child was buried upside down. In such a case the power the placenta still has over the woman has to be severed.

For this ritual people may approach a restricted number of religious specialists (obiaman) who own the medicine. Some of them are well-versed in the whole ritual complex, while others are only versed in a sub-ritual which they inherited from an ancestor\(^{(13)}\). Till today, the ritual is frequently held in all Matawai villages. In the morning a libation is poured, the ancestors are addressed and all the lineage members drink together. The washing does not take place before five or six in the afternoon, the time when the sun begins to set and no longer casts a shadow. The ritual is performed at the fringe of the village, in the backyard of a house bordering either the secondary forest or the river. In the area of the backyard which is demarcated by shrubs on which rubbish is thrown away, the obiaman has already arranged all things needed for the ritual: a winnowing tray with medicines he has gathered that day in the forest (among others lembe konde wwi), a lump of white clay called keeti or pimba doti (white kaoline, frequently used in ritual), a bucket of river water, a calabash to wash the patient, and a machete. He has also put a sangaafu (Costus niveus G.F.W. Meyer), a particular plant dug up with its root, the leaf part of the plant, is blackened with soot (memebasu) scaped from the ceiling of a cooking house, while the root is whitened with white clay (keeti). Therefore the ritual is also called weti ku baaka (white and black), colours which, in this context, are associated with the concepts limbo (purity) and nasi (dirtyness) and thereby also to the contrast between the village
in which the yards are swept and kept clean, and the shrubs where it is [dir...].

When the time of the washing has come, the patient takes his place opposite the specialist. The specialist has turned his back to the village and his face to the forest, while the patient opposite him is facing the village and has the forest at his back. The *obiaman* first shakes out medicine over himself and washes. At the same moment he addresses *Masa Gadu* and the ancestors. While taking a mouthful of these medicines and spitting them out on the ground (*fula buka*), he speaks as follows: ‘I say to you, it is not me who found out that it was you, but another called me to come here, because he said that he knew it was you who touched this man here. Now I wash you and remove thereby your hand. I beg you, please, stay away from here and leave him to *lanti*. It is not me who is asking you this, but it is *lanti*, the village community’. Subsequently, he washes the patient by sprinkling medicines over his head and shoulders and by washing them away with clear water. This is repeated several times. The bystanders also step forward and are washed in the same way.

The *obiaman* then proceeds to the central part of the ritual, the *djafu paati*. First he crumbles little pieces of *pimba doti* and puts them on the patient's head and feet, and sprinkles them on the ground, in order to appease the patient's soul (*akaa*). Then he throws pieces of *pimba* in the direction of the forest and of the river to ‘pay’ the deities of the forest (*matu gadu*) and of the river (*wata gadu*), that is to say, to propitiate them. He then gives the *sangaafu* to the patient to hold. While the patient holds the white side in his hand, and he himself holds the leaf side, the specialist grasps the machete in his other hand and addresses the ancestor spirit in the following way: ‘Look here, we are now separating dirtyness and purity. May the pure go home where all good things belong, and may the dirt stay behind were there is only rubbish’. With one blow of his machete he cuts the *sangaafu* at the place where black and white meet. The leaf side falls to the ground. The patient tightly holds the white side of the *sangaafu* and walks carefully in the direction of the village without looking back. Sometimes the *sangaafu* is not made black and white, but is tied up in the middle and is cut at this place.

So far the meaning of the ritual is clear. The ties are cut between
patient and \textit{koto sembe}, symbolized by the colours white and black\textsuperscript{16}, and associated with the concepts \textit{limbo} and \textit{nasi}, and thereby also referring to the world of the living, the village (\textit{ganda}), and the fringe of the forest (\textit{matu buka}), dominated by supernatural powers. The spirit of the patient is lead off from the spirit world to the world of the living. It is for this reason that the patient, when he walks in the direction of the village, must not look back, because he has averted himself from the world of forest- and water deities and the world of the spirits of the ancestors.

This element may also be seen in other ritual contexts. When, for instance, a boat has been sunk and the boatman has fallen into the river, his soul (\textit{akaa}) is believed to be lost and has to be retrieved ritually. The spirits of the water (\textit{wata gadu}) have to be compensated for the loss of their ‘prey’ with lumps of white clay. The water spirits are considered to hunt down people and make them drown in the same manner as would predatory animals. Also in such a case the patient, after having emerged from the water, will turn his back to the river, facing the landing or the village and must walk straight to the village without looking back.

Now let us return to the \textit{wasi djafu paati} ritual. There are people who see the contrast between the goodness of the \textit{akaa} of the living and the evilness of the \textit{jooka} of the deceased (\textit{koto sembe}) as also present within the human being himself. In fact, they credit man with two souls, two \textit{akaa} (see p. 251) a bad soul (\textit{hogi okaa}), and a good one (\textit{bunu okaa}). Although it is admitted that these souls in man cannot be separated, they, however, sometimes address the patient, while sprinkling \textit{pimba doti} just before the \textit{djafu paati} as follows: ‘Look here, may your good soul follow you to your house, but may your bad soul stay behind in the dust’.

In the ritual complex the separation (\textit{djafu paati}) is followed by a subsequent ritual episode called \textit{lembe}, sprinkling. The patient, who has in the meantime arrived at the village with the \textit{sangaafu} still in his hand, is sprinkled with strongly smelling herbal water. His kinsmen as well are usually sprinkled. In this way they are purified from any stains resulting from their former contact with the spirit of the deceased. Now they are prepared to resume normal village life. In other
contexts this ritual always has the same meaning, marking the passage from a situation in which people are exposed to supernatural danger to one in which this danger is conquered, from restricted to normal social relations, from a disturbance in the relation with the supernatural to a redetermination of a new equilibrium. It is therefore a clear ritual marker of what Turner called liminality.

We will not attempt to consider all contexts in which the sub-ritual of *lembe* plays a part. Mention of a couple will suffice. At the end of the mourning ritual, for example, widow and mourning kinsmen of the deceased are sprinkled. Afterwards the items used by the widow during this time, such as cloths and hammock are purified in the same manner. In the case of a person who has drowned in the river, not only the water of the river itself, but also people from all neighbouring villages are sprinkled. This ritual restores the relationship with the surrounding nature which has been disturbed and purifies the water which has been stained by the death.

While the cut off part of the *sangaafu* now remains behind in the bush, the patient, after having been sprinkled, will return to the village, enter his house and not leave for the night. The white part of the *sangaafu*, he still holds in his hand, will be placed between the palm-leaves or planks of the house on the side which he faces when he is sleeping in his hammock. Not before sunrise will he leave the house.

Meanwhile his lineage members, who have stayed behind at the sprinkling place with the *obiaman*, finish the last part of the ritual: the paying of the *obiaman*. The specialist takes his place opposite a lineage member of the patient, he begins to call out loudly what they owe him. Three times he calls out *madjoma* (debt). Each time he is answered by the other calling out loudly *akaa* (soul). Immediately a little piece of wood is put on the ground by the kinsmen of the patient as a promise of payment. Now the roles are reversed, the other leads the calling of *madjoma* three times, answered by the specialist's call of *akaa*. A second piece of wood is laid down on the ground. When the *obiaman* has called out his *madjoma* three times, each time reciprocated by the other's *akaa*, a third piece of wood is laid along the others. Now the *obiaman* calls out the payment, which is hastily brought to him by
the kinsmen of the patient. In this ritual, the amount varies, but in most cases consists of half a bottle of rum, called a white bottle (*wan weti bata daan*) and one piece of cloth (*wan koosu*). The ritual is finished when the specialist and the other participants drink a part of the rum.

In this manner the ancestor from whom the specialist inherited his ritual knowledge is paid. It is one of the most common ways a specialist is rewarded for the lifting of certain food taboos (taboo on monkey flesh, called *liba meti kina*, which has to be lifted for twins), for the lifting of the taboo on sexual intercourse by the parents after the birth of twins, for the treatment of fractures and accidents caused during hunting, or for the lifting of the taboo of the river after a person has been drowned in it.

**The spirits of the dead: mourning and widowhood**

We have analysed the relationship between the living and the spirits of the dead when they belonged to the same lineage. We will now consider the relationship between the spirits of the dead and the former marriage partners of the deceased. Descriptions of the rituals involved in protecting widows and widowers in the case of mourning and remarriage, will enable us to elaborate the conceptions which play an important role in Matawai ideology concerning the relationship between the living and the dead.

Normally the widow is protected by the spirit of her former husband during the mourning period. However, any adversity, such as illness, which she encounters during this period, is considered to be a result of the anger of her deceased husband's spirit. This is apparent in the following case:

As is customary Tjontjonfou spended the mourning period in the house of her deceased husband. Confusion arose, however, when the two lineage members of her former husband, who were appointed to support her during this period, informed their kinsmen that Tjontjonfou had caught fever and that she could not loosen her hammock. This was considered an indication
that her deceased husband was troubling her. Of course this was eagerly used by those, who commented adversely on the fact that Tjontjonfou had spent a long time at the coast to help her granddaughter deliver, some months before the death of her husband. She had left her husband unattended, they said. This old man, who was reputed to be a heavy drinker, had drowned on the boat trip back to his wife's village after a drinking party. His corpse was never found. Another bad omen was that Tjontjonfou had to chase a snake away with a stick, which threatened her during sleep. Evil tongues said that her husband cursed himself before his death (*siba*), and had added that when he would die his corpse must not be found by the others. All kinds of shameful things (*sjen sondi*) about the relationship between Tjontjonfou and her husband became public gossip. In order to pray for her life, she was forced to tell them what she had done to her husband. However, Tjontjonfou's kinsmen became indignant when they heard that the kinsmen of her husband had held a prayer to the ancestors for her without informing them beforehand. They were presented with a 'fait accompli' and were given the message that her husband's lineage had decided to shorten her mourning period, due to her illness.

At the ending of the mourning period, at the ritual which is called *puu a baaka* (to draw out of black, i.e. mourning) the widow is ritually washed and in this way separated from her former marriage partner. Because she is still the woman of a deceased person, a *koto sembe mujee* as they refer to her, she is not allowed to engage in sexual relations until, after several months, she has undergone a second ritual washing in which the ties with her former marriage partner are loosened. If she had relations with a man during this period, she would evoke the anger of her former husband, who would punish the man, with whom she initiated relations, with illness. Usually venereal diseases are ascribed to the action of the spirit of a woman's former husband, and are considered as a warning. As can be expected, however, transgressions still occur frequently.

In some of these cases the spirit of the deceased may even become a sort of avenging spirit. The spirit does not, however, possess an
individual and his revenge plan is different from that of other avenging spirits. In fact when a man during his lifetime is injured by his wife, he may become a *kunu* after his death, taking revenge on all men who have sexual relations with his former wife during her lifetime. Matawai only know of men who become such avenging spirits. They call the woman of this avenging spirit a *kunu mujee*, in the same way as a widow is called *koto sembe mujee* for some time, the woman of a deceased husband. In their revenge plan these cases correspond, but they differ from each other mainly in the length of time in which they are said to harm their victims. While in the case of a *koto sembe mujee*, the spirit of her deceased husband will only punish a man with whom she has sexual relations during her mourning period and the few months before the ritual of separation has been performed, in the case of a *kunu mujee*, the spirit will revenge itself on all men having relations with the woman as long as the woman lives. Because every man who has sexual relations with a *kunu mujee*, during a new marriage as well as in an adulterous relationship (*piitaki*), will be killed, it is no wonder that these women stigmatized as *kunu mujee* will be avoided and will have difficulty in finding a partner. Some of them are even known to initiate relations by ‘calling’ men a practice which is virtually unheard of in Matawai society. The following case is a poignant example:

Sidonia had treated her first husband Kodjo badly. She did not give him enough food and refused to fulfill her sexual duties towards him. Soon he got ill and had to be brought to town to seek treatment. Accompanied by his uncle Koosu and his wife, he was brought to the hospital, while they stayed in the backyard. There Koosu had an adulterous relation with Sidonia. Because she was the wife of his sister's son and he had to refer to her as his *mai*, he was committing a grave sin. When Kodjo did not recover, they brought him back to the village. Shortly afterwards he died. After his death, when they carried his hair and nail clippings (*bongola*) to find out the cause of his death, it was revealed that he was killed by witchcraft (*wisi*). Some time later Koosu went one day to attend church. On his return, he passed
by the village of Sidonia, visited her and made an appointment to meet her in the bush. She would take the footpath through the bush, while he would go by boat to the meeting place. After they met each other at the appointed place, he dropped down dead. In panic Sidonia fled back to the village. After some time Koosu was missed and people were sent to search for him. First his boat and then finally his corpse, was found. In the bark of a tree was found the knife Sidonia had stuck in to have her hands free, and which she had entirely forgotten. When they brought the corpse to the village, they heard Sidonia wail and cry. After the supernatural cause of his death was revealed by a medium, i.e. that he was killed by the spirit of his sister's son, and the knife was sent for as witness, Sidonia gave in. Hastily they tried to propitiate the spirit of Kodjo, but in vain. Further accidents could not be prevented any more. Not long thereafter her son, begotten by Kodjo, died. The carrying oracle (bongola) indicated that he was killed by his father's spirit because the spirit was angry about the things his mother had done to him. Some time later Sidonia married a second husband. He frequently had frightening dreams in which he was threatened by two men holding bush knives. They warned him that if he did not give heed, he would die soon. He then complied and divorced. Also the third husband she took did not stay long with her and was pressed to divorce her when he became ill. Her fourth husband did not survive. He died a sudden death. The divination of a medium, which revealed that every man with whom she would have relations, would be killed by the spirit of her first husband, came true. This happened to a man who shortly after he had been involved in adultery with her, died. Although he admitted the adultery during his illness, all prayers to the ancestor spirits and the libation with which they tried to soften the hearth of the avenging spirit were in vain. When some months after this happened, another man fell ill and declared that he had sexual relations with her, they feared the worst.
Sometimes even in normal cases a new marriage after the death of a former partner can be threatened by supernatural danger, as is apparent in the following case:

Djama, who had been widower for two years, expressed the wish to remarry with Natali, a woman of a neighbouring village, who had been deserted by her husband a year and a half earlier when he went to work in the coastal area. Both lineages however had quite a lot of objections to his proposal. The fact that they had been brought up by the same woman when they were children, and therefore were thought to be too familiar with each other (gwentitumusi) did not work in favour of their proposed marriage, nor did the fact that the houses in which they now lived practically touched each other in the rear (de nama tumusi). A more serious objection, however, was that Djama had formerly quarreled because of Natali with her first, now deceased, husband. Now his anger was feared. People argued that the relations between them had been so bad, that they did not even speak to each other for a while (buuse); but they did not remember if they were still on bad terms with each other when this man died. They warned him: ‘If you already have had relations with a woman, whose husband has died, you better not take her again because otherwise you would risk your life’. Because Djama still wanted to marry her and pushed on the marriage, his kinsmen gave in and provided him with some protection against eventual harm through the necessary ritual preventative measures. However within a month after the consummation of the marriage he became serious ill. Of course this confirmed the suspicion towards the spirit of Natali’s former husband. After three months Djama had still not recovered. He was troubled by fever and frequently had dreams in which he saw himself bringing golden chains to the house of his deceased wife. This was an indication that they had to search for the cause of his illness in another direction. The circumstances in which his former wife had died could also be connected with an explanation in this direction. This woman had suffered from
epilepsy. When Djama had not been able to cohabit with her for a year because her condition grew increasingly worse, he had propounded his problems to her lineage. The woman, who was called to account by her kinsmen, did not want to cohabit with him, nor to divorce him officially. Now her lineage advised Djama, that as long as no definite solution was found, they should live apart from each other in their own respective villages. He was hardly back in his village, when he received news that his wife drowned. Because the conflict had not been settled in a council after her death, as would have been the appropriate procedure, she could have injured him, as people said. Now this question firstly had to be settled in the village of his former wife.

The initiation of a new marriage relation is invested with ritual precautions for this reason. The power of the spirit of the deceased over his former marriage partner has to be completely severed. The spirit of the deceased must also be appeased so that he favours the new marriage partner. To this end, the widower is brought over to the village of his deceased wife, together with his wife-to-be. Both are ritually washed with medicines, the so-called koto-sembe deesi, whereby calebashes with herbal water and white clay (*pimba doti*) are poured out over their head and shoulders, and washed off with water. This ritual is repeated several times throughout the day, so that their faces finally become ash-coloured from the *pimba doti* and small pieces of herbs remain in their hair. The repeating aspect of washing, which is also common in many other rituals, is considered necessary to achieve the desired effect of loosening the influence of the ancestor spirit.

At the end of this day, the two people are lodged in separate houses and spend the night in the village of the former marriage partner of the widower. Usually the man spends the night in the quarter of his deceased former wife, in the house of one of the persons who was designated to care for him during the mourning period, where he, after the *puu a baaka*, spent the rest of his mourning period. His wife-to-be is lodged in the house of the other individual who cared for the widower after the death of his wife, and who ideally belongs to the other quarter.
of the village. On this evening the lineage members of the deceased wife will symbolically fight (*meki toobi*) with the widower and his wife-to-be. While beating the house with sticks, they cry ‘you have taken away our husband, therefore you have to pay us’. The following morning, when coming together in the quarter of the deceased wife, to be ‘given in’ marriage, the husband indeed has to pay rum to settle the fight. Some of the rum is offered in libation to the spirit of the deceased. This marriage ceremony (*da manu ku mujee*), contrary to other kinds of marriage ceremonies, takes place inside a house, in the quarter of the deceased wife, and is attended by the three families concerned: those of the deceased wife, those of the husband and those of the wife-to-be. They formally speak with the spirit of the deceased (*da tongo*), and pour out libations of water and rum (*tuwe wata, tuwe daan*). In the afternoon they are both washed and separated definitively from the spirit of the deceased (*wasi djafu paati*). We have described this ritual above. The ritual washing takes place near a hole (*baaku*) that is dug for this purpose. At the washing the water from their heads falls into the hole which is refilled with earth after the washing is completed. Similarly with the placing of a new ancestor pole, a hole is dug, at which village headmen, *basia* and lineage elders are ritually washed. In this way a relationship with the ancestors (*gadukonde*) is achieved, in which the spiritual power of the living is drawn off by the dead. The reverse of this ritual is also performed. When a person is frightened so terribly that he becomes unconscious or falls ill, his soul (*akaa*) is considered to have left his corpse. Immediately sand is put on his head to return his soul to his head. He is, then, believed to have been strengthened by the spiritual power of the supernatural world.

The washing is followed by the ritual of *djafu paati*, as already described (see pp. 269-273). The widower continues to hold the white part of the *sangaaflu* in his hand. His wife is brought into contact with this by holding her husband. Together they walk to the village where, after having been sprinkled (*lembe*), they will spend the night together for the first time in the same house. Usually they stay for some nights in the village of the deceased wife, before they, if the new wife was also a widow, proceed to the village of the woman’s deceased husband to repeat the whole ritual complex. It is stressed that the husband does
right to spend as many nights as possible with his wife in the village of his former partner, so that the spirit of his former wife can get acquainted with the new wife and will finally accept her.

After some weeks a food offering (tuwe njanjan) is made by the newly married husband in the village of his deceased wife, libations are made and speeches are held toward the spirit of the deceased wife. This offering in the quarter of the village of the deceased is held indoors and attended mostly by the three lineages concerned. If the newly married wife was a widow the same food offerings is performed thereafter in behalf of her former marital partner in the village of the deceased husband, also attended by members of the three lineages concerned.

Usually the spirit of the deceased is warned the evening before the food will be offered and is directed to in the same house: ‘Look here, tomorrow we will bring a food offering to you, as we are accustomed to do. A good friend of yours, you may call, but you must not call in bad angered people who like to make trouble’.

The following morning a great variety of foods, cooked early in the morning, are set on a small table in the house of a lineage member of the deceased: weti alisi (white rice), satu okoki, i.e. coconoto alisi (coconut rice), batata (sweet potatoes), taja supu (cooked malanga), taja wwi (malanga leaves), bakuba tonton (pounded bananas), baka bakuba (roasted bananas), nana (pine apple), lalu (okra), pingo meti (pingo meat), jasa fisi (roasted fish) etc.. After people have gathered around the table, a kinsman is asked to talk to the deceased spirit. He pours out water and talks as follows: ‘Look here, here is water to rinse your mouth and wash your face. Look we bring you food, as we always did. If you have a good friend call him to come to eat together with you, but bad-hearted people you must not call’. Food taken from each dish is placed on a plate and set apart under the table for the spirit of the deceased. Then food is handed out for all the others, who now eat together (njan makandi). The meeting is concluded with libations of locally made rum prepared from sugarcane (kwinti daan) and bought rum, and drinking together. The bones, which are spread here and there on the flour, are gathered and the house is swept. The plate of the deceased is not touched until the spirit is believed to have taken the essence of the food. The rest is thrown away in the river.
Like so many other traditional ritual practices, food offerings and libations used to be far more common in Matawai society than they are today. This holds true when we compare the present-day practices with those of the past, i.e. before the influence of the Moravian church significantly affected religious practices. A difference is also observable in the present-day practices of the upstream villages as compared to those in the downriver area. We can clearly see a differentiation not only in the frequency of particular ritual elements, but also in the way in which they are performed. Food offerings are an example in point. Food offerings were common elements of the mourning period after death. Usually one week after death, at the so-called *booko di dia*, a large food offering ceremony was held in behalf of the spirit of the dead and attended by both close kinsmen and people from other villages. As a result of the opposition of the Moravian mission, an opposition which was particularly strong towards most elements of the traditional funerary rites and mourning rites due to their close links with the ancestor religion (see p. 330), the food offering at the *booko di dia* is now abandoned, although food is eaten together by the same group of people. Another food offering which has been affected by the mission's opposition is the customary offering, part of the same mourning rites, which takes place about one year after the death. While this offering has become less frequent, it has basically withstood the strong opposition of the mission and is nowadays performed indoors. Like the former food offerings at the *booko di dia*, this food offerings is attended by far more people from other villages than the food offerings after remarriage. It is a question of honour for the lineage to invite many people, to provide them with food and enable them to share in the reunion with the ancestors. In this way they acquire fame (*bai nen*) and will be praised (*gafa*). Because the organization of such a food offering is highly dependent upon successful hunting and fishing, the time between the death and the offering is always somewhat variable. However, a deceased kinsman should not be forced to wait too long or his displeasure will be evoked. Although rituals are performed in the upstream area in which public food offerings are given to an avenging spirit, such public
rituals have become far less frequent. For example, annual harvest rites (*goon gadu pee*) were performed around new year which were accompanied by large-scale food offerings, attracting very much people. Such rituals were announced long beforehand. When the day arrived the food was put in newly-made washed boats. Part of the food was divided, put in big banana leaves, and set apart for the ancestors behind the houses. At such occasions all mediums, but also pregnant women were ritually washed until all became possessed by their spirits and started to perform the specific dancing steps of their gods. These days such rituals are not longer performed in the upstream villages, which are too closely watched by the resident evangelist. In the downstream villages, however, where identification with the Moravian mission is weaker, where Djuka and Saramaka religious specialists have always played an important role and where in some Roman Catholic villages opposition against traditional religious practices has always been less strong (see p. 359), these large-scale public rituals are still performed. The result is that the religious practices in the downriver villages, which have close contacts with Creoles and other Bush Negro groups and which are greatly affected by migration, resemble more closely the former upriver religious situation than do those of the present-day upriver villages, where traditional social organization is much more intact.

**The spirits of the dead: reincarnation**

The belief in reincarnation (*nasi*) is another aspect of the Matawai conceptualization of the interaction between spirits of the dead and their living kinsmen. After death people will return in newborn children. Matawai use the terms *nasi* and *goo* to refer to the person who reincarnated in me (*di sembe di nasi mi; di sembe di goo mi*)\(^{(16)}\). This is an explicit reference to the growing and budding of plants and crops. For the formation of new tubers of, for example, the *napi* (*Dioscorea trifida*), also the word *nasi* is used.

However, not every man is believed to return after death. Young children, who, as people say, do not have sense, and at whose death the mourning ritual is not held wholly, will not return. The former burial method was meant to stimulate a rapid return of the ancestor spirit.
When a grave was dug, the so called *gaan baaku* (large hollow), a side entrance was made, called *piki a se* (little aside) in which the corpse of the deceased was placed. This grave was also called *mama ku miiii* (mother and child). Thereafter earth could be thrown on the empty grave, so that the corpse was not squeezed too much\(^\text{[17]}\). This burial method is compared with the way in which an iguana buries her eggs in the sand by first digging down- and then sideways, so that the eggs will come out rapidly, when the sand is moistened by the rain. As we already indicated (see p. 249) the soul of a former ancestor, his *akaa*, is reborn in the child. On this point we disagree with Green who asserts that it is the aspect of the *jooka* of the ancestor who is reborn in the child (1974: 190). Price rightly speaks of a ‘kind of supernatural genitor’, who plays a role in conception (1975: 51).

In their conception that male ancestors do not necessarily need to return in male children, nor female ancestors in female children, the Matawai agree with the Saramaka (van Lier 1940: 173), but differ from the Djuka who believe that the ancestor has to be reborn in a person of the same sex (van Lier 1940: 172).

A strong relationship is believed to exist between the child and his ancestor. Because he is in fact the same person, it is dangerous for him to call out his ancestor's personal name (*gaan ne*) or to be confronted by another calling this name openly. Although it may happen casually in some cases, it may also be done intentionally and with evil intentions (*fu hogi ati fasi*). Therefore parents try to prevent the harmful consequences that would result from openly calling this name, by ritually raising the child (*opo di miiii*). While lifting up the child and holding it wrapped in an unsewn cloth (*kua-kua koosu*) in their lap, they address the *akaa* of the child, and in this way also the spirit of the ancestor who returned in him: ‘Look here. I do not know who has been reborn in you. But if a person comes to you and calls you openly by name, nothing must happen to you. You came here to live after all. You must stay with me and not return (to the land of the ancestors). If someone calls out your name, you must not die. Therefore I pay you with this piece of cloth’. After the prayer, they wrap the child in this cloth until it has grown older.

The ancestor who is reborn in the child is also known as his *neseki*. 

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This term is derived from the English and also means namesake. The term is commonly used to refer to persons sharing the same Christian name and to persons holding the same political function. The term is used both for direct address and for reference.

Usually the child is not given the name of his spiritual ancestor (18). He does however inherit his ancestor's *tata kina*, that is to say, a food taboo his ancestor had inherited in the paternal line. Eating this forbidden food, his *neseki kina*, will cause illness. In contrast to a person's *tata kina*, his *neseki kina* can be lifted ritually (19). The *neseki kina*, also mentioned for the Saramaka (van Lier 1940: 178), is not common for the Aluku, as Hurault observes ‘il n'impose aucun kina et ne demande pas d'offrandes’ (1961: 221).

In addition to this food taboo, a child inherits from his supernatural ancestor certain physical attributes, such as scars or birth marks corresponding to injuries or illnesses of his *neseki* (as van Lier also mentions for the Saramaka (1940: 137), and Hurault for the Aluku (1961: 221)). Moreover, particular childhood behaviour is ascribed to remembrances of a former life. Nelson, a Moravian evangelist who worked for a long time in the Matawai area during the 1930s, suggested a relationship between the belief in reincarnation and over-indulgent behaviour towards small children. They tend to be humoured and spoiled for fear that otherwise they would go to the underworld or die (20).

The strong connection with the *neseki* will especially come to the foreground if the *neseki* died a violent death (e.g. in case of drowning) or if the *neseki* comes to take revenge on the child for the injustice done to him during his life. In both cases the spirit of the child has to be ritually separated from the ancestor (*wasi djafu paati*). We will return to this later.

For many people knowledge of the ancestor who reincarnated in them is not necessary and indeed remains unknown throughout their lifetime. Incidentally, they come to know their *neseki kina*, by their reaction when eating the prohibited food, without actually identifying the *neseki* himself.

It is believed that one ancestor may be reborn in a number of others, as van Lier also mentions for the Saramaka (1940: 173). It is important to
ascertain with whom they share the ancestor, without, however, the ancestor in question having to be identified. People who share a common neseki are referred to as de abi du wan pau, thus sharing the same pau lit. (tree, staff). In this context pau probably refers to the connection with the ancestors, just as the faaga pau, the pole of the ancestors, is also pre-eminently the place to address the ancestors. The sharing of a common ancestor involves a number of restricting implications for the persons in question. Since they are believed to be the same person, they are not allowed to sleep in the same house. The closeness of their souls would disturb their identities. This Somo experienced when he went out hunting in the upriver area together with Vitalon with whom he shared a neseki. A rain storm forced them to tie their hammocks in the same camp, but they did not close their eyes that night because of a burning sensation in their eyes. Moreover, when two men are involved, it is said that they must not fight each other. It is also dangerous for one to bury the other, because it would seem that he buries himself. The marriage of persons who share a common supernatural ancestor is believed to be especially dangerous for the health of the persons involved and is therefore forbidden (as it is for the Saramaka, see Price 1975: 86).

Anjanbiten, for whom it probably was found out too late that he and his wife shared the same pau, had always been sickly. When his wife died, he refused to pay attention to the warning of his kinsmen not to attend the burial. Three days later he also died. His wife's spirit had killed him.

A person's neseki can become known in various ways. Sometimes it is the mother who has a dream during pregnancy or shortly after delivery, but otherwise both parents or other kinsmen have a dream after the birth of the child. In these dreams a deceased kinsman is seen to come to them. He comes, for example, to tie his hammock, to sit with him in his boat or to bring money to him. Such a dream is submitted to a medium, who will identify the ancestor. Usually, however, it is the medium who takes the initiative in this matter and informs the parents about the neseki of the child. It may also happen that the child at birth or some time later shows certain physical marks, bearing a resemblance to the way in which his neseki was wounded or died.
When after the birth of Lando a spot was found on his leg that ulcerated, prayers were said to his nasi on the indication of a medium. This was his FMB, who died two years before after his leg had been cut off due to a snake bite. A prayer to this ancestor was held and subsequently the wound which appeared on the same place on the leg of the child, was said to be cured.

Attention may be drawn to the neseki by the child himself. Generally this will happen with children who are four or older. While playing the child may call out the gaan ne (personal name) of his neseki or may talk of certain things, which seem to indicate that he is remembering a former life. Thus Filia, whose neseki had been a major servant in church, said, while playing with the other children, that she wanted to sit with the servants and insisted that she had to sweep, a special task for female church servants.

Sometimes illness of the child is interpreted as a sign that the ancestor wants to reveal himself. This is especially true in the case of illnesses which are accompanied by fever in the afternoon, a very common occurrence during the first year of one's life. The medium who pronounces the judgement that the illness is caused by a neseki indicates to which ancestor they have to address themselves (da tongo) and pour out a libation. This is the task of a close relative of the neseki, who is still living, for example, the neseki's brother or sister. The ritual complex to settle this kind of neseki sondi, as it is commonly called, matters involving a supernatural ancestor, like other illnesses caused by other kinds of koto sembe involves three sessions: prayers are said to the ancestors (the ritual of begi) in which the ancestor is begged to leave off; thank giving to the ancestor (the ritual of da tangi), in which libations are made after the patient is recovered; and finally ritual washing in which the separation between neseki spirit and patient is accomplished (the ritual of wasi dja futu paati).

When Lisiati was six months old he was frequently troubled by fever. The kunu speaking through the medium of his mother's sister indicated that it was his father's deceased brother. who was calling him. She designated the person who had to
settle the matter. On three consecutive mornings, sessions were held, in which a classificatory brother of his grandfather on the father's side said the prayers. He addressed the baby child on his mother's arm and prayed for his health as follows: ‘You were here with us until you went away. Now you are back. We do not want illness. Therefore we talk with you, we beg you and say, look here, with this piece of cloth we pay you’. Meanwhile he pointed to a piece of cloth. After this speech an elder woman from the child's lineage backed him up in the praying. She begged that the child would live on until it was old, and that he would build a house, and so on. Some weeks later, when the fever had disappeared, they came together again to pour out a libation to thank the neseki, and shortly thereafter the child was brought to his father's village to be separated from the spirit of his neseki by a ritual washing (wasi dja fu paa ti).

It is believed that all ancestors want to return and reveal themselves to remind the living of their presence. Some however, return with evil intentions (fu hogi ati fasi), because they feel wronged by their relatives. They may take revenge by causing illness in the child. When they intend to kill the child they will not let themselves be appeased by the prayers of their living kinsmen.

For Nita, a 19 year old woman, just married to a migrant, who herself was still living in the tribal area, a neseki sondi had to be settled because of her illness. She had a sore on her feet. She turned in vain to the clinic in the tribal area and to the doctor in town, to be cured. The medium of the gaan kumu, to whom she turned thereafter to find the cause of this illness (fu suku en li bi), told her by whom this illness was caused and in which way it had to be settled. The medium ascribed the illness to the same ancestor, who some years before had caused illness in two young women, lineage members of Nita, in whom the ancestor was reincarnated. This neseki, Sapolina, Nita's classificatory grandmother (her MMMZD) had died because she had cursed herself (siba). Sapolina formerly
lived in a house built so close to the river, that there was almost no place left between the house and the river. One day this old lady became ill and went to the water side to empty the chamber. Usually the chamber is emptied in the forest at the back of the houses, very cautiously and in the absence other people. By this act she invoked the curiousity of children washing dishes at the water side. One of them, Sapolina's sister's daughter called out to the other girls ‘Look how aunty is throwing the dirt in the water’. The old woman felt herself so affronted and ashamed because of these words, that she called on an ancestor spirit to kill her, and so she cursed herself. She died a few weeks later. The two other women in whom she reincarnated had paid for this incident some four years earlier with the same illness. They had to be ritually separated from her, had made a payment of a tin of rum and ten pieces of cloth, and ritual dancing had been held in which the rum was drunken together. Only then did they recover.

Other forms of adversity besides illness, such as miscarriage, still-born children and sterility may be attributed to the neseki. These must be ritually settled for the persons concerned at a later age.

When Thesa, a 15 year old girl, became pregnant, a medium divulged the fact that her neseki, her father's sister, had died shortly after delivery of her first child. It was decided to separate Thesa from the spirit of this ancestor to insure that she too did not die during childbirth.

Also in the following case a neseki sondi had to be settled after childhood:

Seepi, a young migrant, always had bad luck. In fact for a long time he had difficulty in finding a house in town, a wife and a stable job. After a while it was found that his neseki caused these troubles. This ancestor during his lifetime had been chased out of his house. Now he was revealing this injustice by troubling his neseki. During Seepi's
youth the identity of his *neseki* had never been investigated, and consequently the matter had not been settled. After the matter was ritually settled and his soul (*akaa*) was paid, the situation changed. He found a steady job, was able to buy a house of his own, and his marriage relation improved.

Social relations between the living acquire an extra dimension as a result of the belief in reincarnation. Social relations between ancestors, in fact, are extended to the presently living, so that people remain involved in conflicts which have occurred in the past.

Leo, an 18 year old boy of the downriver village of Bilawata, never dared to swim in deep water. Through a medium it was discovered that his *neseki*, (a Creole named Bape), who had been a gold-digger, had been drowned near Mamadan. This happened, when he had been quarreling over a woman with another gold-digger, named Boti. Boti was said to have caused his death by bewitching him (*buta sondi da en*). After Bape's death, Boti also died and reincarnated in Ludi, a village member of Leo. To settle the quarrel, Ludi now had to pay Leo a fine, in order to purify the disturbed relationship between the boys.

This is one of the few cases reported in which non-Matawai were involved in the reincarnation chain. Now let us consider another example of the way in which conflicts of the past are extended to the present through the *nasi*-belief.

When Asomu took Akeesia as his wife, Amonia was called in to give her to him. The *neseki* of Asomu had been married with two wives. The first wife the ancestor had taken in the upriver area, was a woman who as was discovered later, had reincarnated in Akeesia. Her husband had tormented her and troubled her with poverty during her lifetime. Later this man had taken a second wife in a downriver village, a woman who after her death reincarnated in Amonia. He returned with this second wife to Akeesia's *neseki*, whom he had left behind sick and poor. Thus Amonia was now called in to give Akeesia to Asomu, because, as they said, it was she (properly speaking her...
neseki), by whom Akeesia (meaning her neseki) had been wronged so badly. When Akeesia became pregnant and her child died directly after delivery, they turned again to Amonia to settle the matter ritually, because they said that it was Amonia who was bent on ruining her (kaba en a soso), as Amonia's neseki had done to Akeesia's neseki. Asomu, who meanwhile had become a servant in the church, said that he was no longer willing to join in the prayer. They let the matter take its own course, but till today Asomu's and Akeesia's weak physical condition is explicitly ascribed to this neseki-case.

The extension, of conflicts that took place between ancestors, to the living has other important implications and wide ramifications, as we shall see. Following this principle, person B, in whom person A after his death was reborn, is considered culpable for transgressions committed by A during his lifetime against an avenging spirit (misi a di kunu). Even person C, in whom B in turn has been reincarnated, is held culpable for the transgressions of his for-forbear A, and so on. The kunu besides taking revenge on the matrilineal kinsmen and descendants of the original provoker of his death, is bound to persecute those persons, in whom the original provoker is reincarnated.

The belief in a kind of indirect reincarnation is perhaps most evident in the case of the revenge plan of the gaan kunu. It will be remembered that Gaaman Adai, when he was planning to execute the witchcraft suspect Bomboi by burning him at the stake, ordered some persons from each village to help him. He thereby inculpated all these persons in the death of Bomboi. According to the kunu principle all matrilineal kinsmen and descendants of these persons, in other words, nearly all existing Matawai lineages(22), became threatened by the revenge action of this kunu. Moreover, people explained, the kunu sought as ready targets just those people who were reincarnated by the small group of people who had killed him, and even those reincarnated by the ones reincarnated by the guilty. Thus even today there are persons who are held personally culpable in the death of the gaan kunu and must settle the matter ritually with his medium(23). Although they themselves are innocent, the fact that they were reincarnated by an ancestor who was
involved in the murder, or as is more probable in most cases, reincarnated by an ancestor whose nesekí was guilty, as is indicated by the medium of the gaan kunu, they are now identified with the people who, as the Matawai believe, were among them, bi de a dendu, to have been involved in the plot. In this case the principle in which certain persons are held directly responsible interferes with the general kunu principle in which collective responsibility operates within the matrilineage. The fear inspired by all those considered to be accomplices in the death of the gaan kunu is clearly shown in the following case:

When a man died in Njukonde, nobody dared touch the corpse. It was believed that he was reincarnated by the former Gaaman Adai, who had been guilty of the death of so many people. It was he who had ordered the execution of a lineage member, who became a gaan kunu (24).

Also for this reason, before functionaries such as headmen and basia can be appointed, the medium of the gaan kunu must ascertain to what extent their nesekí or nesekí's nesekí was involved in the death of the gaan kunu. If involvement is ascertained the functionary will not be appointed, because it is believed that he will not live long. This is said to be the reason that a former headman of Misalibi died soon after his inauguration. He was so eager to fulfill the function of headman, that he refused to withdraw, when it became known that his nesekí belonged to the culprits of the gaan kunu.

As we have seen, there is a close relationship between burial and reincarnation analogous to planting and budding. This relationship might facilitate an understanding of the reason why certain people, in the past, were not buried. Persons accused of witchcraft (wisi) or those connected with certain taboos (kinaman) (e.g. those who died by drowning) (25) were intentionally not buried in the past to prevent their return to the world of the living, where their nesekí would be guilty again for their misery or sin.

In this context, it is interesting to note a comment of Bastide made in reference to the frequency of suicide cases in slave societies during the eighteenth century. The suicides, Bastide argues, were partly committed in despair, but also in the hope of being reborn in Africa.

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The plantation owners knew well about these conceptions, as seems apparent from their reaction. By decapitating the corpses of the suicides, the planters discouraged other slaves from committing suicide, since the other slaves feared that once decapitated they would be reborn mutilated (Bastide 1965: 11)(26).

Because of the taboo on calling the name of one's own neseki, and the name of those of his close relatives, it was not possible to collect quantitative data on nasi-cases or on cases of the reincarnation type, as Stevenson calls them(27). In addition, many people did not know their own or other people's neseki. We were, however, able to gather some data on this subject in the course of our fieldwork. Certain cases of illness were ascribed to neseki, and neseki were called in casual conversations, which we overheard. Out of the 34 cases, about which we have data, three were cases in which the neseki's neseki was known, but the direct neseki not. These three are not taken into consideration. Most ancestors returned in a person of the same sex, only two of the sixteen men were traced to female ancestors and four of fifteen women to male ancestors. In most cases there was a direct kinship relationship with the neseki. In one case a Matawai was said to have been reborn in the child of a Creole teacher, while as we saw in two cases Creole gold-diggers were said to have been reborn in Matawai. Children were traced to the father's kinsmen as well as to the mother's. This is in contrast to the situation of the Aluku, where generally the father's side is emphasized (Hurault 1961: 221).

Table 1 Origin of supernatural ancestor (neseki) in mother's and father's kimgroup in Matawai society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mother's kinsmen</th>
<th>father's kinsmen</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 17 out of 28 cases the distance between the child and his neseki was one of two generations. In 4 cases there was a gap of three generations.
and in 7 cases, a gap of 1 generation\(^{28}\). Concerning the interval between the time of death of the neseki and the birth of the child the modus was between one and two years, in some cases the time lapse was greater.

Finally we may pay attention to the fact that most neseki sondi are settled for persons when they have reached young adulthood. At that moment they are dependent on the still living close relatives of their neseki, mainly of the generation of their grandparents. Because these elder people know the cause and the circumstances of the death of their kinsmen, and are emotionally involved with conflicts which have happened in the past, they may extend these conflicts to the young generation. They, thereby, acquire a dominant position in the power system within the village community.

**Witchcraft**

The Matawai believe that people are able to harm or kill others by means of witchcraft (wisi). A witch (wisiman) is someone who uses supernatural means for destructive ends. These are actions which are considered illegitimate and are socially condemned. People who are consumed by envy and jealousy, those who harbour revengeful feelings against others, those whose hearts are not pure \(^{28}\) (en ati an limbo), are likely to commit witchcraft. They are people who abi hogi ati (have a bad heart), or abi taku ati, or as is also said abi wan ati fu wan wotuwan, whose heart is not actually perverted or wicked in its nature, but who resent something. Although illness and death may be ascribed to witchcraft, individuals suspected of it are never accused in public. They may be gossipied about behind their back. Witchcraft is considered to be one of the most serious transgressions. Because of the oath made in the past at the Pikin Saramacca (see p. 239), the God of the Saramacca river has a taboo for witchcraft. Those violating his taboos by practising witchcraft are believed to be punished by him with death.

The attitude towards individuals suspected of witchcraft has changed significantly in the course of time. Before the turn of the century accusations of witchcraft were quite frequent, as can be inferred from historical sources. Persons suspected of witchcraft were charged at the
gaaman. Commonly the suspected person was called to come to the gaaman and was subjected to a trial. He had to drink an oath (bebe soi). If he was found guilty, he would die within a short time, killed by the ancestors (gadukonde). If he was found to be innocent nothing would happen to him. People charged with witchcraft could be exiled from the Matawai territory. Sometimes they were persecuted by their kinsmen, which in some cases lead to cruel executions.

We have no evidence as to whether this trial procedure remained or felt into disuse after the turn of the century. We do know, however, that a post-mortem trial to determine the supernatural cause of the death by means of the carry-oracle was a standard procedure, applied in all cases. As far as we could verify, this was a common procedure in the upstream villages until the establishment of the church in the beginning of the 1920s. The carry-oracle was used to determine the ultimate cause of the death: whether the person died a natural death, called gadusiki (illness of God) because it was his time, as is said, or whether his death had a supernatural cause resulting from his own use of witchcraft against others (en egi wisi) for which he was punished by the ancestors, or from the witchcraft of another (wotu sembe wisi)\(^{29}\).

For the trial by the carry-oracle (bongola), nails and hair clippings of the deceased were wrapped in cloths and medicines (deesi), and this bundle was carried on a plank by two pall bearers. The bundle was believed to contain the sabi, the component of knowledge of the deceased The bundle guided the movements of the bearers in answer to questions that were put to the oracle. While the bongola was carried in this manner in order to determine who was guilty in the death and the way in which his inheritance and succession should to be dealt with, the coffin (with the corpse) was carried in a similar manner in order to discover more details concerning cause of death. The coffin would rush at the individual who had killed the deceased through witchcraft, and provided them with more information about the reasons and the way in which, he had bewitched him. If it was ascertained that the deceased was killed because of his own wisi, all his possessions had to be brought to Santigoon, the centre of the Gaan Tata cult. One of the major aims of this cult was to combat witchcraft\(^{30}\) (see p. 195).
Formerly, a person found to be a witch became the object of hostility and persecution. Now their attitudes towards him changed. He was believed to be exposed to supernatural danger in that the spirit of his deceased victim was likely to harm him. They tried to protect him by reconciling him with the spirit of the deceased and at the same time by separating them ritually, or as the Matawai say, to remove the hand of the deceased from him (fu puu di koto sembe mau). The coffin was used as an oracle to determine the fine, the number of bottles of rum for the libation which was to be offered to the spirit of the deceased by the reputed witch. Hoping that they could satisfy the spirit of the deceased, they would pray to him (da tongo) as follows: ‘Look, here is the man who killed you. But instead of killing him in turn, we let him pay you. Look, with these bottles of rum he pays you. Here is your paiman (payment), we pour out to you. Now leave this case to us’. Sometimes the coffin refused the fine, indicating that he did not consider the case as finished. He was still determined to kill the witch. Indeed when this happened, the death would be ascribed to the spirit of his former victim, who had taken revenge.

After the introduction of Christianity with its increasingly strong opposition to divination practices, these oracles gradually fell into disuse. The public investigation into witchcraft was consequently pushed into the background. Another divination method, which also existed in the past, is used these days to ascertain cases of witchcraft. These divinatory judgements are obtained by consulting the akaa kuja, a calabash commonly used in cases of illness. By putting some sand on a person's head and in this way catching his soul (akaa) into the calabash, in which medicines are put, they acquire an oracle to which questions can be put to determine the cause of illness and death. The quivering motions of the calabash on someone's head are interpreted as answers to questions put to this oracle. By means of this oracle, for example, they are able to find out if the illness is caused by cursing (siba), by witchcraft of another person or as a result of the punishment of the ancestors for his own use of witchcraft. The name of the witch is also discovered through this method, but action against the suspected person will not be taken. People believe that God or the ancestors, who do not love people harming others in such a way, will punish him.
Sometimes, however, people will use counter-actions, by applying anti-witchcraft. In the downstream area we heard about more cases of witchcraft than in the upstream area. In one downstream village we observed a mock fight. The matrilineal kinsmen of a witchcraft victim came to take vengeance against the kinsmen of the reputed witch. They refer to this kind of fight as *meki toobi* (quarreling). In the past, large-scale fights (*boto feti*) took place in this sort of case and preceded the ritual praying to the ancestors. The mock fight we observed was a formalized and dramatized performance of the revenge actions which were common in the past. In this case kinsmen of the witch were scolded, their houses were beaten with sticks and machetes, and they were threatened with the burning of their houses. However, no bodily injury was inflicted on them. They were forced to admit that the others were right (*ju abi leti*) and to pay a large fine.

The Matawai are familiar with various witchcraft methods and differentiate them linguistically. They say that there are people who take off their skin. They suck other people or drink their blood. The following morning they take on their skin again. These people are called *azeman*. Old people (*gaan pesembe*) in particular are suspected of these practices, seeking their victims in adults and little children, who become feeble and meager. They are believed to do it consciously and willfully. With this kind of witchcraft is associated a feeble light which shines early in the morning and slowly disappears. When someone is recognized and suspected by his behaviour, countermeasures may be taken. His skin is taken and rubbed with pepper. Although the belief in *azeman* is widespread, people were not able to point to actual cases of this kind of witchcraft, at least not in the upstream area.

Magical practices such as the preparation of witchcraft substances for another (*buta wisi da sembe; buta sondi da sembe*) are far more common. There are various procedures with which magical substances are manipulated for destructive ends, like the burying of a bottle with witchcraft (*bei bata*), holding a hand to another person while witchcraft is hidden under the fingernails, sprinkling of such substances over food or drinks thereby poisoning it, or using the earth of the burying ground.
(gee bi doti) to touch another. These practices are performed covertly, to avoid observation. No wonder charms are badly needed. Protective charms, called tapa, lit. ‘to close’ and ‘to stop’, are prepared by the specialist for a client (a buta en da ju). Charms are numerous and varied. A bottle (tapa bata) buried under the threshold will neutralize the force of witchcraft and protect the people who live in the house. Medicines hung in a string around the neck (tatai) protect the wearer. People can also protect themselves by ritually washing with particular herbs (wasi deesi) or by cutting notches at the joints and rubbing them with a magical substance (koti). The great need of charms is also caused by the fact that it is believed that people are inclined to test others to find out if they are protected against witchcraft (fii luku efu ju abi tapa a ju sikini).

Particular kinds of illnesses or accidents, such as blindness or paralysis, are imputed to result from this form of witchcraft.

Charles of the village of Pniël went out working balata together with a group of men from the upstream area. A vigorous man, he suddenly became paralysed and was no longer able to speak. In the town hospital he was treated for a year without success. His illness was ascribed to witchcraft. Six years earlier a group of men were working for the Geological and Mining Service. They stayed in a working camp opposite Pijeti. One day they came to Pniël and made trouble (suku toobi). The men of Pniël came to blows with them. Charles beat one of them so badly that they believed that this man had taken revenge by means of witchcraft.

The Matawai are convinced that other ethnic groups not only have more expertise in witchcraft, but are also conversant with more dangerous methods and apply them more frequently. The Negroes of the Para-district, for example, are suspected of rubbing their skin with a substance which causes leprosy in whomever they touch.

Applying witchcraft by means of bai wisi or bai taku sondo (by buying witchcraft, or bad things) is considered as the purchase of magical substances at an expert, but in some cases spirits are involved who are made subservient. Especially bush spirits of the type ampuku, akantamasi

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
and the dwarf-like *bakulu* are inclined to let themselves be bribed for these kinds of nefarious practices, as long as they are served in the proper way by offerings of food. The witch thus calls the help of this spirit to harm his victim. The illness that is caused by action of this spirit who possesses his victim, can only be treated by driving out the tormenting spirit in time (*wasi en puu*). Uncommon events are most likely to be ascribed to this kind of supernatural power:

The inhabitants of Wanati were alarmed by a rattling noise they used to hear at the waterside in the evening. They presumed that a *taku sondi* was producing this noise, possibly an *ampuku* or *bakulu*. However nobody dared to go and look fearing to be killed, because only its owner (*en masa*) can remove it, as they said.

Unusual behaviour may also lead to suspicions of witchcraft.

Some years ago the upstream villages were threatened by jaguars (*hogi meti*). They ventured close to the villages, killing hunting dogs and even troubling people. On a hunting trip Nathan was attacked and wounded by a huge jaguar, from whom he was able to escape thanks to his hunting dog who attacked the jaguar from behind. Now this jaguar was considered to be a spirit sent by a witch to attack him. Soon old Elias was imputed to be the witch. He regularly went out hunting with Nathan, always returning empty-handed, while Nathan returned with lots of game. These suspicions were confirmed, by Elias himself, who shortly before his death admitted having used witchcraft and named people he had killed by his malicious practices. In fact, such a relevation was very uncommon in Matawai.

Applying witchcraft involves the risk of being affected in return, as happened to the men in the following case:

Two migrants, Jemias and Lisienne, married to two sisters, had to stay in the forest in connection with their work as bush-policemen. For long periods they remained in the forest, far from their wives who stayed behind in their houses in the
outskirts of Paramaribo. To be sure that their wife would not be visited by other men, both men bought witchcraft and instructed the spirit to kill any man, who would have relations with their wives. No man in fact visited their wife in their absence. However, when they came back and wanted to resume relations with them, they were stricken. All treatment was in vain and they died not long after each other.

Finally, a special kind of spirit that is bought for applying witchcraft, is bakulu. Matawai refer to this kind of witchcraft as sending a bakulu, manda bakulu. The spirit is a small dwarf-like androide, about knee high, who speaks with a nasal voice and lives in a bottle. In contradistinction to bush spirits like ampuku, bakulu are made by men and are bought by a witch to work for him or to harm his enemies. The owner can give the spirit instructions, and point out people to injure or kill. The bakulu demands compensation. He must be provided with certain kinds of food, such as eggs. He may even claim the owner's own child. This spirit is feared more than all other bush spirits. People do not dare call him by name and commonly refer to him obliquely while gesticulating with their hands as high as their knee above the ground, as di sembe aki so, that small man, or more impersonally as to di sondi, that thing.

In the downstream villages, where belief in bakulu plays a more important role than upriver, bakulu are frequently observed, as is said:

One evening Lesli, a boy of Balen, walked through the village and supposed that he saw a child standing near a house. He asked him ‘what are you doing there?’ But when he wanted to strike him over his head, he felt how frizzy the hair was and realized that it was not a child. He ran to his house, followed at his heels by the bakulu, and just managed to close the door. The next morning he was caught by fever, and when they examined the cause by means of an oracle, they concluded: ‘o, it was a bakulu’.

In the upstream villages we only recorded one case involving bakulu. This happened in 1962.

It was said that Moni from the upriver village of Sukibaka
had bought a bakulu. It was not known if he did so intending to let the bakulu work for him or to harm other people, but when he went to work at the Pikin Saramacca he fell ill and died. Meanwhile ‘the thing’ had stayed back in his house. Toi, his sister's son had to go to the downriver area to find someone to remove it for him. In the Amerindian village of Bigipoika he finally met with an Indian who was the owner. He took him upriver by boat. At first even this man did not dare to touch ‘the thing’. Later he succeeded to getting hold of the bottle, in which he was said to live. The Indian's hands trembled, when he took the bottle in his hands. But finally he removed it for them.

In the downstream villages illness and death are frequently ascribed to this tormenting spirit. Non-Matawai, especially Pala-enge and Foto-enge, are always suspected of having sent the bakulu. It is believed that in some cases the bakulu does not kill the individual originally pointed out by his owner as victim, but will become an avenging spirit, victimizing the lineage of the original victim, choosing several members of this lineage as medium to make himself known (kisi sembe a jedi). A clear example of this is the bakulu kunu of the Abennet bee, mentioned by Green (1974: 254-5). This kunu was provoked around 1910. In fact the desertion of the old village of Jacobkonde and the subsequent settlement in Njukonde was an attempt to escape the operation of this kunu. There are indications that a bakulu kunu may even manifest itself in an affinal lineage of the original victim, as is shown in the following case:

Alienne, a young woman of the village of Misalibi, who was living with her husband in town, had been ill for a long time. Within half a year she had lost a lot of weight. The Matawai readily recognized the cause of her illness and said that a bakulu was fighting with her. They inferred this from the way she turned her neck. Attempts were made to induce the bakulu who had possessed her to express and pronounce himself (seeka). These attempts took place in the Matawai area, on emancipation day (1 July) when she visited her home village. But it only
grew worse. At the beginning of November treatment was sought with a Matawai specialist living in town, but he was also unable to cure her. Meanwhile her kinsmen went to a lukuman in town to discover who sent the bakulu, since according to the Matawai, the Creoles were always sending bakulu. Various rumours were spread in the Matawai migrant community about the person presumed to be guilty. Someone had pointed her out to a bakulu while she was attending a party in the outskirts. A man whom she had rejected had sent the bakulu to her. Meanwhile Alienne’s condition increasingly deteriorated. Her husband did not sleep anymore and all felt pity for her. In mid-November they decided to bring her to Mao, downriver along the Saramacca where she had kinsmen through her father. She was accompanied by a number of Matawai townsmen. Here another person was found guilty of having send the bakulu to her. A former tenant of the house in which she lived in town, who had not wanted to leave the house when it was sold, had in revenge bought a bakulu from a specialist and had left him in the house. Only a week after she had been brought to Mao she died.

After a month Stella, a young woman from Misalibi, lineage member of Alienne (her MMMZDDDD), started to exhibit the same symptoms. Hastily she was brought over to Kwakugoon, because in the tribal area, meanwhile, the ‘real’ identity of the bakulu of Alienne had been discovered. This was also affirmed by elder migrants from the downstream villages in town. Lebega, a woman of Balen, was thought to have incurred this bakulu. When she had worked in town for a woman in the Para district and stole something from her, the woman had sent a bakulu to her. This bakulu turned itself into a kunu and chose his first victim in the lineage of Lebega, killing Lebega's sister's daughter, a young woman. Afterwards this kunu was said to have crossed over to the lineage of Lebega's husband of Misalibi. He made Alienne, the daughter of Lebega's husband's sister, his victim. Now they were afraid that the kunu would seize Stella, Lebega's husband's niece (his MMZDDDD), if she returned to her own village.
Cursing

The last section was devoted to a consideration of the ways in which people can harm others by resorting to witchcraft, a particular kind of illegitimate use of supernatural powers. There are still other ways in which supernatural powers can be manipulated for destructive ends\(^{(33)}\), the most important of which is cursing. Cursing in Matawai is called *siba*, *taki tong* or *taki buka* and is a form of invocation. If a person engaged in conflict, feels himself so wronged, misunderstood, offended or shamed by the other, that he maintains a grudge against him (*holi ati*), he may, in his indignation, curse the other by calling on supernatural powers to harm him, i.e. to strike him with illness or death. The individual who invokes the curse turns to *Masa Gadu* (the God in which concepts of traditional religion and Christianity have been syncretized), to lesser deities of the Matawai pantheon, to the collective ancestors or, as is most frequently the case, to a closely related ancestor. It is believed that if the invoker is justified in the conflict, these powers will immediately interfere injuring or even killing his opponent.

Firstly, we will describe a case which happened some 30 years ago and was considered as a case in which the invoker was believed to be justified to his act of *siba*.

Old Tata Awai from the village of Maipakiiki was known to be a powerful sorcerer and healer. After he had worked on the coast lumbering, he brought his logs to sell at Kwakugoon. Bush Negroes used to sell the wood at the saw mill, where it was bought by Creoles. One day, when Tata Awai sold his lumber one Creole, Johny, paid him only part of the money. Knowing that he was cheated, he went to the riverside and cursed the man. He invoked the water gods (*watagadu*) and told them to share the money with this man. He argued that while he had lost so much sweat, this Creole had refused to give him his rightful share. Therefore he told them to do as they pleased with him. Some days afterwards when Johny went to the little office in Kwakugoon to take his money, he fell by accident on...
the sawmill and lost his leg. The accident was imputed by the Matawai to the revenge of Awai. The water gods had punished the man for his wrongdoing.

Cursing, however, is a precarious matter, for if it is spoken out unjustly, the ancestors will turn against the invoker himself or against one of his lineage members. According to a general principle in traditional belief people may become victim of supernatural powers by the unjust action of one of their lineage members. It is for these reasons that siba is considered by most people to be the most dangerous form of witchcraft, insisting that siba en na gaan wisi. As we have explained before, the God of the Saramacca river is thought to have taboos for witchcraft (wisi), bad feelings (hogi atti) and cursing (siba). Therefore invocation calls for strong supernatural sanctions.

The pronouncement of a curse outside of the village, on the river or in the forest is believed to be particularly dangerous because of the risk of direct intervention of supernatural beings, which may cause the invoker to be drowned or killed by a falling tree. Moreover, when no other people are around, the risk of being killed is far more greater, because the pronouncement is not overheard and the invoker can not be forced to revoke his words in time. The syndromes and circumstances of death ascribed to siba differ from those ascribed to witchcraft. While diseases related to witchcraft are often enduring, heavy gripes and sudden strokes are ascribed to cursing.

Formerly the ritual revoking of the words pronounced during the curse was, as far as we know, the only customary action taken to evade the intervention of supernatural powers. Nowadays it is still one of the ritual measures taken directly after it has become public that a person has been cursing. The ritual is called fula buka (rinsing one's mouth) and is conducted in the following manner: Some lineage elders come together and the invoker is required to sit down in the middle. In a calabash water is prepared in which herbs are broken down (one of the most widely used of which is lembe konde wwi). He takes a mouthful of water from the calabash and sprays it on the ground through his teeth, repeating the words he has uttered during his curse. First he calls on Masa Jehova (the Christian God), as is customary today, and the ancestors,
then he revokes his words, underlining them with the frequent spraying of water, and begs them to protect him from harm. He ends his prayer with the following standard phrase: ‘Now I take my words back. I do not have anything of it in my heart any longer. Let nothing harm me, neither in the day, nor at night’. The elders back him up in his prayer, adding: ‘Look, as we have settled this case, let this man walk in the night and may nothing happen him. Let him walk in the day and may nothing happen to him. May this case continue being settled as it is settled by the council and may nothing happen to this man any longer’.

In the upstream area Christian beliefs became quite familiar. In Christianity the concepts of swearing and cursing were also well-known. Sermons in church warned that swearing and cursing would surely be punished by God. Soon the traditional concept of cursing (siba) became closely associated with these Christian concepts, which were referred to by a word derived from the Dutch ‘vloek’, fuluku. These terms came to be used interchangeably both for calling on supernatural powers to strike another person, and for the other form of cursing (siba), in which a person was believed to be able to call a curse upon himself (ju siba ju seept), a traditional concept which has also been reported in other Bush Negro societies(36). Such an invocation is generally uttered when a person feels himself so offended, misjudged, misdone and especially shamed by another, that he as it were becomes beside himself with anger and calls on an ancestor or God to kill him, or to come and take him, as it is usually formulated. These words, which like those of the other form of siba, are thought to give rise to the direct intervention of supernatural beings, are believed to be just as dangerous. The actions that are taken towards the invoker are the same as for the person who curses someone else.

During the government of Gaaman Kiné, who was in power between 1924 and 1947, a tribal law was instituted, in which cursing (siba) was punished. The law claimed that the person who pronounced a curse committed illegal behaviour. Such a person was brought to the pole of the ancestors and humiliated by being whipped publically. In addition he had to pay a fine consisting of a number of bottles of rum. The exact amount of the bottles depended upon the time that had passed between the day that the siba words had been uttered and the day on which the act
became known and he could be punished. If only one night had been passed, he had to pay one bottle of rum, if two nights, two bottles were required until the maximum of one *benki* (16 bottles) was reached if the case became public two weeks or more after it was committed. The revoking rite (*jula buka*) was also required. These measures are taken to prevent that cursing does not become public until the invoker himself becomes ill and by means of divination (*fii-fii*) or a medium the cause of his illness is revealed as being a result of an act of cursing some time before, a common occurrence. Because cursing is believed to be a special offence against the main avenging spirit (*misi a di gaan kunu*) of the upriver region\(^{37}\), prayers have to be made and a libation to be poured out, a fine consisting of one *benki* of rum to this avenging spirit.

It was under the direct influence of Christianity that a change was brought about which had significant repercussions on the development of traditional religious concepts. The strategy of the mission, along with the introduction of Christianity, was to supplant the traditional values, on which the socio-religious life of the Bush Negroes depended, with western values. In their attack on the lineage organization, they tried to introduce a new social structure which crossed lineage and village boundaries, and to strengthen the elementary family. On a lower level they tried to stress the authority of the father over his children as opposed to that of lineage elders over their sister's sons. Along the same lines they stressed in their preachings the responsibility of the individual towards God instead of the joint responsibility of lineage members towards each other.

Gradually, due to the influence of Christianity, the opinion was increasingly voiced among the upriver Matawai that it was indeed wrong when innocent people became the victim of the unlawful acts, such as cursing, of their lineage members. Because, as they argued, it were not these people who had urged their kinsmen to utter these words, they could not be compelled to help their kinsmen pay their fine for a libation to the ancestors. In the 1960s people flocked to the great council in Posugunu to settle this matter with God and the ancestors. After a libation of rum was poured out to the ancestors (*tuwe daan*) prayers were said in which they implored the ancestors, from that time on to kill only the person who had spoken the curse, saying ‘may henceforth the
curse go back to the person who made the curse’.

This change in opinion concerning *siba* has had important consequences. Fewer people were inclined to curse others by means of *siba*. In recent years, the number of illnesses ascribed to this form of *siba* was very small indeed. One of the rare cases, in the recent past, in which a person's death was ascribed to the curse of another, was an occasion used to reinforce the recently established rule. This happened at the end of the 1960s.

When an old woman of the village of Wanati died preparations had to be made to cook food for the assembled people (*lanti*). As usual, this event attracted a great deal of people from other villages, who came together on the day before the whole night wake in the shed made for this purpose. Coconuts were needed for the preparation of the coconut rice, a great preference on such occasions. Feldia, the young female *basia* went to Joram, her ‘uncle’ (MMB) to ask permission to cut some coconuts from his tree. After Feldia had cut them, she brought some coconuts to her uncle, thus showing him the usual respect. Joram, however, who was a heavy drinker on such occasions, could not remember that he had given her permission to cut them. In anger he cursed her (*a taki tonga da di mujee*) and this worked out badly. At the moment of the invocation she was pregnant. When the time of delivery approached she hastily had to be brought to the clinic, were one of the twins was born. After delivery of the other twin, a dead child, the mother also died. After her death her kinsmen tried to insure, by means of a ritual prayer, that she would not turn into an avenging spirit and harm one of them.

There are indications that up to the present days cursing of others occurs more frequently downriver than upriver. In addition, people in the downriver villages are more inclined to ascribe cases of illness to this kind of cursing.

When we visited the village of Njukonde, an elderly woman inquired about the health of a lineage member, Joseph. This man was treated in the upriver clinic. When we informed her
that he still could not walk without a stick, she confided in a half-whisper that he had been crippled, and explained that his wife of Makajapingo had called a curse upon him by saying that if he would go once again to his other wife in Santigoon, an accident would strike him. ‘You can not defy the women of Makajapingo’, she added, having another woman of this village in mind, who was supposed to have stricken her former husband by supernatural means not long ago. The man, who recently had left her for a younger one, had become gravely ill (venereal disease) and had gone to town for treatment.

Also as a result of the influence of Christian ideas about cursing, especially in the upstream area, the fear for self-cursing has increased. At this time there is no consensus about the agent believed to punish the person who is committing siba. Some believe that it is the ancestors who will punish the individual, while others think that it is the Christian God. All agree that when someone has made an invocation, direct action must to be taken. Some say, to avoid provoking the anger of the ancestors. Others believe in accordance with Christian tenets, that invocation which provokes death at a self-determined time, unjustly interferes in God's matters thereby denying that He alone knows and determines the moment of death. Moreover, since they believe that when a person is cursing the Devil enters his heart, the punishment of whipping is thought to be the only way to exorcise the spirit. For those who consider the act of cursing to be a transgression against the ancestors, this punishment is justified because it is meted out at the pole of the ancestors.

It is remarkable that in the upstream area, were, as we have seen, cursing of others only rarely occurs, self-cursing is a frequent phenomenon. This kind of siba is often immediately renounced. During a period of one year, we witnessed twelve cases of self-cursing in the four most upriver villages. Generally the whole village community was mobilized to settle the matter ritually. Before we consider further the consequences of self-cursing, we will present some cases:

Mattias made Olka pregnant. She was a young divorcee. At the same time he initiated sexual relations with Olka's younger
sister Eseline, who was still unmarried. When these facts became public, he came into conflict with his wife, Linia, who belonged to the same lineage as Olka and Eseline. She chased him out of the house. At the palaver he was reconciled with his wife. It was decided that he would be punished by a whipping and a fine of some bottles of rum. Also Eseline would be whipped. Because of her pregnancy Olka would not be punished at that moment, but only after delivery. Bundles of twigs with which the whipping would be meted out, were already cut and people forced their way out of the council house outside to see the whipping at the ancestor pole. There was much excitement. Mattias was whipped and escorted to a nearby cooking house. Then Eseline had to step forward. But suddenly there was some confusion. The unlookers got upset and hysterically screamed to each other, running to and fro. Fiida, Eseline's mother's sister was roaring like a madman, while Awani, her mother's brother could not contain himself and had to be kept under control by four men. Finally Eseline was pushed to the ancestor pole. People could hardly prevent Awani from attacking her. They just heard Eseline invoke her deceased mother to come to kill her, thus cursing herself (siba). After she had been pushed forward to be whipped, the villagers remained, agitatedly discussing the event for hours in small groups. The fact that the girl pronounced these words at the ancestor pole filled them with horror. Only after a long time the palaver was continued. Eseline had to revoke her words ritually (fula buka) and was fined half a bottle of rum because of the siba.

Another case:

Darkness had already fallen over Wanati when Apodo, an affine (konlibi) in the village, called some kinsmen of his wife together. He told them that he had quarreled with his wife Waana. When he asked her to fill the lamp with kerosene, she snapped that the kerosine was finished. Moreover she accused him of all kinds of things and reproached him that he neglected her. After having complained that she could not stand this
life any longer, she finally in her anger invoked her ancestors to kill her over there, under the waki tree. Apodo now did not want to stay any longer in the house and announced that although it was night already, he would take the boat and go to his own village. He was afraid of the consequences of her curse if he would stay that night. They urged him to stay and he agreed on the condition that, as he said, the woman would revoke her words (di tongo di a taki a mu fula en puu). Immediately they began to settle the case. The following morning a small palaver was held in which Waana was fined to pay a bottle of rum, because of her cursing. However they hastened to admit that in fact she had been right and in the future Apodo had to supply her with essentials.

In the last case it was a man who pronounced the curse:

At midnight Caluina, Aseni's wife, awakened some kinsmen in her neighbourhood and called: ‘Hurry up, look at Aseni he is sick to death’. Aseni was groaning with pain in his belly and refused to explain what was wrong with him. Finally he admitted that he had called a curse upon himself (taki tongo). He had invoked his grandfather A. and his supernatural ancestor (neseki). He begged them to kill him, to drag him into the forest so that they would not be able to bury him. They hastened to make him revoke his words. However, a short time later he repeated his curse. Little by little he felt himself growing sicker and being sure that he would die soon, he divided his five boats among his most beloved kinsmen. Not before the cocks began to crow, when he felt sleepy, did he send the others who had remain awake with him, to go to bed. Early in the morning the news of his illness and his curse was passed over from his wife's to his own village. There was a large palaver. People hurried to the other side of the river to attend the meeting. Some of them first peeped in to look at Aseni who was now walking around in his yard and felt somewhat better. After having heard the stories of his affines who spend the whole night with him, they concluded that it was
indeed a serious case, because, as they said, one did not invoke lightly A, who had become a major avenging spirit nor did one invoke one's own neseki. They were afraid that the consequences would be grave. However, when they called Aseni in the palaver and asked him to tell himself what he had done, he did not want to admit that he had provoked an act of siba. He started to grumble (gangi) and reproached the others of lying about him. He had just been ill and that was all, he said. Finally he was forced to admit to the deed. After, revoking his words, others supported him to pray for his life. One of them directed himself to the major avenging spirit, saying: ‘You were there quietly in Santigoon (39) and now Aseni called you. But I beg you, return and don't kill him’. The immediate cause of Aseni’s act was the following event. Shortly before the turn of the year some kinswomen of Aseni had called him. They knew that Aseni liked to drink excessively at such festivities, but also that he could not stand too much liquor and used to quarrel easily. Therefore they had warned him not to quarrel and agreed that if he would become involved in a conflict he had to pay them, otherwise they would pay him. After hearing that Aseni had quarreled with his wife, his sister reproached Aseni that he had not adhered to his promise. Aseni felt ashamed and when he arrived home he called a curse upon himself.

Women seem to be more inclined to curse themselves than men. The Matawai recognize this fact and explain it by arguing that women are more inflammable (en ati bonu esi). Therefore, they say, they are more inclined to show their indignation than men. When men take recourse to siba, the curse is usually spoken during a state of drunkenness.

Shame appears to be the main motivating factor in self-cursing. Shame is a focal theme in this society. The Matawai commonly say: ‘Sjen ta kii mi’ (I am shamed to death). Particularly when a person is publicly charged be they right or wrong, feelings of shame are aroused. For this reason, for example, it is preferable to settle marital disputes in an intimate circle instead of making them public, and so being forced
to settle them in a community-wide palaver.

The question remains whether people who curse themselves really want to die. Sometimes, indeed, the offender refuses to revoke his words ritually, thereby leaving the responsibility to others. However, it seems evident that often the purpose of *siba*, as in the case of attempted suicides in our society, is to draw attention to a serious problem. In our last case, for example, the old man Aseni had strong ambitions to fill the role of village headman (which recently was passed to another younger kinsman), and felt that others did not allot to him the authority he expected.

The frequency of self-cursing in the upstream area, has, aside from the many cases of illness and death ascribed to it, another implication. Self-cursing by means of *siba* has become such a focal point in religious belief that it is now one of the main means by which new avenging spirits (*kunu*) are evoked in the upstream area. It is believed that a person justified in a conflict with another, who curses himself and subsequently dies, will return to take revenge on the kinsmen of the person with whom he quarelled, sickening and killing them. The following case is a recent example of this:

The people of Boslanti were stricken with grief at the sudden death of Adoi. This young woman, while pounding rice at the height of the day, had suddenly fallen on the ground and died. Immediately after her death people whispered to each other that surely *fio fio* had been involved. Indeed the first indications of a conflict in which she had been involved were revealed by one of the candidates together with whom she had been preparing for communion in church. It appeared that when she had accompanied her husband to the village near the great falls of which he was headman, they had become involved in a conflict concerning the gardenplot. She opposed her husband's plan to clear the gardenplot near his village that year. Although the conflict had been rapidly settled in his village, after their return to Boslanti their relationship had remained so strained, that she had declared to the evangelist that she was no longer willing to prepare for a marriage celebration.
in church with her husband. But soon a lineage medium revealed the real cause of her death. Not only had Adoi been involved in a conflict with her husband, but when she returned to her village she had come in a ‘poi konde’ (spoiled village) that is a village in which the sphere was troubled because of another important impending conflict. It was revealed that Kisla, a classificatory sister of Adoi had been involved in a conflict with old Paulina who had died only some months before. Young Kisla and Paulina, who belonged to the same lineage, although to different matri-segments, had been neighbours. In fact it was Paulina who had granted Kisla permission to set up a washing house in her yard. When one of Kisla's children climbed up the matapi pole, and had broken Paulina's calabash tree, the calabashes fell on the ground and began to rot. Mampoi now turned to Kisla to make a complaint. Lightly tempered Kisla proposed immediately to divide the yard and started to tear down the washing house. Paulina, who felt highly angered and ashamed about this act, would have called a curse upon herself and died. Although at that time no official attempts were made to seek the cause of her death, her kinsmen had already pointed out that the symptoms of her short illness and the way in which she had died were similar to the circumstances of the death of another woman, who had died after self-cursing. It was believed that Adoi's death was due to the intervention of the spirit of Mampoi, taking revenge on a lineage segment member of Kisla, interfering in the quarrel between Adoi and her husband. Now, ritual action was needed to prevent this spirit from taking revenge on other kinsmen. The case was laid before the medium of the major avenging spirit. Ritual prayers were held at the ancestor pole of Boslanti, where Paulina's spirit was propitiated by means of an offering of rum. The spirit was entreated not to bother Kisla or any other near kinsman of Kisla anymore. A large fine of a tin of rum and ten cloths were promised. Finally, Kisla herself and other close kinsmen were protected against any eventual damaging influence of this ancestor spirit by ritual washing in a
backyard during the afternoon for some days.

The above mentioned recent case gives an indication of the significance of the concept of *siba*, and especially self-cursing for the religious life of the Matawai. Indeed we would suggest that in this way traditional religious beliefs and practices have been strengthened. Because of the large number of recent avenging spirits believed to have been evoked by means of self-cursing in the upstream area, the number of public measures taken to ritually protect lineages and involving a great number of people, have strongly increased. They have become so important for the upstream Matawai that they could override the strong grip which the Christian mission has exerted in this area for a long time.

**Continuity and Discontinuity**

The discussion about ancestors and elders, which was held among Africanists, is relevant for Matawai conceptions about ancestors, and their significance in relation to the corporate group of the lineage and the authority of the elders. In this discussion, Kopytoff points out that anthropologists, due to their western conceptual ethnocentrism, have created a false dichotomy between ‘elders’ and ‘ancestors’ in their descriptions and analyses of African societies. He shows that in many of these societies ancestors and elders are terminologically as well as conceptually merged. He emphasizes that there is a continuum of eldership and ancestorship, and concludes that in dealing with African cultures the terms ‘ancestor worship’ and ‘ancestor cult’ are ‘semantically inappropriate, analytically misleading and theoretically unproductive’ and that African ancestorship is only an aspect of the broader phenomenon of ‘eldership’ (Kopytoff 1971: 140).

Brain agrees with Kopytoff that many African languages do not make terminological distinctions between ancestors and elders, he points out, however, that they still have a distinct term for the concept of ancestor spirit. He rightly indicates that despite a kind of continuum between elders and ancestors in terms of authority, there are differences in power between them. Brain summarizes his position by admitting that he agrees with Kopytoff ‘that the term “ancestor worship”, but not “ancestor
cult’ is “semantically inappropriate”. The latter term is valid... (For) although it is true that Africans generally treat their elders with more respect and reverence than is customary in western society, this does not necessarily place them on a par with the ancestors, who are believed to be aware not only of the actions, but also of the thoughts of their living descents’ (Brain 1973: 131).

Matawai conceptions of ancestors and elders include elements of both continuity and discontinuity. Whether ancestors and elders are terminologically or conceptually distinguished is dependent on the context. The term *gaanwan* (old one or great one), which is semantically most closely associated with the concept of relative age and eldership, is most frequently used to refer to a lineage elder. It is applied as a term of address as well as of reference, both for a specific elder and for the elders collectively. The derived term *gaan sembe* (the elder people), is only used as a term of reference for the elders collectively. Both these terms are used by the Matawai when directing themselves towards the ancestors to solicit their approval, their guidance in decisions taken in lineage councils, to ask for their protection before undertaking dangerous actions, and to avert eventual harm. In fact in these contexts the continuity of the judicial authority maintained by the elders over their living lineage members even after death, is stressed. In particular, present political functionaries and living elders as representative authority holders of the present village and lineage, fulfill the role of links between lineage and ancestors and are considered most authorized to direct themselves to these ancestors. The same authority model which accords elders judicial authority over their younger lineage members, while they are in turn controlled by their oldest generation, also operates when crossing the boundary from living to dead, thus granting ancestors who died in the distant past authority over the recently dead.

In another context, however, the relationship between living and dead is conceptualized as discontinuous. The ancestors have a closer relationship to the supreme being, other gods and deities in the afterlife (*gadukonde*), thus they are credited with important powers over the living. It is in such contexts that some ancestors will be referred to as *koto sembe* or *kunu*, terms which are used mostly to refer to

**Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname**
individual ancestor spirits.

The conceptualization of continuity between living and dead is given expression in rituals in which aspects of communality and reunion are stressed. We may refer to the ritual of communally drinking rum by all present, which concludes most public events, councils, rites of passage etc.. In this ritual, expression is given to the feeling of involvement and agreement with the decisions of all present; former factions are in this way reunited. This reunion is often emphasized when, for instance, the widow is brought back to her own village at the end of the mourning period. The content of two bottles of rum, which were given by the two kingroups, are mixed and poured into other bottles to be equally divided and drunk by all the members of both groups present. Libations to the ancestors, in which rum (tuwe daan) or water (tuwe wata) is poured out, are made with the same purpose: to involve the ancestors in the life of their kinsmen and in their decisions.

Continuity is also stressed in food offerings (tuwe njanjan) made to the ancestors and accompanied by the communal eating of food. Symbolic communion is achieved by putting together different kinds of food on one plate, sometimes even mixing it on the plate before handing it out to the participants.

Finally, communion is expressed through bodily contact, for example, in the funerary rite. Before the coffin is carried to the cemetery, an elder directs himself to the spirit inside the house. People stand in long rows, radiating from inside the house to the outside, each holding the person who is before him on the shoulder, to keep in touch with the departing ancestor. In this manner, all present kinsmen take leave of his spirit.

On the other hand the conceptualization of discontinuity between living and dead, and more generally between the world of man and the supernatural world, is expressed in a variety of ritual forms, in which separation and apartness are stressed. We refer to a number of symbolic actions, meant to loosen and cut the ties between living and dead, as described in the ritual complex of the wasi-djafu-paati in connection with ancestor spirits who harm their kinsmen (see p. 269 ff.). But there are also other ritual means by which the spheres which are symbolised as ‘social world’ and ‘supernatural world’ are ritually kept apart from
each other, or by which the gap between them is stressed. During a grave illness for example, a patient, who is considered to be in close contact with the world of the spirits, may be effectively sealed off from the social world by shutting him up in a hut and imposing a taboo on him restricting contact with all women in reproductive ages. In the same way widows and widowers, persons preparing specific traditional medicines (obia), and menstruating women are sealed off from the social world. Moreover, in most contexts ritual spaces are marked which symbolise the ‘other world’. We may refer to temporarily built huts in which ritual washings will take place, and to tjanga, with white clay (pemba doti) marked rings or rectangulars on the ground, in which persons during a ritual will be set apart to stress the liminal character. They can only be removed from this ritual space by a person, who, while standing outside the circle and holding a stick in his hand, extends it to the individual standing inside. Accompanied by the loud call of woko-ho three times by the other participants (an element of the transition idiom of birth)⁴⁰, he draws him out of the ritual space. This ritual episode can be most clearly observed in the ritual complex performed after the birth of twins.

Finally we may refer to the ritual acts of reversion, where the separation between the two spheres is expressed, for example, in either facing and turning one's back in the direction associated with one of these spheres (see p. 271).

Matawai religious conceptions are, in fact, dominated by the search for a balance between continuity and discontinuity in the relations with gods and ancestors. Whenever the balance is destroyed by too close an association between the spheres of man and that of gods and ancestors or by some intrusion on their part into the world of the living the boundaries between these to spheres have to be redefined.

Eindnoten:

(1.) The distinction between magic and religion which has persisted in some anthropological circles, has little value. We agree with van Baal (1971: 2) that it has done more harm than good to the anthropological theory of religion.

(2.) This approach of religion has been most vigorously elaborated by Horton in a series of articles, in which he has stressed the similarity between African religion and Western science (1967, 1971 and 1975).

(3.) As a result of their frequent contact with the coastal area and the Para district, the Matawai have become acquainted with Creole beliefs and terminology. They tend to use Sranan terms, in particular when they explain or talk about their own religious concepts to strangers.

(4.) Suicide occurred rarely in Matawai. We have heard of only two cases, which happened a few decennia ago.

(5.) For an excellent analysis of the relationship between lineage fission and kunu vulnerability in Saramaka society, we may refer to Price (1973: 86-107).

(6.) Formerly tone were feared and thrown into the river directly after birth. Nowadays they have to observe a number of food taboos, the most important of which concerns a prohibition against eating fish without scale.

(7.) At this point we disagree with Green, who mentions that at the moment of conception a ghost (jooka) of a dead person is received (1974: 190-1). Our analysis of the multiple soul also deviates from Hurault's analysis of Aluku data (1961: 216-21).
(8.) A person's gaan ne (big name or true name) is the name given to him in infancy and is considered to be most strongly associated with him personally.

(9.) Traditional day names are dimingo (Friday), sata (Saturday), sonde (Sunday), fodaka (Munday), fefi daka (Tuesday), piki saba (Wednesday) and gaan saba (Thursday).

(10.) Saigi is a term of reference for a deceased kinsman which is used to show respect.

(11.) The percentage of upriver Matawai mediums is, especially when compared with that of the Tapanahoni Djuka, extremely low. For reasons of comparison we have calculated the Matawai percentages for adults over 30 years.

Table: Kunu mediumship among upriver Matawai and Tapanahoni Djuka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Matawai</th>
<th>Djuka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Djuka data: van Wetering 1973: 16; Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering n.d.

(12.) The ancestor, who is considered to be angered (en ati bona) has to be propitiated by his kinsmen, his heart has to be cooled down (koto en ait). The cold/warm opposition koto/kindi is ritually significant, although it is not univocally used in different contexts. It is especially used to refer to disturbances in a kind of balance, in which the social world or the body is considered to be. The balance can be disturbed on two sides, both of which have unfavourable associations. Reference can be made to the undesirability of the restriction on social contacts (see p. 76). Most illnesses, not only those accompanied by fever, are referred to as states of kindi (heat), which have to be cooled down by ritual means. Remarkably, the balance is not reintroduced by elements of the opposite category, but by elements of the same category. Thus when a woman has given birth her physical condition is so much associated with the state of kindi, that her house, in which a fire is constantly kept burning, is temporarily sealed off all around by canvass; she regularly drinks bush tea prepared from bita vines (a bitter tasting vine) and other warm drinks. She is forbidden to take cold food (koto njanjan) like watermelon, okers and sugar cane for some months. Also the birth of twins with its more pronounced association of both excessive fertility and sexual activity endangers the health of both parents and children. It is said that it is the kindi which harms their belly, which has to be redressed before normal sexual relations between the parents can be resumed. In this ritual context the sexual element is stressed when the villagers shame the parents who are sealed off in a ritual space and sit with their heads bent low, by singing ribald sexual songs.

(13.) Commonly specific specialist knowledge about traditional medicines is passed to a younger generation by means of inheritance. Among the Matawai, who have been missionized for a long time, literacy has become so widespread, that its application in inheritance has become quite general. After the death of a kinsman, a person will be given a toompmp (metal box) included in which are specific medicines or ritual knowledge which had been written down by his kinsman during his lifetime. In contrast to goods, which are predominantly inherited by matrilineal kinsmen of the deceased, specialist ritual knowledge or traditional medicines are passed down both to a matrilineal kinsman and from a father to his son. Therefore at this time some specialist knowledge is not restricted any longer to one or a small number of lineages. Especially for the koto sembe deesi, there are in nearly all lineages of the upstream area a number of people who are well-versed in the application of some part of this ritual complex (either djafu paati, the ritual washing or in the sprinkling).

(14.) The colour contrast white-black has symbolic meaning. In the context of the wasi-djaafu-paati ritual, in which these colours are clearly associated with the concepts of purity and impurity, these meanings tend to dominate other meanings, prominent in other ritual contexts, that here...
remain somewhat latent. In many of these contexts the colour white is assigned a mediating role in the contact with the world of ancestors and deities. Because it is merely one, though the most important, of the contrasts involved in the colour triadewhite, red and black, the full significance of which is revealed in, for example, the funerary and mourning rites, it would take us too far astray to analyse here in full.

(15.) It was van Gennep (1909) who originally developed the concept of liminal phase. In his analysis of rites of passage, which he defined as rites accompanying every change of place, state, social position and age, in other words transition, he showed how these rituals were characterized by a fixed number of successive ritual phases, each with a distinct ritual character, namely separation, margin (for which he also used the Latin limen) and aggregation. Van Gennep pointed out that the first phase of separation was accompanied by symbolic behaviour which signified detachment of the individual or the group from either earlier fixed points in the social structure or from a set of cultural conditions or both. The intervening liminal period was characterized by a certain amount of ambiguity for the ritual subject who passed through a cultural realm which neither had the attributes of his past nor that of his coming state. Finally during the third phase of reaggregation the ritual subject was reincorporated in a relatively stable state, with clearly defined rights and obligations towards others, accorded in a new structural position. Turner (1964: 4-20; 1967: 93-111 and 1969: 80-194) further concentrated on the transitional phase with its strong ritual potentialities and defined the characteristics of individuals in such liminal state with the help of a great number of cases from both initiation rites and other ritually marked passages. He aptly defines, for example, the liminality of the initiate as ‘betwixt and between, neither here nor there, no longer a child and not yet an adult’ and probes deeper into the symbols associated with this concept.

(16.) The term nasi in Djuka is used in this context, when people refer to their ancestors as na en nasi mi, or na en booko mi doti (personal communication Thoden van Velzen).

(17.) A similar burial method is described in Albitrouw for the Saramaka (1979: 159). The Matawai referring to this method of burial merely indicated that it was a usual burial method in the past. We do not know if it was a special method used only for a restricted group of notables, as is mentioned for the Djuka.

(18.) Some weeks after a child's birth, he will be given two Christian names, which will also be used for the church baptism. Usually his father selects these names from his close kinsmen who are still alive. Since at birth, a child's supernatural ancestor is still unknown, the nesek'i's Christian name is not taken into account. It would therefore be highly unlikely that the child is given this name.

(19.) The ritual lifting of one's nesek'i kina (the tata kina of one's neseki) is done by a specialist who prepares a deesi (medicine). For this purpose pounded herbs and rum are mixed with a piece of the tabooed animal, and drunk by the patient. Thereafter the food has lost its spiritual force and may be freely eaten.

(20.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramaca 1930.

(21.) Although people believe it is possible that a person after his death may return in a non-kinsman, they think that such cases are less common than those of returning in people who are related. Moreover they are unable to point to many specific examples, particularly not in the upstream area. Such cases seem to be more frequently reported in Djuka society. The endogenic character of the upriver Matawai villages, and the lesser frequency of direct contact with people of other ethnic groups is probably responsible for the fact that non-kinsmen are less significant in the reincarnation chain.

(22.) Green points to the claim of a few lineages to partial exemption from the gaan kunu, because their ancestral captains had only nodded their assent, refusing to give it verbally. Especially the lineages of Paka Paka, Makajapingo and Misalibi are mentioned, having in part a non-Matawai population (1974: 264).

(23.) The culpability of people who by virtue of their being a reincarnation or a reincarnation of a reincarnation of a person who wronged the gaan kunu (misi a di gaan kunu) is settled by a communal ritual, in principle held yearly. All people who belong to this category and for whom this matter is not settled already, come together to be ritually washed in the forest and held throughout a whole night during ritual dancing in which the assembled rum is shared between men and ancestors.

(24.) Jaarverslag Nieuw Jacobkondre 1951.
(25.) Formerly the corpses of people who died by drowning were not buried as those of other common people. Their corpses, put in a broken boat, would be hastily dropped in the forest close by the water, in fear of the waterspirits whose prey had been stolen.

(26.) Bastide based himself on Surinamese sources.

(27.) Extensive studies in the phenomenon of reincarnation have been conducted by the psychiatrist Stevenson, who since 1953 collected cases in a number of different cultures. He defines a case of the reincarnation type as ‘one in which the subject claims that he has lived before and justifies this claim by narrating memories of his previous life’ (1970: 2). He mentions that this is accompanied by the following features: 1) announcing dreams (usually the subject's mother when pregnancy concerning the identity of the person ostensibly being reborn; 2) birth marks or deformities of the subject corresponding in appearance and location to wounds on the body of the related previous personality; 3) most of the subjects show behavioural traits which the informants report resemble to a significant extent those of the related previous personality. His cases of the Tlingit and the Haida, cultures in which conceptions and belief in reincarnation exist, show a marked correspondence with the Matawai cases about which we have information (for example, rebirth in a particular family, announcing dreams, birth marks said to correspond with wounds of the deceased person with whom the child is identified and imagined memories of a previous life). However, unlike our investigation, directed at elaborating the belief in reincarnation in terms of its bearing on social relations, Stevenson attempted to verify individual cases by finding witnesses who could confirm that a child must have acquired his knowledge about a previous life by other than normal sensory means.

(28.) Exact genealogical specifications for the 28 nasi-cases of the Matawai:

3 generations:
FMF(1), MMB(1), MMMMZS(1), MMMMMMZDDS(1)

2 generations:
FF(2), FM(2), MM(1), FMB(2), MMB(1), MFFS(1), MMZ(2), MMMMZDS(1), MMZD(3), MMBD(1), MMMMZDD(1)

1 generation:
FB(2), FZ(2), MMMMZDDS(1), FMMMZDD(1), FMZBDDS(1)

(29.) We must note that this classification of the causes of death among the Matawai differs significantly from that of the Djuka. Among the Djuka it is the grave diggers, who by means of hearing the spirit of the deceased, firstly establish if the person had died because he had infringed the law of Gaan Gadu, in which case they speak of gadu dede, or because he died from other circumstances, a more respectable death and classified as jooka dede. After having established that the person was killed by Gaan Gadu, they will investigate whether witchcraft was involved, classifying it as wiisi dede, or whether the person died a sinner's death (misi dede) (Thodenvan Velzen 1966b: 113-5, 240).

(30.) For a detailed description of a specific carrying oracle among the Djuka, the carrying oracle for the Great Deity (Bigi Gadu, Sweli Gadu or Gaan Tata) we refer to Thodenvan Velzen (1966b: 122 ff.).

(31.) In the upper villages with their strong involvement with the Christian church and resident evangelist, the carrying of this oracle (bongola) had already been abandoned since the 1920-30s. In the other villages, however, it had still been carried for quite a long time. It was only because the ‘owner’ of this oracle of one of the downriver villages recently died in the 1970s, that it was no longer carried in the downriver villages as people suggested.

(32.) There are a number of divination methods (fii-fii) which can be distinguished technically. Apart from the already mentioned carry oracle (bongola) and calabash oracle (akaa kuja), there are, for instance, the oracle of the large earthenware pots (agban), the bottle oracle (fii bata), the divinatory device which is called naki naki after the way in which the hands may clap together in answer to questions posed, and the killing of a cock, and kangaa, a divinatory method which is used to detect thieves by means of a special kind of grass.

(33.) Other ways in which supernatural powers are manipulated for destructive ends are, among others, publically calling a person by the name of his supernatural ancestor (neseki) with evil intentions, bringing adversity to other people's children by casting an evil eye on them (hoogi
ai), praising a person excessively with evil intentions (kai sembe nen, sembe buka), and revealing secret information about a person behind his back towards others (sei sembe).

(34.) The same principle applies in fio fio, by which close lineage members can be harmed by the ancestors who intervene in a conflict and punish the party who was wrong via his closest relatives.

(35.) The ritual revoking of one's words (fula buka) is not exclusively related to cursing. It is, in fact, the most secular ritual generally applied in cases in which conflicts are settled, also in village councils.

(36.) This form of cursing is also known among other Bush Negro groups. For the Djuka a special form of invocation is described by van Lier known as seepi gogo. According to van Lier the invocation is performed in the following way: ‘In order to give power to his words, he utters the curse, while, having pulled out his clothes, sitting naked on the ground, moves forward leaning on his hands and thereby scraping his buttocks over the ground’ (1940: 221; our tr.). This practice is, however no longer in use (van Wetering 1973: 88).

(37.) Siba is considered to be an offence against the gaan kunu, because this major avenging spirit is said to have a taboo for siba. Siba would destroy the power of the obia (medicines) with which the medium is established, and developed into a shrine to be used in times of crises.

(38.) This was in the 1970s one of the two cases of men who had been polygynously married. His marital circumstances were, although sharply criticized among the Matawai, tolerated because they were not able to exert pressure on his relationship with the woman of Santigoon, being outside of the sphere of influence of the Matawai.

(39.) For a number of years the medium for this major avenging spirit has been recruited from Santigoon instead of from Bilawata.

(40.) At delivery the birth of a child is announced by three times calling out loudly woko-ho. Also in other ritual contexts use is made of this idiom to accompany transitions of ritual states. At the coming-out ceremony (puuadoo) one or two weeks after birth, when the child is brought out of the house in which he was born and incorporated in the social group, the child is carried over the threshold in the following way: while he is passed in and out the door three times, participants call out woko-ho three times.
10
Christianity and Traditional Religion

In the previous chapters we focused first on the development of Christianity in Matawai society, showing the strong involvement of the Matawai in church life. Next, a number of important themes of the traditional religion were considered, indicating the close association with and dependency on ancestors and other supernatural powers. Clearly both religious traditions play a role in Matawai life. Before we explore the interrelations between these two religions, we will review some of the current ideas about forms of religious acculturation as presented by other students of Afro-American religions in Suriname. Then, after first describing the ways in which Matawai deal with both religious traditions, we will compare and contrast the Matawai situation with that of other Afro-American religious variants in Suriname.

Points of view in religious acculturation

The evangelist H. Leerdm published a series of articles on Bush Negro life for the Surinamese daily ‘De West’ (1956-7), relying on years of experience working among different tribes. In one of his final articles he considers the influence of the Gospel on Bush Negro life, especially on the Saramaka and the Matawai. He emphasizes the great impact of Christianity in all domains of life, as indicated by a number of observable phenomena.

Anyone who visits the interior will notice that the Christian
villages are cleared up to the river and that the houses are built close to the river. The *kifoenga*, the *azangpauw*, the *kondi* or *pindi* are all absent at the landing stage. In the village you will look in vain for the *flagra tiki*, the central place for the worship of gods and spirits. Also the *gado oso* and shrines for some of the *bere* are not found in the village. They have been replaced by a church building and bell-tower (Leerdam 1957: XXXIII; our tr.).

In other domains, as well, he observes radical changes under the influence of Christianity: in local politics, in male-female relations, in the decline of the authority of the maternal uncle, and so forth. His conclusion is that the former fear of spirits has been replaced by a feeling of self-consciousness. In short, Leerdam maintains that for the Matawai and some of the Saramaka Christianity has largely supplanted the traditional religion.

Leerdam's observation concerning the Matawai has been corroborated by de Graav, an evangelist who arrived in 1932 at the Matawai village of Boslanti after having worked for several years in Christian Saramaka villages. He was greatly astonished by the strong appeal of the church. In an annual report he compares his observations of the Matawai with those of the Christian Saramaka.

Soon I was impressed by the fact that the work among the Matawai is more fruitful than among the Saramaka...! The ‘refusal’ of corpses at burial (1) - as was frequent among the Saramaka Christians - and therefore as the pagans use to do, to talk to the corpse, a real pagan custom - is unknown here. The possession of people by spirits, as I often observed along the Suriname river, does not occur here. The belief in God is therefore much more prominent than along the Suriname river... The church services are visited frequently as is also the case with the daily morning services... I witnessed only one case of idolatry (2) (our tr.).

These observations are similar to those of other visitors to the upstream Saramacca river (see, for instance, van Lier 1927).

When Köbben conducted fieldwork among the Cottica Djuka in the 1960s,
the area had long been under Christian influence. The Moravian mission had begun missionary work along the Cottica before the turn of the century (Buck 1896), while the Roman Catholics had established a school there, in 1915. In contrast to Leerdam's observations in Matawai and Saramaka, Köbben considers the way in which the Cottica Djuka accepted Christianity in the first place as an addition rather than as a substitution, which was the aim of the missionaries. Köbben's position can best be expounded in his own terms:

They view Catholicism (Christianity; our addition) as something additional, and in this sense they readily accept it: the supernatural is so important that one can't have too many contacts with it. This position is further understandable because of the nature of the traditional Djuka religion, which consists of a number of pantheons. Each pantheon has its own gods, with its own temples, priests, rituals, and secret language (cf. Hurault, 1961: 190-215). Christianity, as an addition, fits perfectly into such a conception (1968: 72).

He applies this conception to the Djuka attitude towards western medicine. Consequently, as he says, the Djuka

  go to the Great Deity's oracle and to the hospital; sacrifice to the avenging spirit and swallow patent medicine; let themselves be ritually purified and treated by the doctor (1968: 77).

However, in a later publication (1975) Köbben shows himself to be aware of the fact that the influence of Christianity is far deeper in some other Bush Negro groups, and he doubts if in these cases the term ‘addition’ is the most appropriate. Köbben's notion of the additive nature of the acceptance of Christianity raises several questions. It seems to imply that acceptance of Christianity or aspects thereof, proceeds smoothly, and it overlooks ideological and psychological conflicts that tend to accompany conversion in tribal societies. Moreover, it takes little notice of conflicts between Christians and non-Christians that characterize the history of Christianity in Cottica Djuka society (see the reports of missionaries, Buck (1896) and Helstone (1912)).
Thoden van Velzen, who worked among the Djuka along the Tapanahoni river during the same period as Köbben's work along the Cottica, encountered a quite different religious situation. The Tapanahoni Djuka have always shown a strong resistance to missionaries, who have repeatedly attempted without success to gain a foothold in this area. Thoden van Velzen's penetrating study of the Gaan Gadu cult, the religious movement that still dominated the Tapanahoni in the 1960s, contains only a brief mention of the influence of Christianity on this cult. He observes that the priests of the cult, aware of their own firm grip on their adherents, were able, from this superior position, to be well-disposed to the Christian church and would even speak about it with admiration. These observations are relevant for a good understanding of Thoden van Velzen's conclusion that although the direct influence of Christianity has been restricted and the number of converts is small, indirect influence is far greater. ‘The Christian church is an admired and in some respects also imitated model of organization for the theocratic powergroup in Dritabiki’ (1966b: 23; our tr.). He also points to a number of syncretisms, such as monotheistic ideas that have been incorporated into Djuka religious conceptions.

Lenoir (1973), working among the Paramaka, confronted a situation in which the Paramaka were divided between an upstream segment affiliated with the Roman Catholic church and another segment, residing in the village of the gaaman in Langatabiki, affiliated with the church of the Moravians. He adopts Herskovits' original idea about the difference between religious acculturation in Protestant and Catholic countries (1937; 1941) and indeed observes important differences between the two tribal segments. The Moravian mission has, thanks to a vigorous campaign against paganism, been far more successful in supplanting traditional religious concepts. However, by identifying traditional belief with the religion of the Catholic villages and Protestant belief with that of the Moravian villages in Paramaka, he overemphasizes the differences, because in his description of the Moravians he only relates the obvious Christian beliefs, omitting the role played by traditional religious conceptions in both Roman Catholic and Moravian communities.

It is relevant to compare Lenoir's notion of Paramaka religious acculturation with the ‘additive’ model developed by Köbben for the
Cottica Djuka. According to Lenoir (1973) Christianity has largely supplanted traditional belief among the Moravian Paramaka. However, in a later article (1975) Lenoir has changed his position significantly and refers to his agreement with Köbben. Traditional religion seems to play a more important role among Paramaka Moravians than he had initially supposed when his primary aim was to compare Roman Catholic and Moravian Paramaka folk beliefs. He goes on to explain how the Paramaka have manipulated Christianity in order to become autonomous of the Djuka.

Paramaccans accepted Christianity at a time when their social identity in Surinam changed from one of fugitives isolated in a forest, to one of citizens within the colony. Their identity as Christians reaffirmed, if not guaranteed, their independence from the neighbouring non-Christian Djuka. The Christian missions among them were direct manifestations of their new relationship to the state, and assured police protection against any forcible takeover by the Djuka (1975: 314).

Green, whose fieldwork period among the Matawai mainly preceded our own, presents an analysis of the religious situation among the Matawai in his article ‘Winti and Christianity: A Study in Religious Change’ (1978). He observes the existence of two separate religious systems: the traditional Matawai religion, in his terms called Winti, and Christianity. He points out that unlike in other Afro-American religion, in Matawai religion there has been little or no Christian-Winti syncretism, or dynamic merging and integration of belief systems. Instead of syncretism, we find among the Matawais a dual system of religious beliefs, a situation where Christian and Winti beliefs co-exist uneasily and are kept distinct for the most part (1978: 251).

In the sphere of medicine, as well, he points to the dual system of traditional and western medicines. Green offers some explanations of the success of Christianity: the missionary offer of education and medical care, the use of black evangelists who are supposed to be more acceptable and more effective, and the mission school as an instrument for Christian socialization. All these factors, however, are largely concomitant consequences of the success of Christianity and are
insufficient to explain the large impact of Christianity on Matawai society. The presence of schools and medical care, does not in itself lead to the acceptance of Christianity, as has been frequently observed in the history of the mission among the Bush Negroes (see, for instance, Spalburg 1979, de Groot 1969). Moreover, missionary sources indicate that particularly in the first phase of Christianization the position of black evangelists was difficult precisely because of their colour). The major explanation for the lack of syncretism in Matawai religion, according to Green, can be found in the particular character of Moravian theology, that tends to be quite fixed:

Moravian theology and world-view are sufficiently incompatible with those of *Winti* that there can be no significant merging or fusion of the content of the two belief systems (Green 1978: 273).

In this assessment he relies on Bourguignon (1970: 190-5), who elaborates Herskovits' distinction between religious acculturation in Protestant and Catholic countries. However, as has been observed in many religious movements and in the development of syncretic independent churches in Africa, ideological incompatibilities between religious elements does not necessarily prevent the development of religious syncretism (see, for example, Peel 1968). In the case of the Matawai we suggest that the Moravian mission has influenced Matawai life so effectively through the establishment of a local organization that could control a great deal of religious life, that little room was left for traditional religion to be practiced openly. We will return to this point later.

Van der Elst, an American anthropologist who conducted fieldwork among the Coppename Kwinti, developed an interpretation concerning the relationship between Christianity and traditional religion that deviates from the others. He characterizes Kwinti religion as a syncretism of traditional belief and Christianity.

Clearly, present religious belief and ritual are part Christian, part native polytheism, and no clear lines of demarcation separate the areas borrowed from each of the contributory
systems. The terms for the Supreme Being are many: 

_Gadu_ for the Christian Creator, _Massa Gadu_ for the reigning deity of the Djuka pantheons, and _Gran Gado_ for the Saramacca's. In many ceremonies and in everyday life, however, the terms are used interchangeably. _Dopu_, a term for the Christian act of baptism, is also applied to a number of ritual events in which bottled beer - the holy water of the Kwinti - is squirted on persons seeking supernatural aid or guidance (1975: 121).

We agree with Van der Elst that there are indeed a number of syncretic phenomena that can be observed in Kwinti religion on a certain level. This does not, however, mean that Kwinti religion can be characterized as completely syncretic. Close reading of his article reveals certain indications of a lack of integration between the religious systems among the Kwinti. For instance, Van der Elst observes that traditional religious practices (_kunu_ shrines) are hidden from outsiders, and in particular from the Moravian evangelist (1975: 118). In addition, he emphasizes the important role of foreign (Djuka and Saramaka) religious specialists among the Coppenname Kwinti (1975: 121). It seems that the religious situation of the Kwinti in many respects resembles that of the Matawai, which is characterized by Green as a ‘dual system’ (1978: 251). We will return later to both the underground character of traditional Matawai religion and the concept of a dual religious system.

Finally, Wooding’s interpretation deserves consideration. Wooding tries to explain why the _Winti_ religion of the Para district differs fundamentally from other Afro-American religions, such as _Voodoo_ in Haiti, _Santeria_ in Cuba, and _Candoblé_ and _Macumba_ in Brazil, all of which are commonly characterized as syncretic religions. To explain the way in which _Winti_ originated, the develops the concept of _fromu_, a Sranan word derived from the Dutch ‘frommelen’, to crumple. He defines _fromu_ as:

> the process which integrates homogeneous religious elements into a new religious system, with worship and behavioural patterns, showing great similarity with the original (patterns) (1972: 505; our tr.).

That which distinguishes _fromu_ from syncretism as defined by Fairchild,
Herskovits and Métraux is, according to Wooding, its homogeneity as opposed to the greater degree of differentiation observable between conflicting elements. Wooding goes on to account for the lack of influence of European religion on Winti. He explains that at the arrival of the missionaries the Winti religion was already fully established and ‘deeply entrenched in the soul of the villagers’, so there was no ‘need for Roman Catholic and Protestant angels and saints’ (1972: 506).

This reasoning is certainly questionable. It is doubtful that lack of need is a legitimate explanation for non-acceptance of Christian belief. There are several groups in Suriname, that, although having an already developed Afro-American religion, accepted Christianity in some form or another as an essential part of their lives. The fromu-syncretic distinction is also problematic. What is the meaning of ‘homogeneous’ and what must be understood by ‘original religion’ in Wooding’s fromu definition? It seems extremely difficult to rely on this definition in the case of Winti religion. In fact, many different African religions have contributed elements and concepts to the new synthesis of Winti religion. It is clear that African religions, despite their enormous variety, have more similarities with each other than with Christianity, but this in no way implies that religious elements of the African religions are homogeneous or interchangeable.

It is apparent from the above review of some of the relevant opinions about religious acculturation in Suriname, that contact with Christianity and the way in which it is accepted and incorporated within the traditional religion differs considerably from one area to another. The responses range from strong opposition to Christianity in the Para and resistance among the Tapanahoni Djuka, to its acceptance as an addition by the Cottica Djuka and to its far greater influence in such other tribe as the Kwinti, Christian Saramaka, Matawai and Paramaka, where it is considered to have partly supplanted, partly to exist aside from and partly to have been incorporated in the traditional religion forming a syncretic religion. We will now turn to our description of Matawai religious beliefs.

The Matawai religious situation

The first impression we acquired about religion in the upstream Matawai
area, was that traditional religious concepts seemed to be of relatively little significance. Not long after our arrival in the upstream area, village life was dominated by a whole range of festivities connected with the church. It was only some months later that we were confronted with a number of crisis situations. Explanations were sought in the sphere of traditional religion and as a consequence a number of traditional rituals were performed. We attended these rituals in the first stages of our study, thus we acquired a starting point for fuller orientation in traditional religious conceptions later on. However, our informants were initially not much inclined to give explanations. Some even pretended that particular rituals were no longer performed by the Matawai and could only be observed among the ‘pagan’ Saramaka or in the downriver area of Kwakugoon. These claims were soon falsified when we were able to observe these rituals only a month later in the informants' own village. In this manner we were repeatedly misled concerning religious matters throughout our research.

Our fieldwork was mainly conducted in Boslanti, which, as we already indicated, had for a long time been a bulwark of Christianity among the Matawai. In this village community, Christianity had become particularly important as a result of the dominant role of the headman's lineage in the introduction of the church (see p. 214). The main church functionaries have always been recruited from the ranks of this lineage. These former notables, who were closely associated with the church, remain important ancestors for their lineage members and their behaviour is still regarded with admiration. Due to the long tradition of Christian partisanship, the tensions with traditional religion have been aggravated. Today Matawai quote their ancestors when voicing opposition to particular traditional rituals. They will point out, for example, that traditional rituals being performed now, would have been strictly prohibited by the former headman of Boslanti, who was strongly opposed to anything ‘pagan’.

It soon became apparent that particular rituals were more frequently held and more publicly performed, in villages in which no lay pastor was living, and that people from these villages were also more inclined to talk openly about traditional religious matters. On the one hand, the Matawai's reticence to expose traditional religious practices as
experienced by us in a village as Christian as Boslanti was a handicap. On the other hand, however, it furnished us with some indications of the specific character of the two religious systems.

We suggest that there are two religious spheres that the Matawai keep relatively apart from each other. In fact there are two religious ideologies having their own geographical referents. The central focus or point of reference for the profession of Christianity is the church, built at the edge of the village; for traditional religion it is the ancestor pole (faaga pau) together with the nearby council house (kuutu gangasa) in the centre of the village. Each sphere has its own code of behaviour, hierarchical structure and calendar of worship. Despite some individual variations, in principle all Matawai participate in both religious systems, thereby shifting from one sphere to another. In this respect our own observations concerning the religious life of the Matawai point in the same direction as those of Green, and we basically agree with his conclusion that two separate religious traditions persist among the Matawai.

One must not, however, overlook the interrelations between the two religious systems. Persons who play major roles in the traditional religion (as lineage elders, local functionaries and ritual specialists) are often key figures in the local church organization. It is evident that living within two ideologically conflicting religious systems involves interactions between them, and the very existence of two such concurrent religious systems must have an important effect on the inherent characteristics of each of them. Most interactions, as we will shortly illustrate, are characterized by conflict and people who are aware of the divergent ideologies try to cope with the difficulties in various ways. So our main task in analysing the religious life of the Matawai will be to elucidate the clashes resulting from the two ideologies, and to specify the adjustments that are made and the mechanisms involved. First, however, we will specify the aims of the Moravian mission in instilling Christianity among the Matawai and the way in which they tried to achieve these aims.
The confrontation between two conflicting ideologies: the Moravian mission

From missionary reports dating back to the initial period of the church's work in this area in the 1860s, it appears that the early missionaries were quite outspoken in their aspirations for the Matawai. They expected the Gospel to open the door to a way of life fundamentally different from traditional life. They hoped that the Bush Negroes, while throwing away all old gods and obia, would be eager to radically change their cultural institutions and to strive after western ideals. But this expectation soon appeared to be too optimistic. Despite the number of converts who flocked to their church to be baptized and listen to their sermons, and despite some outward indications of change differentiating Christian from non-Christian villages, missionaries had to be constantly on their guard. They discovered that they not only had to continually oppose traditional concepts and principles of social organization in their sermons, but also had to use church sanctions when congregation members transgressed the rules of the church by practicing traditional customs.

In their campaign against polygyny the mission has been extremely successful. Before the introduction of the church in the upriver area polygyny was as generally practiced as among other Bush Negro groups. The church, however, was strongly opposed to this practice and only allowed polygynists to be baptized, if they declared publicly that they would divorce one of their marriage partners. In the early period many polygynists were the most vigorous opponents of the church. During the 1920s a number of people were still engaged in polygynous relations in the upstream area\(^4\), but by about 1930 polygyny was practically non-existent\(^5\).

Other traditional practices, however, could not be combatted so easily by any sanction, no matter how stringently applied or fear-inspiring it might be. Sometimes, when the mission thought that it had scored a victory, it proved to be merely a temporary one, and the traditional practice would reappear only to be clinged to with more persistency than ever.

From the beginning of the church in Maipaston, the Moravian mission had strongly opposed the use of the apinti drum,
despite the fact that this was the most frequently used drum type at secular as well as at religious occasions. In the annual reports regular mention was made of the campaign against the *apinti*. In the 1940s and 1950s the issue even led to consultations with the Roman Catholic mission. While the Roman Catholics did not see any wrong in the use of the *apinti*, and therefore felt no urgency in combating it, the Moravians considered the prohibition of the *apinti* as the first step towards eradicating the traditional belief in spirit possession. It was believed that the drum was used as a vehicle to induce spirit possession and that it was the sound of the drum head, made of an animal's skin, that stimulated people to become possessed by spirits. As a result of the opposition of the mission in the upstream area the *apinti* drum fell into disuse and soap boxes, kerosine tins and large cooking pans, producing a much more lashing sound, were used for drumming purposes. But the rejoicing of the mission was premature. When the Matawai *gaaman* returned from his trip to Africa in 1972 (de Groot 1973), impressed by his observations in the land of his ancestors, he reinstated the *apinti*. He encouraged each village to have its own *apinti*. Although the art of *apinti*-making had become obsolete among the Matawai, *apinti* were bought from Saramaka people in town. Now they hesitantly began to use the *apinti*, despite some fervent adherents to the new sound produced by the soap cases and pans.

The tactic generally employed by the Moravian mission to break through traditional customs involved searching for specific aspects in the traditional religion, that could be substituted by Christian rites. In certain respects the mission has been successful in influencing the Matawai in this manner. The ritual that was previously performed at the end of the year to thank *Goon Mama* (see p. 282) for an abundant harvest, involving large food offerings, communal eating and drinking, dancing and spirit possession, was substituted by the Harvest Festival in church. On this occasion large bundles of rice, peanuts and other food are brought to the church and sold among the congregational members.
The proceeds, which can be as high as some hundreds of Surinamese guilders, are used for the benefit of the church congregation.

By marking the stages of life with Christian rites celebrated in church like baptism, confirmation and marriage, the mission tried to supplant traditional rites of passage, hoping to make them superfluous. However, despite the significance of Christian rituals in this context, these have never been able wholly to replace traditional rituals. The ritual of the *puu a doo*, for example, in which a child is brought out of the house of delivery and ritually incorporated into his mother's lineage, is still performed. Baptism in church, which has become customary in Matawai, has not replaced this traditional ritual. Today baptism is usually held some months after the *puu a doo*, which is performed one or two weeks after delivery. The same holds true for marriage. On the one hand an essential ritual in the village community, at which occasion the marriage is publicly recognized, is the *da manu ku mujee*, which is attended by the respective lineages of the marital partners. On the other hand, there is the marriage celebration in church, which is generally concluded much later in the marital career of the partners. Not all marriage relations become blessed by a church celebration, because the decision is left to the partners.

The Moravian mission's attempts to supplant institutions or customs that conflicted with Christian belief were sometimes only temporarily successful.

In 1929 a few church notables, among whom the chairman of the Moravians in Suriname and the secretary of the mission in Zeist, the Netherlands, visited the upstream area. In Posugun they heard about a widower who was about to remarry. According to Matawai tradition relatives of the deceased woman had to make a food offering to the woman's spirit to protect the new wife from the former wife's jealousy. The missionaries now proposed to change this custom and suggested that they take Jesus Christ as protector of the woman instead of praying to the spirit. The family agreed and the newly married couple was placed under the guardianship of Jesus. The Moravians hoped that the old custom would be abandoned\(^a\). Nevertheless

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
in the 1970s libations and offerings to the spirit of the widower's deceased wife are still customary in cases of remarriage (see p. 280).

In contrast to their vigorous campaign in the early missionary period, in later years the Moravians expected that more prudent adjustments in traditional ritual would have a more lasting effect, and they used this policy for several years.

The mission has always strongly attacked traditional funeral rites because they were closely interrelated with the belief system based on ancestor worship and lineage organization. Matawai beliefs and rituals dealing with death are, in fact, contingent with many aspects of social life. Central in the Matawai belief is the idea that disease and death have a supernatural cause, the explanation of which has to be sought by means of divination, that the dead continue to have relations with the living and are able to interfere in their lives. The cycle of funerary and mourning rituals that are performed to mark the deceased's transition to the afterlife and to protect the living from the dead, reflect these beliefs.

Christian ideas about death and the proper way in which to deal with it were in fact at variance to Matawai beliefs. The mission was of the opinion that at the occasion of death the only obligation of the kinsmen towards the deceased was to prepare his corpse and give him a timely and decent burial in order to prepare his soul to ascend to God's realm to be judged. They preached that after death no relations were possible between the living and the death. It is no wonder that in their attempt to change funerary rites among the Matawai, they clashed head-on with the Matawai.

Still, the mission would become increasingly successful in gradually replacing traditional rituals with Christian ones. Harsh sanctions were imposed on such divinatory practices as the carrying of the bongola (see p. 294), which, although still practiced some years ago in villages were no evangelist was stationed, have become obsolete in the upriver villages. This does not mean, however, that the Matawai ceased to be interested in any signs from the dead corpse, that might give them clues for interpretation. It still may happen that when the coffin is
carried to the burial-place along the narrow pathway, that is cleared through the bush
after death, any hampering of the coffin or its unusual speed in going along the path
is interpreted as an intentional act by the spirit of the deceased, who, by so influencing
the bearers of the coffin, reveals to his kinsmen that he does not agree with the
proceedings or that his death was caused by something his kinsmen must investigate.

In 1974 a woman in Boslanti died. All kinds of preparations were made
for the burial. The coffin had to be carried to the cemetery at the back of
the village. The procession gradually set out from the cooking house, in
which the corpse had been prepared and her kinsmen had given their last
farewell to her spirit. White kerchiefs were thrown to some young men,
who reluctantly took up their place to bear the coffin. They were followed
by a small group of people wearing white clothes and singing Christian
songs (these were persons, who, like the deceased, were preparing for
confirmation in the church), then the village functionaries dressed in their
uniforms and finally a large group of kinsmen and villagers, in the rear of
the procession. At the border of the village, where the path turned sharply
around a big tree, the coffin came to a sudden halt. In panic the people
drew back, murmuring to each other that the coffin refused to go any
further. Back at the centre of the village an elder addressed himself to the
coffin and admitted that the proceedings had not been performed as they
should have been. The woman had been the wife of a headman, and
therefore they should have sung koili (choir) before they buried her.
Immediately a hymn was begun and the coffin was carried along the
pathway without further difficulties.

The church has taken a firm grip on the preparation of the corpse and the burial.
Today, the lay pastor makes sure that burial takes place within 24 hours. While burial
has clearly come under the spell of Christianity, funerary rites and mourning have
maintained much of their traditional character.

On the day of burial, people assemble under the roof, dede gangasa,
which is hastily constructed after death, adjoining the house in which the corpse is prepared. While some women are sewing and adorning white clothes for the deadman, others prepare a meal for those gathered from other villages to help with burial preparations. Most of the close kinsmen, still drowsy from attending the all-night wake, singing hymns for the deceased, will spend the time trying to obtain rum from their kinsmen or will take a nap. The people from other villages take the lead in handling: construction of the coffin in the village, clearing the path to the cemetery and digging the grave on the burial ground. But the preparation of the corpse is left to the church notables, who assemble in the closed-up house of the deceased, to wash his corpse with alanja (bitter orange), change him into white deadman's clothes, shut his eyes, relax his clenched fists and so forth. They are paid for this service with a bottle of rum, which is used to wash away the dangerous influence of bodily contact with the corpse. Because they consume part of the rum, the singing of aria during their preparations begins to take on another character: dancing and with cracking voices they leave the house of the deceased to wash their hands with a herbal mixture. The coffin is forced into the house by the church functionaries, who sometimes have to saw out some planks, and people draw near the house to take part in saying farewell. In a low voice an elder addresses himself to the spirit of the deceased, and begs him to go where he belongs, and not to bother the living anymore. Close kinsmen and others push forward and express their solidarity with these words by standing each behind the other's back and touching the shoulder of the person who stands in front, thus forming long rows radiating from those who stand near the corpse in the coffin. The coffin is closed, men are assigned as bearers and given white kerchiefs, and finally the coffin is carried to the cemetery while singing hymns. When church notables and other lineage elders are buried, the coffin is first carried around the church while the church bell is rung, and then brought to the ancestor pole, where a short stop is made.

At the cemetery, after the coffin is lowered into the grave, the lay pastor gives a small sermon in which he relates that death is to be considered as a punishment for sins (paiman fu sondu). He initiates the litany and thereafter all present throw earth on the grave and dig
some shrubs. One of the last rituals connected with Christian belief, is the burying of a cross with the engraved name of the deceased, date of birth and death, called *bei di pali*, early in the morning following burial. Although based on Christian concepts, this re-burial has its traditional connotations, as it is comparable to the burial of an ancestor pole, and may also give rise to manipulations by the spirit of the deceased.

The Moravian mission was able to put an end to the custom of not burying certain kinds of people after death and saw this as a victory over traditional belief. However, the Matawai still oppose burial in cases of those who die as a result of drowning and tend to cling to hastily dropping the corpse close to the river.

In addition to its function as place of burial, the cemetery was also used by the Moravians to hold Easter services in remembrance of the crucifixion. Imagine the fear which the cemetery inspired in early Christian Matawai:

When in 1910, the lay pastor of Kwatahede proposed during services, that the cemetery be cleared, with the purpose of holding the Easter-litany there, he met with a great deal of resistance. They replied that he himself must go to clear it. They were so afraid that most of the people stayed away from the village on that day. After he had cleared the cemetery almost alone, the lay pastor decided to trick them. He thought it wiser to announce that the litany would not be held in the cemetery, but in the church. People flocked to the church at the ringing of the bells. The pastor whispered to some of the church functionaries, that when he was halfway through his sermon, he would go to the burial ground. And so he did. As he walked ahead, he was followed by the villagers. But when a fever struck him after Easter Monday sermon, they declared ‘well you see, he found what he sought yesterday’

For a long time the cemetery would remain a sensitive subject.

In 1919 the newly appointed lay pastor of Boslanti mentioned that as a result of the fear of spirits thought to find their
way back to the village, the path to the cemetery had been completely overgrown by bush. In a council meeting with the congregation, he proposed to leave their customary burial ground and to clear a new place for burial purposes, with a path five feet wide. He also proposed that children, and those who died during a church punishment should be buried separately. Although they agreed, no one seemed eager to begin working, and when the evangelist and his wife took their machetes and started working, they were observed from a safe distance by the others. After a time, one of the female church functionaries began to assist them and a while later others followed as well. But several anxiety-filled days passed before someone declared that the evangelist had been victorious, since no one had been afflicted by fever, or had been screaming during the night, plagued by spirits (SZ 1944 (12): 10).

The Matawai have never agreed with the opinion held by the Moravian mission that the memorial service in church is the last ritual commemorating the deceased. From early missionary times, the church has persistently attempted to banish traditional funerary and mourning rites. In their sermons they fulminated against the customary deede gangasa, in which the villagers assembled from the day after burial for a whole week to sit and talk about former events, tell stories (mato), play cards and adjiboto, and eat and drink communally to please the collective spirits of the ancestors. The week culminated in a wake (booko di dia), during which stories and riddles were told and rum was consumed. It was only recently, as observed by Green in 1972 (1978: 266) that the Moravian mission was able to induce people in the villages of the upstream area to change the nature of their booko di dia by communally singing Christian hymns until midnight, instead of telling traditional tales throughout the night, as is still practiced downstream.

There has also always been a great deal of opposition to the traditional mourning period, marked by the rituals of teki law or kaabu and puu baaka in which relations are re-established between both the near kinsmen of the deceased and his widow on the one hand, and the
spirits on the other. The mission especially opposed what they considered to be the shameful treatment of the widow, who for a long period was debarred from normal social relations, would remain dependent on a small number of lineage members of the deceased and was forced to observe a number of strict taboos. They also objected to the rituals that involved, as we already indicated, food offerings and libations to the spirit of the deceased. As a consequence of this opposition, changes were made in the course of time: food offerings at the time of the *booko di dia* became obsolete, while those offered about a year after death, are now held less frequently and on a smaller scale - indoors and with less people attending (see p. 281). The mourners' heads are no longer shaved, as was the custom formerly. Nowadays they are shaved only symbolically or are cut at the forehead and the temples. Its meaning, however, has not changed, and the ritual is still called *kaabu* (shaving). But more significantly, the time period for the mourning obligation has been shortened in the course of time. Traditionally mourning was imposed for a maximum of a year, in the case of the death of older people. The period was changed during the 1940s to six months and in 1957 it was further reduced to a maximum of three months. Mourning for other categories that was formerly six months and minimally three months for people who died without leaving a partner, was shortened to six weeks and two weeks respectively. The changes that were thus brought about were not, however, fundamental, in that the cultural meaning remains unaltered.

The Moravian mission would not have achieved the same degree of success in their campaign against traditional beliefs, if they had restricted themselves merely to admonishments and proposals to introduce Christian rites. From the outset sanctions were imposed by the church as a means of ascertaining the salvation of their converts. They were able to apply these sanctions effectively because of the strict church organization on the local level, in which the lay pastor was directly responsible to the church council in town, and was in turn alerted by the locally appointed church notables concerning practices that were incongruent with Christian beliefs. Moreover these church sanctions could only be effective, when people were kept away from participating in traditional rituals because of their fear of supernatural consequences, as indeed was the case. In particular, those who were
caught using traditional medicines (see p. 344), entering into contact with spirits for mediumistic purposes, praying at the ancestor pole or bringing food offerings and libations for ancestor spirits, were punished harshly by the church. Aside from being debarred from further participation in church activities for a specified period of their lifetime, when they died they were refused a Christian burial. This had a most intimidating effect on their kinsmen, who believed not only that the washing and consecration of the corpse by church functionaries was a prerequisite for the soul's journey to God's realm, but also that the litany held by the lay pastor would favourably influence God when the deceased's soul stood before him. Until recently this church sanction was frequently applied and nowadays upriver villagers still speak with horror about former kinsmen, who were not given Christian funerals and for whom recourse was sought in traditional rituals. Today such sanctions may still be applied occasionally.

At the funeral of an older man, the lay pastor gave a summary of the way in which the deceased was related to the church. ‘He has always been a good member of the congregation, faithfully attending the services, and participating for years in the Holy Communion. But’, he dramatically added, ‘he has been negligent in paying his contribution for three years. For this reason I refuse to sing the litany for him’. A dreadful look appeared in the eyes of the serious unlookers. People held their breath until the pastor decided that, this time, he would make an exception and sing the litany half-way. As people later admitted, they were afraid for the deceased's salvation. Now that they had been able to sing the litany in part, the case would be left to God to decide on his own merits.

In their attempts to force people to conform to church rules, the mission has always made extensive use of the local church functionaries. These church notables were also at the same time, lineage elders and local functionaries, holding key positions in local politics. Although the village and church council functioned as separate bodies, decisions made in each could strongly reinforce the other. The case of adultery and separation may serve as an example. Adultery is effectly dealt
with, involving procedures between the kin groups concerned, in which the seducer is punished, the husband receives reparations and the marital partners, after their initial separation, are reconciled (see p. 121). And yet the Moravian church readily intervenes. The church considers marital relations, and especially those between confirmants, to be in principle unbreakable, and adultery, the most frequent provocation of marital break-up, is seen as a grave transgression. Church functionaries are expected to inform the lay pastor about such cases. The lay pastor then organizes a church council meeting together with the other church functionaries to impose sanctions on the adulterer and the woman. In addition, when a marriage between confirmants for reasons other than adultery is threatened by divorce (see also p. 120), and their kin groups are unable to bring them together, the pressure of the church council upon the marital partners and their kinsmen is so strong, that they will inevitably succeed in reconciling them. These measures, while not functioning to prevent extra-marital relations or the frequent initiation of separation, have been the main factor in stabilizing marital relations in the upriver part of the Matawai territory (see pp. 121-4).

Recently there has been a significant change in the way the Moravian mission tends to confront traditional religion - a change which can be related to their former success, especially in the upstream area. Although the lay pastors are as eager as ever to be informed about ‘scenes of idolatry’, especially when confirmants or church functionaries are involved, they are now more inclined to threaten the use of sanctions rather than to actually impose them. Often they go so far as to pretend not to know about a church member's involvement in traditional rituals, in order to avoid being forced to impose sanctions.

**Ideologies in conflict: the Matawai reaction**

The way in which the Moravian mission tried to shift the Matawai from traditional belief and towards Christianity has been discussed in the preceding pages. We will now elaborate on some of the ways in which the Matawai deal with, or accommodate themselves to, situations that involve a confrontation between both religions. The mechanisms involved can be
grouped into three main divisions:

**Ideological differences between the two religions are stressed by**

1) the acknowledgement of two different spheres, each of which may operate separately in certain more or less specific areas; 
2) the association of religious behaviour or conceptions with certain specified contexts; and 
3) the encouragement of tolerance towards deviant behaviour and opinions.

**Ideological distance between the two religions is reduced by**

1) actual attempts to minimize ideological differences; 
2) attempts to combine traditional and Christian principles of interpretation; 
3) providing a Christian context for traditional performances; a[...]
4) allowing for the incorporation of Christian elements into traditional ritual and behaviour.

**One religion is made dominant over the other by**

1) the denial of the existence of certain religious practices; 
2) allowing for a divergence between ideology and behaviour; 
3) practicing traditional religion on a smaller scale and less publicly; and 
4) expressing doubts concerning the relevance of traditional religion (scepticism).

All of the mechanisms described can be seen at work in ritual events; often two or more coming together in one case history.

On the highest level the distinction between the two religions is vaguely articulated. Most people believe that the supreme deity in the traditional religion, Gaan Gadu, or Kediampo as he is sometimes called, must be the same as the Christian God, Masa Gadu. Thus on this level some merging of religious conceptions occurs. Many people in the upstream area pretend to be unfamiliar with the name Kediampo, while others maintain that Gaan Gadu and Kediampo are in fact two different deities.
Conceptions of both Gaan Gadu and Masa Gadu coincide in their role as creator of the world, but diverge in respect to their further relation to the world of man, thus philosophically oriented Matawai have some scope for speculation within this realm. Individually, people say prayers to this God before going to sleep, and on other occasions. Also some activities in the horticultural cycle, such as the planting of rice, are preceded by prayers to Masa Gadu to ask his blessing for an abundant harvest, for which he is given thanks in church on the occasion of the yearly Harvest Festival (see p. 328).

In daily matters, however, no direct communication with the supreme deity is sought. In palavers - in which cases are settled for persons who have made transgressions by their anti-social behaviour, or have infringed religious laws - or when political functionaries are appointed, people direct themselves mainly to the ancestor spirits, who are believed to reside in gadukonde and to other supernatural powers. In gadukonde ancestor spirits are believed to gather in councils, similar to those they held when they were still alive, and presided over by the spirits of former notables, headmen, basia and lineage elders. These notables are called on to give advice and to contact the gaan sembe in question to prevent adversity. Gadukonde is also considered to be ‘heaven’ and is therefore sometimes referred to by the Christian term.

On numerous occasions Matawai consciously search for indications of ideological conformity within their two belief systems. They find corroboration of their ideas in the bible. The practice of traditional cursing (siba), which is thought to be a grave sin committed against the ancestors (see p. 304) is compared to the sin of cursing in the Christian sense, by using God's name. They support their belief in kunu by referring to biblical events that are believed to have provoked kunu vengeance, such as the death of Cain after murdering Abel and the way in which the thirteenth tribe was chased out of their land. It is not certain whether the Matawai themselves were the first to notice these similarities, or if they were influenced by the Moravian lay pastors - themselves Bush Negroes or Creoles - who frequently used traditional concepts in their sermons to clarify certain Christian concepts.

In the past the Moravian church strongly opposed traditional
jurisdiction because of its affiliation with traditional belief. Village headmen, who are strongly involved in the Moravian church, feel themselves caught in a role conflict and try to resolve the major discrepancies by providing the council with a Christian context. Before starting the council proper all those present in the council house stand, while the headman addresses a prayer to Masa Gadu, asking him to bless the decisions that will be taken by the council. Although it had become customary in the upstream area, it was made obligatory by the headman of Boslanti in 1973, who proposed that henceforth in cases of palavers in the council house, a prayer must be addressed first to God, before taking up the palaver. While standing, the headman said the following prayer, using Church Creole:

So, our beloved God and Saviour in heaven. God, you have made the earth. You made Adam and Eva. You said that they had to resemble you personally. God, you installed kings, gaaman and all sorts of people in the world to rule over your people on earth. God, they do not have wisdom. They do not have understanding. But we pray to you, please, give wisdom to those who have things to say. God, give them humility, give them tolerance, give them patience. Give us wisdom so that we can rule over the people, who have put their confidence in your hands. Let us not rule with our own power and strength, but with the power and wisdom of God in heaven. God, we know that there are things that we are not aware of, but when your spirit is in our heart, this will allow us to see and know the deeper things the hidden things. God, give us wisdom so that we can counsel righteously, so that you, God in heaven, will be pleased with us. Let us give people who are right, their right, and people who are wrong their wrong. Allow that we do not counsel favouring an individual person, because you, our God in heaven, sees and knows all things. Therefore we pray to you: give us wisdom, humility and tolerance. God, give us patience. Help us with this council. Let your holy spirit assist us in this matter. Amen.

Although this council, dealing with a case of adultery, was preceded by
a Christian prayer, in the course of the same session assistance from the ancestors was also sought. When the words, spoken during a quarrel, had to be ritually reverted and neutralized, people directed themselves to the collective ancestors, saying: ‘Old ones, now we sprinkle water from our mouth, praying, may father M. return to his house again without hindrance. Day and night, nothing must harm him’.

Also other communal meetings mainly related to traditional events such as praying to an avenging spirit or offering food to one’s ancestors are often preceded by similar prayers to God, because, as people explain: ‘It is Masa Gadu who made the world, so you have to pray to him first’. The standard expression ‘Masa Jehova a fesi..’ is also common in this context.

In some cases a confrontation is avoided by denying the very existence of non-Christian practices.

During our absence a strange thing seemed to have happened in the upriver area. Some weeks after our return we occasionally heard about the incident from a townsman who was temporarily employed for the building of a new school. An idol, evidently recently carved, had been found in the village. A village council had been arranged to find out who was the owner or the individual who had made it. Nobody was able to give any indication about its origin. So it was thrown into the river. At various occasions we delicately inquired about this incident, but most people said that they knew nothing. Others, who admitted that there had been a palaver about the idol, said that it had taken place a long time ago and that it had not been found in their village. No one ever mentioned the matter on his own account, despite the fact that the gaaman was said to have been called to the meeting, indicating that the case was considered to be more than merely a common local affair.

In the following case, however, a confrontation between traditional religion and Christianity was unavoidable.

When an old man of Boslanti went with his boat for a hunting trip, he had an epileptic seizure. He died and was later found with his head hanging in the water. As a consequence
of his drowning the river was considered to be polluted and a strict prohibition was proclaimed on using the water of the river, before it would be ritually purified. Thus the water of the river was no longer to be used as drinking water, nor could it be used to wash clothes or dishes. Water had to be taken from the creeks, or from the rainwater that could be caught running from the corrugated iron roofs. All hunting and fishing was forbidden; even the labourers for the Geological and Mining Service were not allowed to carry their shotgun and had to remain in their camp during this period. At that time a message arrived that the minister would be coming to pay his semi-annual visit to the congregation. The church functionaries were seized with fright. Usually the church was washed and cleaned thoroughly when the preacher came, and a number of church rituals such as baptism of children, confirmation and Holy Communion were performed. In the village of the widow, where people assembled for the mourning ritual, a palaver was held to discuss the question of whether the church could be washed this time. The river water was prohibited, it had not rained for weeks and the creeks were a long way from the church. Some people argued that God was so almighty that nothing would harm them if they transgressed the taboo for this purpose, for he would surely protect them in this case. But many others had their doubts. It took a long time before a decision was made to wash the church with water from the creek. A few days later all the villagers participated in the cleaning activities. School children pulled out weeds in the church yard, while a group of women brushed the interior of the church, splashing around buckets full of water, and loudly singing hymns. Others went to and from the river, filling the buckets with water from boats, which the men had filled with creek water and which were now moored at the landing stage. Meanwhile preparations were made for the great purification ritual that would be performed. Negotiations were conducted with a lineage of Posugunu specialized in this ritual, to perform and supervise it. The minister arrived and was soon

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
informed of the events by the lay pastor. In his first sermon in Boslanti he vigorously objected to the ‘heathen washings’ which were going to be performed. ‘You can not serve two masters’, he warned the churchgoers, ‘You have to make a sharp distinction. When you have an alanja and an orange you can only distinguish them by cutting them and tasting’. He also ridiculed the taboo of the river by a comparison: ‘Imagine if someone would die in Switzerland. Do you think that in the Netherlands they could no longer use the water of the Rhine?’ And he expressed opposition to other customs such as the booko di dia, which obligates many people to stay in the tribal area for a while. ‘Do you think that the men of Brownsweg (Saramaka) who work for Biliton (a bauxite company), should waste their time by sitting in the dede gangasa playing cards? When the corpse is buried, things are finished’, he said. ‘Jesus has already paid for all people's sins by his crucifixion’. He declared that he would not perform a memorial service for the deceased, although the man was a regular churchgoer and had been confirmed since 1930. He limited himself to a short commemorative speech at the end of his sermon.

The people of Boslanti seemed very impressed by the words of the minister. ‘He is right’ (a abi leti) was a frequently heard individual reaction. But in the afternoon council, other opinions began to gain ground. They, the people of Boslanti, as the lineage of the deceased, had to decide whether to hold the purification ritual. Although some people maintained that the minister was right and that indeed it would be better to leave these things, others believed that you may not break suddenly with the traditions of your ancestors. Some proposed to consider the matter at a later date, when the headman had returned to the village. The decision was finally made that the ritual would be performed and this message was brought to Posugunu. In Posugunu the minister also gave a sermon in which the same objections were voiced. During his admonishments, whisperings could be heard in the congregation. After services, four men were delegated to tell the minister that the
purification ritual was their own concern, and that they objected to his attempts to intrude in their affairs.
The ritual was performed, hundreds of people were washed with obia for two days, the last payments were brought to Posugunu, and the whole event concluded with a large dancing party. The lay pastor shook his head and declared dramatically: ‘This has been a black day in the history of Boslanti’.

Large rituals, such as the above case, can not be performed in secret and no attempt is made to hide them. Situations in which the whole community is considered to be in danger, involve everyone in attempts to reconcile, neutralize and normalize disturbed relations between community members and gods and ancestors, so that as a result of the pressure of the situation, the possibility of maintaining secrecy is not even considered. And we will see from the following case that it becomes an especially difficult predicament for the church functionaries who have to reconcile these practices with their conscience. We will return to these individual problems and dilemmas later.

As a consequence of the sudden death of Adoi (see also the case on p. 311), her husband and a lineage sister Kisla had to be ritually protected against impending supernatural danger. As soon as it became known by pronunciation of a major lineage medium that an ancestor spirit was involved, threatening to take revenge as a kunu, a delegation was send to the residence of the medium of the gaan kunu. As a result of the various rumours that were spread including different explanations of the cause of death, the evangelist was on his guard. From his house near the waterside he observed the boats passing by and was eager to find out what was going on. The medium indicated that a ritual had to be performed in which prayers had to be said in front of the ancestor pole to ward off further adversity. The day was set. Three times people gathered at the ancestor pole to pray to the ancestors, pouring out libations of water and rum. During the last meeting suddenly one of the elders looked up startled and whispered to the others: ‘Mesti ta kon’ (there comes the lay pastor). Indeed, the evangelist,
who was not otherwise inclined to show himself in the village, appeared momentarily and then hastily retreated. That evening the lay pastor visited us. He explained that he had been warned beforehand by one of the church functionaries that a praying ritual would take place. This man, who thought of such practices as ‘idolatry’, came to inform him and declared that he himself would not participate. But other church notables participated fully, the lay pastor observed. He was particularly disturbed by the fact that the ritual had been performed in public. ‘If they had performed it in secret, I would not have objected,’ he added. Now, he could not deny what had happened and had to report it to the minister, who was the resort leader, in town.

In the past as well, the public character of traditional practices has been severely criticized by the mission. One of their explanations for their opposition was that such public displays influence young children, who are thus reared in a vicious environment leading to participation in traditional rituals and performance of non-Christian practices when they reach adulthood.

**Traditional and western medicine**

Inevitable clashes result in the sphere of medicine, which is interrelated with both traditional and western religious conceptions. There is, as we will illustrate, a great variety of responses and solutions. From the Matawai viewpoint the possibility of ascribing a particular disease to one domain, to be treated either by traditional or by western medicines, is an appropriate means to avoid the conflict.

In the afternoon the quiet village scene was disturbed by people suddenly shouting and screaming loudly and running towards the edge of the forest. The news had just been received that a man had been accidentally shot from a short distance by a seventeen old boy, who only recently was permitted to go out hunting with a shotgun. The boy had seen something moving and supposing it to be a pingo (*Dicotyles pecari*), he
fired, without having been able to clearly see what had been moving near the path. The man himself had been waiting in ambush near the path for some game he wanted to lure. The men rushed to the bush path to fetch the victim. Meanwhile the boy was brought into the village and immediately surrounded by a number of women, who tried to stop him when they saw in what kind of desperate state he was. When he rushed in the direction of the river, one of them warned the others: ‘Do not let him go to the river’ for fear that he might drown himself. Soon the man too was brought into the village. Seeing the procession of men carrying the heavy body, the women started to wail as if a corpse had been brought home. Some of the men explained that he was not dead, but unconscious. Hastily he was laid in the quickly vacated cooking house of his wife. The nurse from the missionary hospital, who was still in the village after having held a two week clinic for pregnant women and young mothers, tried to force her way into the cooking house, but was blocked by the villagers, who gathered near the house to discuss what needed to be done. Finally she was able to take a look at him and instructed them to prepare an outboard immediately to bring the man to the clinic opposite Posugunu. She stressed that this was not the time to deliberate any longer, and that they must hurry. The man's wife also urged them to make a decision. However, they continued to debate heatedly, and were soon joined by other elders returning from the fields. The decision was finally reached to cure the man in the village. ‘Bakaa deesi (medicines of the whites) are good, but in this case it is better to apply matu deesi (medicines of the bush)’. The nurse became angry, but unable to alter the decision, she dramatically declared: ‘I am washing my hands of it’. That night all the villagers sat and waited near the cooking house. A small delegation was sent, in the darkness of the night, to the place of the accident to recover the patient's soul (akaa), believed to have left the body at the moment he was shot. It was not until the following day that an
investigation was made into the ‘supernatural cause’ of the accident. It was revealed that fio fio was involved. Prayers were then said to the ancestors, the cure was begun and a specialist was assigned. At the council, held the following day, the gaaman arrived. The boy was found guilty of not looking before he fired the gun. Moreover, only at the age of 21, is formal permission given by the national government to carry a shotgun. But they decided to suspend his case until the man had recovered. In this way, they attempted to prevent outsiders from being involved in the case. Feeling that a conflict with the mission was at hand, they added that when the man had recovered, the convocation in town would be informed so that they could thank God. The lay pastor until this time had kept aloof. Hearing that the treatment had not yet started, he warned them, that they better send the man to the clinic. Within a few days the nurse sent a letter to Boslanti, complaining about the lack of cooperation she received in her work, and inquiring who was responsible for the decision about curing the man. An answer was given that both families in question, both the man's and his wife's lineages, made the decision. The nurse, feeling herself responsible for the patient, meanwhile radioed the doctor, who visits the clinic once in a fortnight. He in his turn informed the district commissioner, who dispatched an outboard motor with policemen from Kwakugo to the upriver area.

Meanwhile the patient was brought to a cooking house at the rear of the village. Once the treatment began, the patient was sealed off from all contact, excepting those with the specialist and his helper, because other visits would influence the treatment unfavourably. For the same reason not even the policemen were allowed to visit and ascertain the condition of the patient. It was considered to be an internal matter, and there should be no intervention from outsiders. The authority of the police extended only to the control of licences for shotguns, and so they could take the boy along with them to Brokopondo for interrogation.
Some five weeks later the man's recovery was dramatized in a ritual. On this occasion the shots which had been removed from his head, by means of traditional medicine, were shown to all present. Testifying to his complete recovery, he walked to the riverside and then back to them carrying an enormous bucket of water on his head. Finally thanks were given to the ancestors, libations of rum poured out, and they drank rum together.

A week later the doctor came to Posugunu to talk about the case with the gaaman, headmen and elders. Before the meeting the gaaman suggested to the others that the medicines of the doctor were also not made from sand alone, but from the same herbs used by the Bush Negroes to make their mattu deesi. He referred to a professor who came all the way from the United States to Suriname to collect plants in the area of the Tafelberg, and pointed out that the professor collected these plants in order to prepare medicine. At the meeting, the doctor tried to convince them that the medical specialist in town knows how to cure patients better than the local medicine men. The reason being that he has more experience. He is not only confronted more regularly with certain syndromes, but his knowledge, moreover, is based on a large number of books made with the help of the cumulative knowledge produced by thousands of research studies. He told them that people came to visit him regularly saying: ‘Doctor, somewhere here must still be a shot, which has not been removed by traditional medicine’. He went on to explain that a shot in your leg needs not trouble you much, but if it is in your head, that is bad, because the shots may move to other parts. To be sure that a shot has not been left, a photograph must be made, so that the doctor can, by looking at the picture, ascertain if there are still shots left and if an operation is necessary. A person with a shot left inside can become paralysed, after some two, three, or even ten years.

After the customary meeting technique of ‘going aside’, the gaaman replied: ‘All is God's work, the knowledge of the
medicine-man as well as the knowledge of the white doctor. When
someone's time has come to die, only God decides’. The discussion came
back to this point repeatedly. When the discussion broached the subject
of the desirability or the need for the Matawai to cooperate with the medical
mission, the gaaman took the initiative and articulated his grievances. He
rebuked the doctor for having allowed himself to be used by the district
commissioner as an errand boy, and clearly indicated that he did not
appreciate this kind of intervention.

As is clear from the above case, Matawai ideas about the applicability of traditional
medicine for particular afflictions are not shared by the personnel of the medical
mission. The Matawai claim that traditional medicines are more effective than western
ones, in cases such as removing shots and healing fractures. Despite the fact that
regularly, throughout Bush Negro tribal areas, such cases are effectively cured by
means of traditional medical practices, the value of traditional medicine is strongly
denied by the medical mission. They insist that all diseases must be treated by them
and consider almost as a matter of course that their own medicine is superior to
traditional ones. Matawai resistance to treatment in the clinic or hospital is frequently
misinterpreted by the medical personnel as a sign of negligence and lack of
responsibility towards kinsmen. The people associated with the medical mission are
involved with the Moravian church and the doctors are mostly young Europeans.
The ideas of some of the Creole doctors in town are more compatible with Matawai
ideas. They are inclined to distinguish between what they call datra siki, diseases
treatable by western-educated doctors, and busi siki, diseases treatable by traditional
specialists or healers. When the diagnosis falls into the latter category they will
occasionally refer the patient to these specialists. We will return later to this
distinction, which is also used by the Matawai.

Western and Matawai conceptions concerning the cause of illness and the way in
which it affects the treatment sought, diverge widely. As appeared in the above case,
the explanation sought for the cause of the accident is much less restricted, and
directly affects the way in which the patient is cured. Not satisfied with ascertaining
that
the man was shot by accident, they tried to discover the real cause for the affliction of that particular man. They discovered a disturbance in the social relations for which he himself was to blame. This cause, fio fio, it was argued, invoked the intervention of the ancestors, and led to the affliction.

Illness and adversity according to the Matawai generally result from a disturbance in social relations (fio fio, cursing, witchcraft). The disturbance must be ritually settled with gods and ancestors as a prerequisite to effective treatment. By means of divination or a pronouncement of a medium the locus of the disturbance, that is the reason why supernatural powers are believed to have interfered, can be ascertained. Moreover, divinatory methods can determine the way in which the matter must be ritually settled. It may specify the ritual specialist to be summoned for treatment, or even the particular herbal components of the traditional medicine. However on this level, for the curing of physical phenomena, Matawai conceptions leave considerable room for divergent treatment, and have incorporated the application of western medicines as a possible alternative.

While in practice western and traditional medicines are often used together, in theory the Matawai insist that treatments should not be mixed. People who are applying traditional medicine must refrain from going to the clinic to seek treatment, and vice versa. This theory is related to observations concerning the opposite requirements and effects of the two kinds of medical treatment, as well as to their incompatibility. All traditional medicine, acquired as it is from gods and ancestors(11) is of supernatural origin, and thus surrounded by numerous prohibitions and supernatural sanctions, involving actual or symbolic seclusion of the patient, food prohibitions, and the like.

Since western medicine has become incorporated as a possible means of treatment for certain diseases, the clinic is regularly visited. People go to it seeking treatment for a whole range of diseases, from minor ailments like influenza, headaches, backaches, and intestinal worms, to such specific afflictions as venereal disease, formerly cured by a healer, and serious cases that must be treated at the hospital in Paramaribo. By its special attention to mother and child care, the clinic has gradually acquired a vital role in matters concerning pregnancy,
delivery and the care of small children.

However, use of western medicine did not lead to a change in the fundamental ideas concerning the cause of affliction. For those seeking treatment by means of western medicine, traditional ritual remains an essential part of the cure. While the patient is visiting the clinic or is brought to the hospital, his lineage members will turn to divination to seek out the cause of his affliction. They might find, for example, that his venereal disease was caused by the spirit of the deceased, with whose widow he had initiated sexual relations while she was still a *koto sembe mujee* (see p. 274); perhaps his affliction was brought about by his supernatural namesake (see p. 287); or as a lineage elder who had to settle troubles in his lineage, he bypassed the quarrel in which his old mother was involved in favour of another, thus angering her; or his affliction was due to the way in which he abused his wife before her death, and so forth. The relatives will hasten, during the absence of the patient to bring the prayers and libations necessary to settle the matter. When the patient has returned and recovered, they will thank the gods and ancestors.

In addition, there are a number of cases, for which western medicines are considered inappropriate. When western medical treatment is ineffective, the lack of success tends to be explained in terms of *busi siki*. Thus, since the affliction originated from supernatural causes, such as witchcraft, cursing, or the action of an avenging spirit, it cannot be effectively treated by western medicine. *Ex post facto* explanations are sought that are coherent with traditional religious concepts.

If the Matawai would strictly adhere to a conceptual division of afflictions according to type, there would be little reason for conflict. In most cases, however, diagnosis begins after the frequently vague and confusing first symptoms, and after the patient has already turned to the clinic, leaving room for concurrent interpretations.

Moreover, attitudes diverge toward seeking the help of a medium to explain illness and adversity, and toward the phenomenon of spirit possession in general. Those closely associated with the church have assumed the Moravian viewpoint that spirit possession belongs to the realm of the Devil and according to them people can not even become possessed when the minister is in the village. Church-minded people are
not likely to turn to a medium in search of an explanation for illness, and are also not likely to believe divinatory pronouncements of a medium. Moreover, when they observe the first symptoms of spirit possession in their kinsmen, they are inclined to bring the individual to the lay pastor to be exorcized (see p. 257) Others, however, who believe that God has instituted two systems for the treatment of illness, hold that the choice of treatment is one's own. They have no moral objections to spirit possession in itself and the consultation of mediums. As some will argue: Gadu de, ma ju mu jeji ju seeji (God exists, but in case of emergency you have to help yourself).

**The individual dilemma**

Clearly, there are considerable variations in the relevance of traditional and Christian beliefs and practices, for the individual. Although personality characteristics play an important role in this matter, the most significant variable is the position the individual holds in each of the religious systems. Church functionaries in particular are constantly being reminded of their intermediate position. It is their duty to inform the lay pastor of any transgression of the rules of the church and of any practice that does not conform with Christian belief. Further they must draw the attention of their villagers and kinsmen to the incompatibility of these practices with Christian belief and the rules of the church, urging them to stop participating in such practices. The lay pastor, also, expects them to set an example by their own behaviour, in order to influence their kinsmen. Therefore they are more harshly punished by church sanctions, if they participate in traditional rituals or transgress church rules.

The church acknowledges three categories of congregational membership. The gravity with which a transgression is viewed and the severity of the sanction varies with the category to which a member belongs. Baptized members are dealt with less stringently than confirmation members, while a transgression on the part of a church functionary is treated with the utmost severity.

Church functionaries are often also lineage elders, holding key positions in both local politics and traditional religion. We have already
indicated the way in which, because of their dual role, they are able to urge their kinsmen and villagers to conform to church rules. While in the case of adultery and separation, the goal of the church conference and village council coincide, namely reconciliation of the marital partners, this is frequently not the case when church functionaries act in their role as lineage elders in traditional religious contexts. They are indeed keenly aware of the inherent difficulties of the divergent ideologies. More than others they are inclined to pretend to avoid participation in traditional rituals, and often they will, in fact, keep quite aloof from them. Although they usually warn their kinsmen against such practices, they do not actively attempt to oppose them. When they inform the lay pastor concerning rituals that are about to performed, they will attempt to hide their role from others, for fear of retribution. This fear is often well-grounded, as is apparent from the following missionary report. The lay pastor of Kwatahede had been alerted that a meeting would be held at the ancestor pole to pray to the ancestors in connection with an illness. He pretended to pass by accidentally and those present hastily scattered. When he summoned the participants to admonish them about the incident, he was reproached by the headman of the village. Angrily the headman told him that if he knew the name of the person who had warned him, he would have come to blows with him.

Church functionaries who are also lineage elders, are more aware than others of latent conflicts between the two systems and often discuss these discrepancies among themselves. Some voice the opinion that there is a clear difference between some traditional practices, such as spirit possession and divination, that are ‘real pagan’, and others such as food offerings and libations to one's own ancestors, that are only old gwenti (things people are accustomed to do) and can not be dispensed with immediately. In the case of a fanowdu, a pressing matter concerning illness and adversity that must be settled, lineage elders in general, and also church functionaries among them, are frequently called on to intervene. If they are discovered participating in these rituals, some will justify themselves by emphasizing that they did not want to interfere, but had been pressured by others to help them. One must not underestimate the great pressures that kinsmen or villagers can exert
upon an individual to conform and to participate, by referring to supernatural sanctions. It is a basic Bush Negro belief that a person, by means of anti-social behaviour, causes illness and adversity to his kinsmen. Since any adversity can be ascribed to the previous refusal of an elder to perform a ritual, one has to have an extremely strong personality to resist these social pressures, as the headman in the following case:

During the annual burning of the garden plot of a Christian headman in an upriver Matawai village, a young man died. Non-Christians from other villages, who attended the council, accused the headman of being responsible for the death since it had happened on his field, and he had instructed the man to set the field afire. In order to prevent the spirit from roaming around this part of the forest and attacking other people on their fields, he would have to pay the spirit with a libation and purify the place with a washing ritual, otherwise, they argued, he could not plant his field. Although such measures were customary, the village headman refused. He not only rejected the libation, but also ignored their warnings about planting his field (Leerdam 1957: XXXIII).

Many people who strongly associate in public with the church view their own participation in traditional ritual as a nominal and not an active one, emphasizing that they can not possibly back out of it. For other more traditionally oriented people the opposite holds true. They have a strong public association with traditional religion, that is apparent in the leading functions they perform, so that their church attendance is nominal and they do not feel themselves to be so much obliged by the church organization. Others view traditional beliefs and practices with scepticism. They feel caught in a web of social pressures to accept traditional divinations that they consider irrelevant, often having to participate in rituals on behalf of their kinsmen or for themselves, that have no meaning for them:

Upon returning from an operation in the town hospital,
Akwali was informed that his kinsmen had said prayers and offered libations on his behalf, because, as they said, it had been found that his affliction was caused by his neseki. He gave them a bottle of rum in return for the one they had offered to his neseki, but reprimanded them that it was their responsibility, while muttering that he did not believe in such nonsense.

People like Akwali often discuss aspects of traditional belief with others, reasoning in similar terms to those used in sermons opposing traditional practices: ‘I do not believe that “such and such” an ancestor is responsible for someone's illness,’ they vehemently argue, ‘if ancestors would have so much power, they themselves would not have died’. And speaking about the divination of a medium: ‘I do not believe in it. Such people only speak false words, because they do not warn people beforehand about things that are going to happen, but only tell them afterwards, when it has already occurred. The person himself knows best what has happened’. Often these people put more trust in God, believing that he will be able to protect them against adversity, as one of them stated: ‘I do not need a tapa (any traditional charm) to protect me against evil and witchcraft, because Gadu en na di tapa fu mi (God serves as a kind of protective amulet)’. And time and again when we walked on the path to the fields they expressed their belief that God protected them on the way to their fields by keeping the snakes away in the forest, and that was why snakes did not cross the path.

The divergence of opinions and attitudes in religious matters can easily become a source of interpersonal conflicts. However, Matawai, aware of the diversity, tend to show an attitude of tolerance towards deviant opinions and the intensity of an individual's participation in each of the religious systems is seen to some degree, to be a matter of choice.

The religious situation among Matawai migrants in town

Matawai migrants who live in the coastal area and especially in town, usually remain affiliated with their church community upriver,
expecting to return to the tribal area some day. By continuing to pay contributions to their congregation upriver, they maintain the right to be buried by the church community. In fact, in the first place they consider membership in the church of the Moravian brethren, as do other people upstream, in terms of belonging to the church community, rather than in terms of a general affiliation with the Moravian church. Therefore they are not inclined to affiliate with the Moravian congregations in town, which are dominated by a Creole constituency. The migrants, dispersed over several neighbourhoods in town (see p. 448) hardly ever attend church and maintain little or no relations with either Moravian or Catholic congregations.

Instead, certain aspects of traditional religious life are reinforced. In times of adversity and illness, Matawai migrants turn increasingly to traditional healers among other Bush Negro groups and among Para Creoles. In this multi-ethnic context particular religious concepts become prominent, especially suspicions of witchcraft and the sending of bakulu (see p. 457).

Rituals that center around life crises, birth, marriage and death, become focal points in the formation of a Matawai community in town: Matawai from all villages, who reside in town or are on visiting trips, participate in these rites. For people who die in either the tribal area or in town, funerary rites are performed in both areas, thus strengthening the links between tribal and migrant segments of the Matawai, such that migrants can express their feelings of solidarity and can remain involved in tribal life.

The Moravian church, which has lost its grip on most migrants, is trying to regain its influence by the appointment in 1975 of two lay pastors to work in the Bush Negro neighbourhoods in and around town. It is not yet possible to assess the results of these attempts.

**Conclusions**

The Moravian mission's attempt to replace traditional religion and life-style by Christianity and western attitudes, and the ways in which the Matawai have responded to these pressures, have had a remarkable effect on Matawai society. To summarize, the results have been:
a) the rather radical disappearance of a number of traditional socio-cultural institutions (such as polygyny, the secondary marriage of a widower with a classificatory sister of his former wife (see also p. 97-8), the carrying oracle for divinatory purposes (see p. 295), to mention a few examples), while others have remained only in a rudimentary form (as has happened, for instance, with the formerly more elaborate cult rituals such as that of the *koomanti* cult, see p. 245).
b) the decline of the public character of a number of traditional socio-cultural institutions (observable in a great variety of customs, such as the wearing of *tapa* (protective *obia*) under one's clothes; the ‘secret’ use of religious objects like rattles, earthen pots (*agban*) and calabashes for the treatment and diagnosis of illness and other divinatory purposes; the performance of food offerings inside a house instead of the former large public offerings; ‘secret’ mediumistic seances and hidden shrines of *kunu* mediums instead of the former *kunu wosu* (temples) in the village; performance of divination indoors with a few people present).
c) the differentiation in individual belief and involvement in both systems, that subsequently leads not only to more scepticism, but also to more tolerance towards other opinions.

Although all Bush Negro religions have developed esoteric domains, kept from outsiders or even from members of other lineages, in Matawai society Christianity has become in most respects the dominant public religion. As a consequence traditional religion has gone underground. This means that religious practice is largely performed in secret, outside the village. Because of the disappearance of public oracles in favour of more individually applied divination, and because of the different involvement of individuals in both religious systems, interpretations of events have become more varied, resulting in a rather complex religious situation. While concurrent interpretations have always existed, Christianity has certainly contributed to an increasing complexity. The outcome of divination is no longer recognized by everyone as legitimate. The fact that divination (13.) occurs less frequently in public, has given
rise to a large variety of interpretations. Especially those of local, minor or village mediums, are often contradictory. In the resulting confused muddle of opinions, the only divination that is communally acknowledged is that of the medium of a *gaan kunu*.

The contact between traditional religion and Christianity does not, however, always proceed in one direction. As we have already pointed out, in the case of *siba* (cursing) (see p. 306), the acceptance of Christian ideas resulted in a marked shift towards frequent self-cursing rather than cursing others. This, in turn, was accompanied by an increase in the number of avenging spirits that arose from self-cursing. This is the only case, as far as we know, that the clash between Christianity and traditional belief, led to an enforcement of traditional custom.

We have already indicated that the Matawai involvement in the church community and in Christian concepts is very strong. Sunday services and church connected activities fulfill a number of community functions, and indeed the attendance of both older and younger adults is very high. The percentage of communicants is probably the highest in Suriname\(^{14}\). The eagerness with which people strive to become confirmed and their willingness to spend a lot of time learning the biblical stories by heart, is an indication of their sincerity. The extent to which Christianity is meaningful for the Matawai can be seen in the feeling of religious thrill expressed at the communal singing of Christian hymns\(^{15}\), the frequent references to biblical stories to explain life, the individual dedication shown in the way in which people read from their bibles murmuring the words by the light of a *kokolampu*, and many other instances throughout daily life. We therefore refrain from concluding, with so many other anthropologists from their arrogant western viewpoint in similar situations, that the Matawai, because of the persistent relevance of their traditional religious conceptions, would not be true believers (see Peel 1968: 121) or that Christianity for them would be only a thin layer with which they mask their real intentions.

Our analysis of Matawai religious life has focused on the upriver area and especially the uppermost cluster of villages. The religious situation in the downriver area is essentially quite similar, but the underground character of traditional religion is less pronounced\(^{16}\).
Two factors have contributed to this differentiation. Firstly, from the beginning of the century Creole gold-diggers as well as Saramaka and Djuka have settled in this area, some of them marrying with Matawai. They have significantly influenced Matawai religious life. The Creole gold-diggers and balata-gatherers, although some were also Christians, held a different view of the Moravian church. They were less inclined to recognize the authority of the church in all matters, and introduced among the villagers a more secularized life-style. The Saramaka and Djuka, who settled for long periods in downriver villages and to whom the Matawai turned for ritual purposes, reinforced traditional religious practices. Some of them even initiated a religious movement among the Matawai.

Secondly, the downriver village of Bilawata, traditionally the centre for the gaan gadu cult, that had a following throughout the area, was the first village where a Roman Catholic mission was established. Because of the more tolerant attitude of the Catholics towards aspects of traditional religion, cult life in this village could be performed more openly than, for example, a similar cult in the upstream area.

On the ideological level Christianity and traditional religion are quite distinct. This is especially true when considered from the Christian point of view. On the level of actual daily life there are, as we have seen, many tangent planes as well as domains of inevitable conflicts. To live with these inherent conflicts, the Matawai have developed a large range of religious adjustments or responses, that may vary according to the situation. In crisis situations other concepts and mechanisms become dominant.

In fact all elements found to be characteristic in other religious acculturation situations, could be observed among the Matawai at various levels. Matawai religion is a fluctuating system in which at one point in time either traditional religion or Christianity is dominant. And viewed at any specific point in time they have worked out their precarious balance, in which elements of both religions are represented.

In the beginning of this chapter we outlined some of the theoretical frameworks relating to religious acculturation in a number of Bush Negro societies. It was shown that interpretations concerning the role of
Christianity varied greatly. This is partly due to actual differences generated by historical processes, and partly to the particular viewpoint and peculiar interests of the researcher. At the present time we still lack the necessary data to compare meaningfully the processes of religious acculturation in the various Bush Negro societies. In our analysis of the Matawai situation we have tried to indicate that the co-existence of two concurrent religious traditions has consequences throughout a large range of social phenomena and at different analytic levels (ideology, socio-cultural institutions and individual behaviour).

Eindnoten:

(1.) De Graav had been an evangelist in the Saramaka village of Abenaston before he went to the Saramaccariver. In his report of 1932 he describes an extended case of the ‘refusal of a corpse’ at burial in a Christian Saramaka village.
(2.) Jaarverslag Boslanti 1932.
(3.) Verslag van de Zending der EBG 1890.
(4.) Jaarverslagen Boven Saramacca 1921 and 1923.
(5.) Jaarverslag Boslanti 1930.
(6.) Jaarverslag Boven Saramacca 1929.
(7.) Jaarverslag Kwattahede 1910.
(8.) Church sanctions are considered by the congregation of the Moravian Brethren to be a means of pastoral care, based on the words of the Holy Bible in Matthew 18:15-7 and Gal. 6:1. According to the example of the old Christian congregation, sanctions are applied when pastoral exhortation has remained ineffective. The aim is the salvation of the individual member of the congregation as well as the congregation as a whole (see article 12 in Handboek der Evangelische Broedergemeente in Suriname, 1931).
(9.) Notice that Church Creole, a specific kind of Sranan, is used instead of Matawai when addressing God. Since this specific kind of Sranan is used in most church sermons as well as in singing at school, the majority of Matawai are well-versed in this language.
(10.) The gaaman referred here to a botanical expedition in 1944 of B. Maguire, an American biologist of the New York Botanical Garden. The expedition's purpose was the collection of plants, seeds and samples of wood in the Tafelberg area.
(11.) For the Matawai, all traditional medicine is of supernatural origin. Both the medicines used to mediate contact with the supernatural world, usually called obia or gaan obia, and other traditional medicines used for the healing of specific afflictions, called deesi, have originally been acquired from particular deities or ancestors during possession. In this way these medicines have become closely linked with the person (and his lineage) who acquired them by supernatural means, and who is thus considered to be the owner of the medicine. The owner becomes a specialist of his particular medicine, is approached by others for treatment, and receives a standard amount of rum and cloth in payment for his services. Formerly the bequeathal of a person's medicines was settled by means of divination, nowadays it may be transmitted during a dream or during the division of the inheritance (see also note 13 chapter 7). Medicines for minor afflictions will even change hands during the owner's lifetime. Besides being approached for his services, the owner will sometimes be asked to sell his medicine for a small bottle of rum or a machete, or exchange it for another medicine. A person who buys the medicine is able to apply it both for himself and close kinsmen, when needed. The original owner also retains the right to apply the medicine.
(12.) Jaarverslag Kwattahede 1910.
(13.) There are indications that divination used to play a more dominant role in Matawai social life and that by its public character it provided an occasion in which public opinion was voiced by
reference to supernatural powers, as it still does in Saramaka society (see Price 1975: 38-43, for a clear description of the prominent role of divination in Saramaka society).

(14.) In 1947, Boslanti numbered 340 baptized members, of which 106 were confirmants (OS 1947: 191).

(15.) Missionaries have always been deeply impressed by such expressions on the part of the Matawai, as is apparent from the following observation of one missionary: ‘I will never forget the moment, when the congregation of the village of Boslanti, under the direction of Brother and Sister Hok-a-Hin (lay pastor of Boslanti) slowly came down the river in 35 boats, while all were singing loudly songs in honour of God, and the congregation of Posoegoenoe, standing on the bank, greeted their songs, while swinging palm-branches and flowers, and clapping their hands (OS 1921: 65; the inauguration of the church in Posugunu).

(16.) This difference between the religious life in the two areas was also observed by Green, who, however, ascribes it to a different factor. His suggestion is that more Creoles would have been appointed as evangelists in downriver villages, while the evangelists of the upriver area would have been mostly Maroons, and that their attitude towards traditional religion differed markedly. Creoles, because of their difficult position had to be more lenient than Bush Negro evangelists, who would have felt obliged to prove that they had overcome their heathen heritage (Green 1978: 265). Our research has indicated that both Creoles and Bush Negro evangelists have rotated turns working years in both areas.

(17.) One such movement was initiated in the 1940s by the Djuka, Moliki, who established a cult centre within Matawai territory. Together with his wife Catholina, who originated from the village of Bilawata and had been a prominent helper in the church, as well as some of her relatives, he founded a new settlement, Catholinakonde, upstream of Bilawata and opposite of the goldminer's camp, Lemiki. Moliki and his brother maintained close relations with Santigoon, the centre of the Gaan Tata cult. Deep in the forest, near the gardens, he built his shrine where people were ritually washed when they turned to him in case of illness. However, he did not succeed in attracting a large following and when he died the cult was dwindling. His wife, who was quite old by then, continued in his stead. Matawai of the upstream area insisted that the rituals were, in fact, extremely ‘pagan’ and suspect. As confirmation of their belief they pointed out that when the woman died her whole body had been black as charcoal, which they considered to be a punishment of God and the ancestors for the woman's involvement in such ‘pagan rituals’.
III Demography
11 Demography

In this part an analysis is made of demographic data of a pre-industrial tribal society which is partly dependent on the traditional horticultural system of shifting cultivation but is now undergoing rapid change. One of the most significant manifestations of this change is the exodus of Matawai villagers to the coast of Suriname. As a result of migration, which started in the late 1950s, many Matawai men now work in regular jobs and have consequently developed a new life-style. The demographic implications of the migration process will be the subject of chapter while the process of adaptation to city life will be the subject of chapter 16. We will shortly consider the relation between migration and fertility.

Archival data and published sources were used to reconstruct the growth of the Matawai population since the middle of the 18th century. We will analyse the available historical data in relation to data we collected in contemporary Matawai society.

The Davis and Blake classification of factors affecting fertility (1956) will be used to analyse specific social and cultural factors which determine Matawai fertility. In the next section characteristics of Matawai demography, such as the regular and increasing growth, moderate to low birth rates and high child mortality in the recent past, are linked with some general aspects of the demographic transition model. In a next chapter some hypotheses are developed in order to explain the particular pattern of seasonal variation of births. A part of this section has been published before (de Beet and Sterman 1978).
The collection of demographic data in a tribal society

Although such a classic handbook of anthropological data gathering techniques as ‘Notes and Queries on Anthropology’ (first edition 1874, 1967) points to the need for systematic counts in order to determine population density, sex ratios, fertility rates and other demographic indices, until recently anthropologists have tended to neglect the possibilities of collecting vital statistics in a systematic way. As exceptions we may mention the British explorer and anthropologist Rivers, who was the first to recognize the possibility of using extensive genealogical material for the compilation of vital statistics in primitive societies (Rivers 1900; 1906; 1910). Another early contribution was Audrey Richards' technique of the village census. Richards was confronted with problems of social and cultural change among African tribal societies before the second World War. Her village census technique was aimed at providing a base line for the study of cultural change, but it could also furnish a useful framework for collecting and analysing demographic data (Richards 1935). After World War II a number of other anthropologists showed interest in the development of quantitative approaches, among whom Firth, Fortes, Barnes and Mitchell were the most prominent. A review of this development can be found in Epstein's edited book 'The Craft of Social Anthropology' (1967).

The American anthropologist Hackenberg has contributed to the renewed interest in Rivers' approach and has elaborated this approach in what he has called structural demography (1967; 1973). According to Hackenberg:

Structural demography incorporates inductive discovery procedures, based on accumulation of individual demographic and social data through time, for the purpose of charting stability and change in institutions and communities at various levels of social structure (1973: 314-5).

The analysis of elaborate and complex data sets as those obtained from genealogies has been facilitated by the use of new technical aids such as computers. Illustrations of this work which Hackenberg and his team members have done with the genealogical inquiry of the Papago tribe -
North American Indians residing mainly on a reservation in the state Arizona have been presented in Hackenberg (1972). The genealogies provide, in these studies, the basic framework for the collection of data on the ‘whole’ tribe and facilitate careful comparisons in time and space of such diverse aspects as marriage choice, fertility, mortality, and economic and medical characteristics.

We may mention some reasons for the emergence of a new subfield of demographic anthropology or as some prefer to call it ‘population anthropology’. The first reason is a practical one. Processes of detribalization and incorporation of isolated tribal societies in national states caused increasing bureaucratization, which also implied the registration of these populations. However, most of these registration systems are incomplete and often cannot be used for demographic analysis. For this reason numerous new techniques have been developed to acquire demographic information or to make demographic estimates, for instance the multi-round samples, the Brass technique and the use of model life tables (see Coale and Demeny 1966; United Nations 1967. Brass and Coale 1968; Weiss 1973). In accordance with these developments, anthropologists have extended their research domains to the level of the nation state and to urban and complex societies.

A second reason is the concomitant development of some related fields, such as historical demography and ecological anthropology which recognizes the importance of demographic processes for the study of the relationship between a population and its man-made as well as its natural environment (see for instance, Vayda and Rappaport 1968; Bennett 1976: 113).

While the demographer mainly works with aggregate census figures to analyse data of large populations and to derive general tendencies, the demographic anthropologist's focus is on macro-evolutionary processes with estimates of the population density as a major variable; on the other hand he is interested in micro-processes which occur on the level of the local community. With the microscopic perspective he may discover relevant variables and relationships in the study of social and cultural factors which affect demographic processes. He may also acquire a better control over these variables in comparative analysis. A major handicap is, however, that the smallness of the
populations which he uses implies possible distortion by random factors. In this context it must be noted that random factors may play an important role in processes of survival and extinction of small communities.

Instead of using standard demographic concepts of *de jure* and *de facto* population, the anthropologist will often opt for the concept of ‘ethnic population’. The boundaries of an ethnic population are not primarily determined by time and space criteria, but by the criterion of membership to the community as defined by the community itself. These criteria are often based on kinship principles, marital relations or relations of clientship. People who have been away from the village for years may be included in the ethnic population (see Carroll 1978 for an elaboration of the ethnic population concept).

In a unilineal society, as that of the Matawai, the lineage organization provides the basic rule for the determination of membership of the ethnic population. In fact, every person who can trace his descent in the female or matri-line to a Matawai ancestor belongs to the ‘ethnic’ Matawai population. Actually, this means that any person with a Matawai mother belongs to the Matawai group.

Our fieldwork was aimed at combining the intensive study of a single village community with a more quantitative approach to anchor the village study to a wider perspective of Matawai society as a whole. The quantitative approach made comparisons possible between several Matawai villages and clusters of villages in order to discover variations within the tribal area. To achieve these goals we collected basic demographic data for almost the whole Matawai population. These data included place of residence, migration histories, marital and reproductive histories, age, number of births, etc. In fact, we covered 17 out of the 19 Matawai villages. Data on the two downstream villages of Makakiiki and Asanwai were not complete and are excluded in this work. Also excluded are data from the two Kwinti villages Paka Paka and Pikin Paka Paka, which are located between the Matawai villages along the Saramacca river. Genealogies which were collected for all lineages provided the basic data for the compilation of lists of the Matawai adult population. A major problem, in the use of genealogies in demographic research, is to determine the point at which the genealogy is complete for at least the few most recent generations. In our Matawai research many cross-checks
became possible due to both the small-scale of this society and to the endogamous character of the marriage system. In other words, the number of marriages with non-Matawai was restricted. There were some other ways we used to extend the reliability and comprehensiveness of our data. We applied, for instance, a number of external checks. The names of ancestors that could be heard frequently in prayers or in oral history accounts were used to control the completeness of the genealogies. In cases of particular accidents, when someone was bitten by a snake or died in the river, it was possible to record similar cases occurring in the past and to write down the names of the people involved. Another source for names were the working histories which were collected for 25 men. Some of the older men were able to remember the composition of work groups in which they had participated in their youth some 30 years earlier. In addition to genealogical data we used all available written material, such as the incomplete registration systems of both the Anti-Malaria Campaign and the Moravian church. The church registers were particularly helpful, because they provided us with exact birth data on the majority of the Matawai. Many of the missing data were found in the registers of the Roman Catholic church in Paramaribo. The major handicap of the Moravian church's registration system was that the baptismal- or membership cards were usually destroyed some time after death. However, the available data provided a useful basis to estimate birth and death rates over the past decade. Also, by combining male and female reproductive histories, the further refinement of estimates was possible. The collection of genealogical data was facilitated by the fairly strict principle of unilineal descent and the principle of uxorilocal residence. In this way we obtained for every village a list of adults, who according to genealogical principles, belonged to that village. The lists served as a basis for a more extended census conducted among both females and males and among migrants as well as among the resident population. The demographer's ideal to carry out the census work in a short limited period, is not possible in a tribal society with high mobility of individual members and with villages several days traveling distance from each other. Moreover, the migrant population which we included in our census, lived dispersed in and around Paramaribo, while many of the men temporarily stayed elsewhere on working places in Suriname's large tropical forests. After having completed
genealogies, more than a year was needed to finish census work. This work was partly done in the second half of 1973 and in 1974. It was possible to reconstruct Matawai population at one particular date, January 1, 1974. For this aim all vital events were recorded which took place after census was taken. For census work done after January 1, 1974, it was easy to reconstruct the situation at that date.

**Population growth**

‘To think of population today is to think of growth’, is the opening phrase in the forward of a textbook on demography, which appeared a decade ago (Keyfitz and Flieger 1971). In fact, population growth, its causes and effects became important issues of debate among historians, politicians, demographers and social scientists since the publication of Malthus' classic ‘An Essay on the principle of population, as it affects the future improvement of society’ (1798). Malthus was aware of the great growth potential in human populations and he postulated a differential development of food production and population growth. Populations were, according to Malthus, growing faster than the production of food. Malthus' ideas were severely criticized by Marx and Engels (see, for instance, Meek 1953). New stimuli for the discussion about population growth were provided by the theory of the demographic transition and by the work of the Danish geographer Ester Boserup (1965). The latter's work reverses Malthus' original thesis, arguing that population growth works an an independent variable, being a prime cause in the development of agriculture. She proposes a number of successive agricultural stages 1) forest fallow cropping, 2) bush fallow cultivation, 3) short fallow, 4) annual cropping, 5) multi-cropping.

The development of these increasingly intensive agricultural forms are explained by an exogenous variable; population density is seen as the most important factor. A large population density provides, in Boserup's view, the extra labour needed for technological innovations. In the same year that ‘The conditions of Agricultural growth’ was published, a similar argument was put forward by Dumond (1965) (1). While Boserup's theory is restricted to agricultural societies, the theory of the demographic transition also accounts for the industrial
revolution. Also in this theory, population growth is seen as an independent variable. The idea of demographic transition was first postulated by the American demographer Thompson (1929) and has been elaborated by a large number of demographers among whom Davis and Notestein are the most notable (Davis 1945 and 1963; Notestein 1945; Caldwell 1976).

The model of the demographic transition can best be summarized by its three successive phases. The first phase is characteristic for pre-industrial and agrarian societies; birth and mortality rates are relatively high while the possibilities of controlling or regulating these variables are restricted. In the second phase mortality begins to fall as a result of improvements in living conditions while birth rates continue to be high. The growing difference between mortality and fertility, as observed in the second phase, causes a rapid population growth. The increase may be so rapid that some demographers speak of a population explosion or, even worse, of a population bomb. In the third phase mortality and fertility reach a new equilibrium of a more or less stationary population, that is a population with a constant rate of growth. The idea of demographic transition is related to the industrial revolution and to processes of modernization involving more rational life-styles. Consequently it is assumed that it begins in urban areas and spreads out slowly to rural areas. On another level we witness the so-called ‘export’ of the demographic transition to developing countries. Here mortality levels are declining rapidly due to improvements of medical care and the control of parasitic diseases. However, fertility tends to remain at a high level.

The concept of the demographic transition is accepted by most demographers, while its theoretical implications are criticized. A contribution which anthropologists have made to the discussion is their criticism of the assumption that most pre-industrial societies are characterized by uniform high birth and mortality levels. In a cross-cultural study, Nag (1962) shows that this assumption has no empirical basis and that mortality as well as fertility rates are highly variable.

In the following case we will point out that a pre-industrial society may show rapid population growth long before processes of modernization could play a role. We will also show that the recent
increased growth in the Matawai population was not caused by high levels of fertility but by increasing life expectancies to which the decline of child mortality had greatly contributed.
12
Population Growth

*Matawai population growth*

A major impact of colonization has been the rapid decline of the aboriginal Amerindian populations, who almost completely disappeared from the Caribbean islands. On the mainland of the Guyanas too their numbers were considerably reduced. A historical review of the development of the post-conquest Amerindian population is not available for Suriname. The slave populations which were imported from West Africa were also affected by a demographic decline, caused by high mortality and low levels of fertility. In Suriname, as well as in some other Caribbean countries, the slave force was threatened by marronage to such a degree that the plantation owners could only maintain a labour force by importing large numbers of new slaves from Africa (see Price 1976: 9). There are no reliable data available about the demography of the early Maroons. The very process of running away from the plantations had a selective character. Hurault (1959: 525) argued that the viability of the Maroon populations in Suriname and French Guiana can be explained by the fact that only the strongest slaves were able to run away and to survive in the new environment. It seems, also, that more men ran away than women. There are some indications of shortances of women in the early Maroon societies. Hartsinck (1770: 758) mentions wife stealing from the plantations in order to acquire more balanced Maroon communities. The success of the Maroons found formal recognition in the peace treaties with the government in the 1760s. The viability of the Maroon populations can best be illustrated by the growth of its numbers. The growth in the past century is especially striking.

In 1860, a few years before the emancipation of slaves in Suriname
the number of Maroons was estimated at 7,000; in 1975 their total number had increased to 40,000. The Djuka population has quintupled since the beginning of the century (Thoden van Velzen 1977: 94).

Matawai and Saramaka are the oldest Maroon societies in Suriname. The majority of the Maroons who were to become the Matawai and the Saramaka tribes escaped from the plantations before 1667. The Matawai settled, originally along the Tukumutu, a tributary of the Saramaccariver, after a period of hiding on a mountain which they call Hansesipo (Tafelberg). According to oral history accounts they settled there in a large village called Toido. This village was so large that it had no less than twelve landing stages (lanpesi). In comparison, the present village Boslanti, with about 200 inhabitants the largest Matawai village has 6 landing stages.

Kersten, a Moravian missionary who lived and worked among the Saramaka Maroons of the Suriname river made a trip in 1771 through the forest to the Saramacca river. He counted four villages(1). There are some other vague indications of the Matawai population size in the middle of the 18th century. In 1760 the mission post and settlement of Amerindians, Saron, was attacked by a group of Matawai who managed to set the village in fire. They also took a number of Indians with them to the upriver region. The population numbers mentioned in the earliest accounts are small compared to the military force which was necessary to be mobilized in order to restore law and order in the downstream area, far away from the Matawai villages. In the early 1770s the Matawai hid a number of slaves who were captured on the plantations near the coast. In 1773 the Matawai population was estimated at 150. Some years later in 1775 the postholder Joseph provided the government with the following population list(2).

Table 1 Matawai population figures 1775

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Matawai with the exception of slaves 137

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
In 1783 the postholder was able to provide a more detailed population list.

**Table 2 Matawai population figures 1783**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tra Camis</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toppij</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paka pika</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures between the brackets indicate our corrections.

If these numbers are accurate we may conclude that the sex ratio at that time was quite balanced and that the percentage of children in the total population was high (35.8%). This usually indicates a rapidly growing population. The absence of exact data concerning age distribution prevents us from definite conclusions about the fertility level and the growth rate of the Matawai population.

It is likely that the growth rate of the Matawai population fluctuated. In 1790 the missionaries, residing in the Saramaka territory, reported a small-pox epidemic that, according to them, took only a few victims among the Saramaka. However, they also mentioned that five to six persons who visited the Matawai territory were infected (Staehelin 1913-19, III (2): 148-9). This account suggests that the small-pox epidemic may have been more disastrous for the Matawai. Confirmation of this may be found in a remark made by van Calcer, a praeses of the Moravians in 1861. At that time he estimated the Matawai population at about 400, and he added that their number had been reduced in the past by an epidemic (NB 1862: 835).

For the period after 1800 we have found the following estimates and accounts of the Matawai population (see table 3). Ignoring for a moment the inaccuracies in these data, some general tendencies can be derived from the graphical presentation in figure 1. The growth rate increased especially after 1870. After 1950 the growth rate reached
### Table 3 Matawai population figures 1830-1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Wong (1938)</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Teenstra (1835)</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>LA BIB 12: 1846-50</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Koloniaal Verslag 1859</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>NB (1862: 836)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>ARA KA 73: November 22, 1871</td>
<td>350-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>LA GR 1325: February 18, 1893</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Koloniaal Verslag 1911</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Weiss (1911)</td>
<td>700-800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>LA SB 596: December 14, 1931</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>EBG (1932)</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>de Groot (1948)</td>
<td>1110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Population census</td>
<td>1391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Own estimate</td>
<td>1700-2000(^{(1)})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{(1)}\) Own estimate

*Figure 1 Matawai population growth*
a value of about 20, which means that the population increased every year with 2%, doubling itself in 35 years. Shortly before 1950 the figure indicates a stagnation in the growth pattern. There is some documentary evidence that also in other Bush Negro societies the growth began to cease and this fact was recognized by the different tribal paramounts. In a meeting in 1943 at the palace of the governor they complained about the ‘strong’ decline in their populations. The guests of the governor, the gaaman of the Paramaka, Djuka and Matawai tribes attributed the population decline to tuberculosis, malaria and the large number of women who proved to be infertile. One of them pointed out that about half of all the children born died in childhood. The governor of Suriname speculated that marriage within a small group and the increase of venereal diseases were the major causes of what was called the dying-out of the Bush Negroes. Two medical specialists were sent to the Tapanahoni river to investigate the causes of the population decline (Malmberg and Labadie 1944). Unfortunately, the original report of this expedition was not to be found in the archives of the BOG (a Surinamese health organization) and the summary of their report, that was published in van der Kuyt (1962), does not give conclusions of their research on this problem. We will return to this problem in the discussion about the characteristics of the present population.

The structure of the present Matawai population

The composition of the resident tribal population is, as we may expect in a migrant-oriented society, heavily affected by the age and sex selective character of the migration flow. This is particularly significant in this case, because of the speed of urban migration in the last few decades. By eliminating the effects of migration and pooling the residents and migrants, we acquire a population which is more comparable with the demographic characteristics of the non-tribal population of Suriname as a whole. For reason of comparison we chose the Surinamese population figures of 1963. At that time large-scale migration to the Netherlands, which reached a highpoint in the 1970s, had not yet had a significant effect on the population distribution.
Table 4 The total Matawai population of 17 villages at January 1, 1974 compared with the composition of the population of Suriname 1963 (non tribal population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>% (Mat.)</th>
<th>% (Sur.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>10.82</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

N = 768, 802, 1570, 100%, 97.3%

Population under the age of 20
Matawai 1974: 47.6%
Suriname 1963: 56.6%

Population above the age of 60
Matawai 1974: 9.2%
Suriname 1963: 5.5%
In table 4 we observe that both have the characteristics of growing populations; the percentage of the age category 0-19 is very large in Surinamese population (56.6%), the comparable Matawai figure is 47.6%. A striking feature of the Matawai figures is the small number of children in the youngest age category (0-4) which is considerably smaller than the percentage of the following age category (5-9). We have no reason to believe that the age category (0-4) is under-represented because of counting errors, as might be expected in census taking. It is likely that here the growth stagnation mentioned in the previous section affected the birth rates a generation later. The relatively few people born in the period 1940-1950 including women who now reach their peak in the reproductive cycle, are responsible for the observed small number of young children in the present Matawai population. Another striking feature is the large proportion of the highest age categories in the total Matawai population. Actually, the contribution of people of 60 years and older is for the Matawai almost twice as large as the similar contribution to the Surinamese non-tribal population of 1963. Because of the small numbers involved, it was not possible to calculate meaningful Age Specific Mortality Rates for individual years. Instead, we calculated these Rates for a period of 12 years (1962-1974) (see table 5).

Table 5 Age Specific Mortality Rates calculated on base of all deaths in the period 1962-1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>0.0082</th>
<th>0.0068</th>
<th>0.0043</th>
<th>0.0017</th>
<th>0.0017</th>
<th>0.0011</th>
<th>0.0039</th>
<th>0.0153</th>
<th>0.0975</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95-99</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>0.0082</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>0.3529</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>0.0068</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>0.0833</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>0.0043</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>0.1538</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>0.0017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>0.0818</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>0.0017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>0.0247</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>0.0017</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>0.0169</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0.0011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>0.0231</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>0.0039</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1-4</td>
<td>0.0153</td>
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<td>50-54</td>
<td>0.0100</td>
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<td>45-49</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
Figure 2 Age Specific Fertility Rates of the Matawai
- - - births in period 1966-1973 (T.F.R. 4980)
- births to all adult women (T.F.R. 4165)
- - - - births to women older than 45 (T.F.R. 3953)
These data indicate relatively low mortality rates for the higher age categories and explain the observed large representation of older people in the total Matawai population. In fact, the life expectancy for those who have reached the age of 15 remains fairly high for a long time. We may also point in this context to the small number of children whose mothers died during childhood: 31 out of 721 (4.4%) for children under the age of 16. Child mortality has been declining rapidly in the last decades (see p. 396) and this may indicate a general tendency in the mortality rates.

**Matawai fertility**

Before we turn to specific factors affecting fertility in Matawai society, we will present some data on the level of fertility. One of the best indicators of the level of fertility is the Age Specific Fertility Rate that differentiates the data according to the age of women or mothers. Demographers work with two kinds of measures: cohort fertility based on longitudinal data series and cross-sectional fertility based on the births of a group of women during a limited period. In figure 2 we present Age Specific Fertility Rates which are calculated in three different ways.

- Pattern a is based on the women who were within the reproductive ages 15-49, and on the children who were born to them during the period 1966-1973.
- Pattern b is calculated with the aid of the reproductive histories of all adult women including all children born before January, 1974. This is a cohort measure but with the assumption that the fertility of surviving mothers is the same as the fertility of non-surviving mothers.
- Pattern c is similar to pattern b but here, only women who had reached the age of 45 by January 1, 1974, are included.

The Total Fertility Rates tend to increase in time. Although the temporal point of reference in these measures is not fixed, it is possible to conclude that the increase is, for a large part, due to women who remain fertile in the second half of their reproductive period. The
The relatively high fertility of the older women till the age of 25 tends to point to the reliability of these figures (see Brass 1968: 88-104)

**Social and cultural factors affecting fertility in Matawai society**

For the analysis of social and cultural factors affecting fertility, a large number of flow diagrams and classifications have been presented. In this analysis of Matawai fertility we will use the demographic model of intermediate variables as proposed by Davis and Blake (1955-56: 212).

Factors affecting exposure to intercourse (‘Intercourse variables’):

(a) Those governing the formation and dissolution of unions in the reproductive period.

(i) Age of entry into sexual unions.

(ii) Permanent celibacy: proportion of women never entering sexual unions.

(iii) Amount of reproductive period spent after or between unions.

(a) When unions are broken by divorce, separation or desertion.

(b) When unions are broken by death of husband.

(b) Those governing the exposure to intercourse within unions.

(iv) Voluntary abstinence.

(v) Involuntary abstinence (from impotence, illness, unavoidable but temporary separations).

(vi) Coital frequency (excluding periods of abstinence).

(c) Factors affecting exposure to conception (‘Conception variables’):

(vii) Fecundity or infecundity, as affected by involuntary causes.

(viii) Use or non-use of contraception.

(a) By mechanical and chemical means.

(b) By other means.

(ix) Fecundity or infecundity, as affected by voluntary causes (sterilisation, subincision, medical treatment, etc.).
(d) Factors affecting gestation and successful parturition (‘Gestation variables’):

(x) Foetal mortality from involuntary causes.

(xi) Foetal mortality from voluntary causes.
Table 6 Age at which the first child is born for males and females from the upriver area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>age</th>
<th>female</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>female</th>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 Age and birth of first child
Age at marriage (i)

Differences and shifts in the age of marriage are important variables in explaining fertility trends historically and to a lesser degree also in contemporary societies. Especially in populations with limited life expectancies, marriage at late ages may reduce the reproduction potential considerably.

The Matawai themselves think that the age at marriage (age at which the first sexual relationship is legalized by the members of the community) has declined in the course of this century. According to them, men used to marry at the age of 22 or 23, while women began their first relationship between the ages of 17 and 19. Nowadays, they believe, both men and women marry a few years earlier. These Matawai interpretations are in accordance with Price's findings in Saramaka society (1975: 94). The data that we have on the Matawai extending back over a period of about 40 to 50 years do not, however, indicate a significant shift in the age at marriage. In our adjustments of the reproductive and marital histories, we often used the age at which the first child was born as a reference point to determine the age at marriage. It seems, therefore, more appropriate to use the basic data of mother's age at the birth of her first child as an indicator for shifts in the age at marriage. These data are represented in table 6. From this table and the adjoining figure 3 it will be noted that most women have their first child at the age of 17 and 18. Thus it can be derived that they are likely to have entered a marriage relationship at the age of 16 and 17, for men this age is somewhat higher at 22 and 23. These are the same ages at which, presently, men and women become engaged in a first marriage relationship.

The observed age differences of about six or seven years between female and male partners at first marriage may influence the level of fertility as a result of diminishing fecundability with increasing age. Men are usually able to beget children for ten years following the age that marks the end of the female reproductive period. We may conclude that the effects of age differences for the first marriage will be restricted. However, in second and third marriages age differences begin to increase with males being up to 20-25 years older than females.
If these new relationships begin before the woman's reproductive period ended, the level of fertility and especially the age specific fertility of older women can be reduced considerably. In figure 4 we present the distribution of age differences of present marriages. Although large differences occur, the Matawai do not encourage such marriages. They will point to the fact that an older man has to be too submissive to his younger wife in order to keep her as his partner. This contradicts the norms of marital roles.

**Figure 4** Age differences of marital partners (169 marriages in the upriver area)
- total
--- first marriage of women

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Permanent celibacy (ii)

Marriage, for the Matawai, is a matter of course. Permanent celibacy is never thought of as a possible choice. This is partly related with the division of labour, defining female and male tasks which reinforce economic dependency on each other. In Matawai society, it is unimaginable that a woman will fell her own gardenplot. The harvest of rice, however, is an exclusively female activity done during the period when most men are absent. We may point to Price's observations in Saramaka society where women do not find men to prepare the gardens because of the permanent shortage of men in this society. The shortage is due to the particular migration pattern there. Men stay away from home for long periods leaving their women in the tribal area (1975: 106).

The number of women older than 20 years of age who have never been married is quite small. In the upstream area, only seven of these women remained unmarried; four of them did not participate in the marriage market because of mental illness. The number of unmarried men is even more restricted; only 3 men out of a total of 210, older than 25, remained without ever being married. In one of these cases the marriage rituals could not be completed when the man proved to be impotent on the first night of marriage. In this context, it is apt to point to the fact that homosexuality does not exist as far as we could observe and it certainly has no implications for the marriage system.

Amount of reproductive period spent after or between unions (iii) a) When unions are broken by divorce, separation or desertion

The importance of marriage in Matawai society is also reflected in the high incidence of remarriage. In the present situation, however, quite a large number of young women in the upstream area remain temporarily without a partner after divorce (see table 5a chapter 4).

For all women born after 1940 (married and divorced) 21 out of 77, i.e. 27% were presently divorced. An explanation is to be found in the recent character of migration in the upstream area; migration is here more dominated by men than in other areas. In the same area we observed a surplus of unmarried women due to imbalances in the sex ratio of the
total population, i.e. the resident and migrant population as a whole. It is evident that this reinforces the implications of sex-selective migration to the coast.

In figure 5a and 5b we summarize the marital histories of women from the group of villages around Boslanti and around Posugunu confirming this observation. The differences between the two neighbouring clusters are remarkable. A large number of women from the Boslanti area remain with their first partner throughout their reproductive period. In addition, the percentage of children born during the first marriage relationship is large, 77.3% of all children. The number of women living without a partner after the age of 20 fluctuates between 10 and 20 percent. In the Posugunu area, divorce is much more frequent and at the end of the reproductive period more than 50% of the women live with a second, third or subsequent partner. In the Boslanti region this figure is 20%. Surprisingly, the greater instability of sexual relations has had no consequences for the time-loss (time without marital partner) within the reproductive period. In fact, the loss of time is even less than in the Boslanti area. The higher frequency of divorce coincides here with a rapid succession of partners, reducing the expected loss of reproductive time. The large influence of the church in the Boslanti area seems to be the main explanatory factor for the greater stability of marriages. In the Boslanti congregation (which includes the three neighbouring villages of Wanati, Pniel and Vertrouw) far more people are married in church than in other Matawai congregations. Unions sealed by the church tend to be more stable partly because of religious sanctions imposed after divorce that are feared by most people. Moreover, especially in this area the church is quite influential in preventing separation of unions that are not yet blessed by the church.

b) When unions are broken by death of husband

The death of the husbands ends only a few unions before the reproductive cycle of the woman is completed or before she reaches the age of 45. Out of all unions ending during the woman's child bearing age only 12% are caused by the death of the husband. Also, the number of widows,
Figure 5 a and b Compilation of marital histories (a) based on 164 cases from four upriver villages Libasei 1 and (b) based on 164 cases from 6 villages in the Libasei 2 area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L 1</th>
<th>L 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>percentage of children born in wedlock</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentage of children born in first marriage</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentage of children born outside wedlock</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a = involved in first, second and following marriage  
b = involved in first marriage only  
c = not involved in a marital relationship
among all women born after 1920, who live without a partner is small, namely 4 out of a total of 219.

The death of one of the partners is followed by a three months period of mourning. Only a few months thereafter the widow may resume sexual relations, but not before the performance of a ritual aimed at breaking the ties with the deceased. Till that moment the widow is a koto sembe mujee, the wife of her deceased husband. After this ceremony remarriage is not yet allowed. Shortly before the marriage ceremony a new ritual is performed to completely sever all ties. In most cases a year will pass before she actually remarries. Sometimes the spirit of the former husband will prevent her from remarrying or becoming engaged in a sexual relationship. This phenomenon has been treated more extensively in chapter 9. In this context, it is sufficient to remark that the number of women who do not remarry for this reason is limited and that the demographic implications are insignificant.

Finally, we have to point to the obvious but sometimes neglected fact that marriage is not a necessary condition for childbearing. Thus the time-loss within the reproductive period does not correspond to the expected loss of reproduction. In Matawai society the number of births outside wedlock is between 7 and 8 percent of the total number of births, while the amount of time that women spend without a marital partner during the childbearing ages (between 15 and 49) is on the average about 25% This means that we can estimate the contribution of extra-marital affairs to reproduction at about 30% (7.5/25). In order not to complicate the estimation, we have omitted consideration of the age factor.

Factors governing the exposure to intercourse within unions (iv, v, vi)

Our remarks on this point must be limited. We did not collect systematic data on the frequency of sexual intercourse. Some of our male informants told us that a frequency of two to three times a week was considered normal. During menstruation there is a strict taboo on sexual intercourse. Formerly, women stayed during this period in a separate house, the so-called faagi wosu, which was built at the border of the
village. After the establishment of the church, the women during their menstrual period went to a separate part of the house or remained in their own village. The Matawai believe that women are most fertile in the period immediately following or preceding menstruation. After a woman becomes pregnant, she must have frequent intercourse until the child is born, otherwise the child will be weak. The intercourse is necessary to feed the child in the womb. For this reason even men who have had a casual affair often are expected to continue to have intercourse until birth.

A period of three to four months abstinence follows childbirth. However, the distribution of birth intervals according to length reveals that this rule is not followed in all cases (see figure 6).

The division of labour, which often requires men to spend long periods on the coast and the particular pattern of residence are the main reasons for partners to live apart, sometimes for months and longer. We will consider this point in more detail in relation to the seasonality of births.

Figure 6 Distribution of birth intervals according to length
Figure 7a Cumulative fertility of the cohort of women born in the period (a) 1910, 1911-1920 (b) 1921-1930, 1931-1940 (c) 1941-1950, 1951-1958
Figure 7b
Figure 7c
Table 7 Cohort fertility of Matawai women (calculations based on surviving women at January 1, 1974)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Downriver</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1900</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1910</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>( - )</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1920</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1930</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1940</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. mean number of births per woman  
b. proportion of women without childbirth  
c. percentage surviving children at the age of 15  
d. most of the women in this cohort have not completed their reproductive period at January 1, 1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Upriver</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1900</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>1901-1910</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911-1920</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-1930</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1940</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Both Areas</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1900</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1910</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1920</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1930</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1940</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>79</td>
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</table>
Factors affecting exposure to conception (vii, viii, ix)

In the introduction to this chapter on fertility we have pointed to the fact that Matawai fertility is quite low for a society that does not control its population through the use of modern contraceptives. Despite high marital rates a large number of women remain childless. The number reaches a peak in the cohort of women born between 1911-1920. The percentage is particularly high, in the downstream area, at 26.9%. For the upstream women of the same cohort this value is 18.4%. Younger cohorts yield lower percentages (see table 7 and figures 7a, 7b and 7c). The main determining factor in these figures is likely to be found in the incidence of venereal diseases. In the 1920s and 1930s many balata gatherers and gold-diggers from the coast and from various Caribbean islands invaded the downstream area and began to live with the females in these villages. In the annual reports of the Moravian mission we found regular accounts after 1918 of venereal diseases spreading out to the downstream area. After 1950 a new peak was reached caused by Matawai men who spent months on the coast for wage labour.

Figure 8 Female and male sterility of the population of 10 upstream villages
In figure 8 we present data on the increasing of infertility among upriver women and men born before 1924. It shows the amazing fact that of all women 50% stop child bearing before the age of 28, while 50% of the men do not beget children after the age of 40. For an interpretation of these data it is necessary to consider both female and male infertility, since as a result of male sterility women who are perfectly able to conceive do not become pregnant. For this reason we have analysed the marital histories of men and women from the upriver villages born before 1940 and compared the number of them who despite being involved in various relationships remained childless in each of them. We found (see table 8) that the number of men and women who remained childless is almost equal (22 males, 23 females). In a number of cases when partners are involved in only one marital relationship, it is not possible to determine if the infertility of the conjugal pair is caused by the man or the woman. However, a majority of them have been engaged in more than one marriage with partners who already proved their fertility. The mean number of partners of childless men and women is almost equal. This indicates that the cause of infertility can not exclusively be ascribed to the male or female partner and confirms the importance of male infertility in fertility research.

Table 8 Childless upriver males and females born before 1940 and the number of their marital partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>number of partners</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of males</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of females</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Factors affecting gestation and successful parturition (x, xi)

Foetal mortality from voluntary cause i.e. abortion, is an almost universal phenomenon as has been observed among others by Devereux (1955). In Matawai society people are also aware of the possibility of abortion and some specialists are able to prepare abortifacients. Nevertheless, the use of these medicines is restricted and does not substantially affect the fertility level as far as we could infer. In this society abortifacients are usually prepared with a base of lemon juice and a number of herbs, In the downstream area some young women collected malaria pills which were taken in large quantities to invoke an abortus. This knowledge was based on the warnings of the Anti-Malaria Campaign employees not to take the pills during pregnancy. However, we have the impression that incidents of abortion are quite rare. Our informants could only mention one case of a woman who had been accused of abortion twenty years earlier and who was punished by a tribal council.

Foetal mortality from involuntary cause i.e. miscarriage, seems to have a much higher frequency than had been assumed in the past (see Hawthorn 1968: 124). Despite the fact that early foetal loss remain unobserved, the actual observed foetal mortality in Matawai reaches a high level. For Boslanti and the surrounding villages where the most reliable figures were obtained, the percentage of foetal death is 24 of all known conceptions. In most of these cases, the death took place three to four months after conception. It remains, however, likely that many of the early miscarriages remained unnoticed, or were not reported in the reproductive histories.

Child Mortality

Infant and child mortality have often been used as indicators for the well-being of a society. A recent report of the World Health Organization indicates that 57% of all deaths among children in Latin America can be ascribed to malnutrition (Puffer and Serrano 1978).

Child mortality in Matawai society has declined considerably in the past two decades (see table 9 and figure 9). This happened after reaching a very high peak in the 1920s; the figures for the years before
Table 9 Development of child mortality during the period 1914-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>0-1</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>4-15</th>
<th>0-4</th>
<th>0-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914-18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-23</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-28</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-33</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.247</td>
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<td>1934-38</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.286</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939-43</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-48</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.296</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>0.338</td>
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<td>1954-58</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-63</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-68</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;x&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>0.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-73</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;x&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;x&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1914-73       | 1534| 198 | 95  | 40   | 0.191 | 0.217 |

It must be noted that the marked numbers represent cases of child mortality of children who only partly have completed the age period.

Figure 9 Development of child mortality during the period 1914-1973
1920 suggest lower levels but these values are based on small numbers and are therefore not reliable. In the annual reports of the mission we have found a number of records which corroborates our findings concerning the exceptionally high child mortality in the 1920s. In 1923 when the Matawai population numbered about 1000 people, the mission account reports 34 deaths, out of which 23 were of children. Five years later, the missionaries again reported a remarkable number of childhood deaths. In the first part of 1929, 20 children died from a whooping-cough epidemic and at the end of the same year some others died from an epidemic of measles. This epidemic continued spreading in 1930 when in one single village five children were reported to have died from measles. Although these data are fragmentary, they support the data we compiled of reproductive histories of people from 17 villages. The bias we might expect from data collected in this way would be the increased likelyhood of underreporting for death cases that occured further back in time. We have attempted to reduce underreporting by collecting both male and female reproductive histories. Nevertheless, it is probable that the actual decline is still larger than our data indicate, and some adjustment is necessary.

There is one salient factor which explains the rapid decline of child mortality in the last decades. In the beginning of the 1960s two airstrips were built in Matawai territory as part of a larger project for the opening up of Suriname's interior. This was a neccessary condition for the improvement of medical services in Matawai, where two clinics were built. The clinic in the most densely populated area of Posugunu was occupied permanently while the Njukonde clinic was visited once in a fortnight. This was a considerable improvement over the state prior to 1960 when villages were visited by a doctor only a few times a year. Relevant in this context is that more attention could be paid to mother and child care.

Despite the persistent reliance on traditional medicines and healers the new medical provisions became important in Matawai life as is reflected in the number of visits to the clinic. The Posugunu clinic registered in the early 1970s between 4000 and 5000 visits a year on a total resident upstream population of about 700. More and more women are going to the clinic for delivery. In the annual report

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Components of population growth: fertility and mortality

Contrary to the theory of demographic transition which assumes high mortality and high fertility in pre-modern or traditional societies, we found in Matauai a relatively moderate level of fertility. Moreover, our data indicate considerable fluctuations of mortality as well as fertility levels. The cohort fertility data in table 7 show fertility rates have fluctuated in Matauai society. Also, we observed a temporary decline in the 1940s that was even remarked upon by the government in a report that mentioned the gradual extinction of the Bush Negroes of Suriname (see p. 375). The lowest level of cumulative fertility is reached for the 1911-1920 birth cohort. Women of this cohort end their reproductive period with an average of three children per woman. In later cohorts the cumulative fertility began to rise to values of 4.35. As we have seen in an earlier section, the decline of child mortality is a recent phenomenon; as late as 1950, 30% of all children died before they reached the age of 5.

The question now arises, how the Matauai population maintained such a steady rate of growth interrupted only by a few periods of stagnation. During the last 20 years this rate has been about 2% a year, implying a considerable difference between fertility and mortality rates. It seems apparent, from the number of those reaching adulthood in our genealogies, that the high fertility of the -1900 cohort was not accidental, but that fertility before the turn of the century was indeed relatively high. The decline of fertility for later cohorts, however, is not in agreement with the acceleration of growth rates after the turn of the century. We may at this point return to the Age Specific Mortality Rates (see table 5) which indicate that the probability of dying between the ages of 10 to 50 is relatively small, reaching a level comparable to that of modern nations. This finding is in accordance with the large proportion of people older than 50 within the total population. It would seem that the high life expectancies after the age of 10, are the determining factor in the rapid growth of the Matauai population during the last few decades. Also, the decline in child mortality has contributed to the recent increase of the growth rate.
The move to the city and the demographic transition

It has been frequently assumed that people who migrate from rural to urban areas become involved in processes of modernization and are therefore inclined to limit their number of children. However, in some cases it has been observed that in the first period after migration the fertility level shows a slight increase before it tends to decrease (see for instance Romaniuk 1974, 1980). The cause of the increase is to be found in better health conditions by which foetal mortality is reduced. Also, the improvement of the diet may led to shorter birth intervals.

As migration only recently started in Matawai society, most women began their reproductive careers in the tribal villages. In table 10 it is shown that most children of mothers older than 32, were born in the tribal area.

Table 10 Place of birth of children of migrant mothers according to the age of mother (born before and after January 1, 1941)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L 1</th>
<th>L 2</th>
<th>B 1</th>
<th>B 2</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>born in the coastal area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1941</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>total</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>born in the tribal area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1941</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it makes little sense to divide reproductive histories of individual women on the basis of tribal or urban births, we have chosen to compare fertility levels of the downriver area from which a majority of the women migrated to the coast, with those of the upriver area from
which there are only a small number of migrants. We suggest here that migration is one aspect of the differing lifestyles in the down- and upriver areas. It is remarkable that the downriver women show higher fertility rates than the women from the upriver region, moreover the differences tend to increase for the most recent cohorts. It is likely that such factors as better health care and better nutrition in the coastal area are responsible for the increase of fertility which was quite low in the recent past and for the decline in child mortality which have been very high some decades ago.

The value of children

We did not systematically investigate the ideal number of children, partly because we felt that the question is irrelevant to Matawai women. We do, however, have indications that children are highly valued. It is likely that the relatively low fertility level has contributed to the value ascribed to children. Recent research on the value of children in developing countries has emphasized the economic contribution of children to the household (see Nag 1972, White 1975, Fawcett 1972). Most of these studies have been conducted in peasant societies where the agricultural surplus could be enlarged through the additional workforce provided by children. In Matawai society agricultural surplus is not transformed into cash crops, therefore the economic position of individual households would hardly be improved by the extension of the family. Formerly, before school was introduced children’s contribution to horticultural activities was considerable and until recently they were kept at home during the peaks in the horticultural cycle. The amount of time children now spend in the gardens has decreased and although they do participate in all kinds of work at the age of 12 or 13, the aspect of learning is stressed. It seems that the high value attached to children can only partly be explained by their contribution within the subsistence economy.

As reproduction is essential for the survival of a society, the value attached to children and childbearing is not exclusively localized within the domain of the household. It has been hypothesized by Lorimer (1954) that lineage-based societies tend to generate strong
motives for high fertility. Nag (1975) has explored the fertility levels in societies with and without corporate descent groups and finds no significant differences between these two kinds of societies. He recognizes, however, that ‘this finding... should not be interpreted as a direct repudiation of Lorimer's hypothesis which is stated in terms of motivation for fertility rather than actual fertility’ (Nag 1975: 39).

Although it is difficult to make explicit statements about fertility ideology on the basis of observations and impressions, it became clear to us that the Matawai would prefer to have more children than they actually do. The Matawai recognize that the continuity of lineage and of village life is dependent on the reproductive capacities of female lineage members. It must be noted that because of the small numbers involved, random factors play an important role in the extinction or survival of a particular lineage. In the past epidemics could wipe out a large part of the child population in a village. Moreover, child mortality in general was often high (see p. 396). Nowadays still another factor perceived as a threat to the continuity of the village is the exodus to the coast. These combined factors have contributed to a marked resistance against the introduction of birth control in Matawai society.

Recently, doctors of the Moravian Brethren's clinic (located opposite Posugunu) assembled the villagers to discuss the possibilities of birth control. These initial attempts were met with little resistance because most people could imagine that mothers with large families and difficult deliveries would want to avoid further pregnancy. This tolerant attitude changed when it became known that some young women had begun to use contraceptives, a fact that became public during our short visit to Boslanti in the summer of 1976.

Sunday morning after church, the village headman called for a meeting in the council house (kuutu gangasa). Such meetings were regularly held to regulate village affairs. This time the main issue was puu bee (abortion). The headman had been informed by the schoolteacher that young single women were using pills to avoid childbirth. He called this meeting to warn these women and their mothers to give up these practices.
If not he would call their names in public. He had noticed a village, on returning from a stay at the coast, which was, for the time being, completely deserted and he pointed out that the same fate was about to strike one of the neighbouring villages where no children had been born during the past few years. Loudly shouting men started to inveigh against the women, who were blamed for depopulation. Should a woman not desire a child, there were always enough women who wanted to foster one. The reaction of the women was laconic since ‘if they had pills, they were given them by men’.

Later we heard that labourers of the Geological and Mining Service had supplied contraceptive pills to young women with whom they had initiated sexual relations. However, the accusation at the council was also directed to the doctors who had delicately informed people about the possibilities of birth control. At this meeting, as well as on other occasions, it was clear that the Matawai worried about depopulation and that they tended to desire large families.

Eindnoten:

(2.) ARA HvP 91: May 1, 1775; ARA HvP 121: August 11, 1783.
(3.) If we include the population of the Kwinti villages and of the villages Makakiiki and Asanwai our estimate will come close to Green's estimation.
(4.) LA GR 3148: November 12, 1943.
Seasonality of Birth

The study of seasonality of birth has a history that extends as far as the early studies of Heape (1909), Gini (1912), Westermark (1922), and Huntington (1922). In the past few decades, the interest in this phenomenon has revived. We may mention Cowgill's comparative study of seasonal patterns of birth, based on aggregate data of whole nations. Temperature is found to be the most important determining factor of seasonal variations. She observes that seasonal variability tends to decrease with the improvement of living conditions and to increase with illegitimacy, poverty, war depression and subspecific differences (1966: 239). A recent elaboration on this point can be found in Crook and Dyson's comparison of seasonality among Whites and Blacks in South Africa. They conclude that the interaction between climatological factors and population processes is much stronger in populations with unfavorable social conditions (1980: 697).

Recent studies have tended to move away from the use of aggregate data to the study of particular communities emphasizing features of the ecological cycle such as agricultural activities, workload, variations in diet, etc. (see Nurge 1966, Thompson and Robbins 1973, Pasternak 1978). An interesting example of this approach is Mosher's comparative study of Taiwan fishing and peasant communities. In this study it is suggested that seasonal food stress in the peasant communities is the main explanatory factor for the particular pattern of birth seasonality. In the fishing communities where the supply of food is quite stable throughout the year, the variation in monthly birth rates is absent (1979).
In some recent analytic demographic contributions, mathematical models have been developed to explore the consequences of seasonal variation on the level of fertility (Menken 1979, Bongaarts and Potter 19) We will now turn to the analysis of birth seasonality in Matawai society. Matawai men spend a considerable amount of time away from their families. Earlier (p. 16) we have shown that the pattern of male absenteeism is closely linked to the ecological cycle. We may also expect the pattern of male absenteeism to be reflected in the monthly distribution of births. We will first consider the effect of male absenteeism on the birth rates. In figure 2 (p. 17) we present detailed information on the absence of males between the ages of 15 and 55 over a two year period. The absenteeism is highest in the period from May to July. The mean duration of stay on the coast is approximately three months. During this period women tend to remain in the village. The question that we will consider first is, what is the effect of this three months absence on the level of fertility and does it contribute to an explanation for the low level of fertility?

This question has recently been elaborated by Jane Menken, who developed a mathematical model to estimate the impact of seasonal variation of conception and the effect of temporary absence of men. She concludes that the effect may be quite substantial (Menken 1979). It must be emphasized that these calculations are highly dependent on the value given to the different components contributing to the total length of the birth interval. We argue that in cases of long postpartum amenorrhea of a year or longer - as is often the case in non-western societies and probably also in Matawai where, in the absence of contraceptives, modal birth intervals centre around 24-25 months - the effect of an annual male absenteeism period of three months is quite limited and is restricted to only a few percentage points. In a note a simple example to illustrate this point is presented.

Our conclusion is that temporary male absenteeism is not a sufficient causal explanation. The decrease in frequency of sexual relations as a result of male absenteeism does not significantly contributes to the low fertility level in Matawai society.
### Table 11 Seasonal variation in birth before and after 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>month of birth</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>month of conception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals** | 697 | 400 | 297

**Amplitude** | 117 | 168 | 125
Figure 10 Seasonality of male absenteeism and conception \( r = -0.47 \)

--- male absenteeism (deviations from the mean)
- conception (deviations from the mean)
**Matawai seasonality of birth**

It can be expected that the seasonal absenteeism of men will cause a fluctuation in monthly birth rates. Birth data of children born to all females of the ten upper river villages show indeed a remarkable pattern of seasonality. The monthly distribution of 697 births born to the present female population is given in table 11. We have omitted all cases which were not exactly known by month of birth (30%).

A year can be divided in two periods, one from March to August with a low number of births, the other from September to February with a high birth rate. We counted 247 births in the low season as against 450 in the high season. More remarkable is the difference between the peak month December and the lowest month April, with 101 and 33 births respectively. A usual measure for the degree of seasonality of birth is the numerical difference between the deviations in percentages from the annual mean. The amplitude or seasonality acquired in this way is one of the highest recorded. It supasses 1960 Korean data which Cowgill (1966) mentions as the highest amplitude of any country that has been studied. From her histogram we infer an amplitude for Korea of 90 which is considerably lower than the values of 168 and 125 calculated for both the period before 1960 and the 1960-1974 period in Matawai society.

Before we will look to specific causes of the seasonality, it must be pointed out that the seasonal pattern is reinforced by the fact that there is a clear peak in the birth intervals observable around 24 months. That is, when one birth takes place in the peak season, the next will probably follow in the same period of the year.

Let us now examine whether the pattern of seasonal absenteeism will correlate with the pattern of seasonality of conceptions\(^2\). In figure 10 we combine data on male absenteeism (deviations from the mean calculated over a two year period of men between 15 and 55) and data on seasonality of birth (also deviations from the mean). On the whole, the graphic presentation shows a strong negative correlation, as could be expected. However, examining the pattern more closely, the three months period comprising September, October and November does not show the expected increase of conceptions. In other words, the time of return of most men from the coast is not related with an
Figure 11 Seasonality of rainfall and conception $r = 0.733$
- conception (deviations from the mean)
--- rainfall (deviations from the mean)
increase in the conception rate. The question that has to be posed is what causes the first three months of male presence to be passed without a marked increase in conceptions? We have looked for the answer in the organization of work in traditional society. Almost immediately upon their return, the men are busy with the work of felling trees in the hottest period of the year. This keeps them on their gardens plots and out of the villages. It is arduous work that presumably negatively influences their physical condition and their eagerness for sexual intercourse. However, the total time spent in these activities seldom exceeds a fortnight. Moreover, the image Matawai have of deewei (dry season) is one of leisure, spending the day with the family in the shade on a sandbank upriver with an abundance of fish and iguana eggs.

We are left with the fact that September, October and November are the driest months of the year and also have the highest temperatures. It has frequently been observed that in the hot season the lowest number of conceptions occur. According to Thompson and Robbins (1973) referring to the work of Pasamanick et al. (1959, 1960), extreme high temperatures may act to lessen both sexual activity and sperm viability, thereby reducing the chance of conception. The rainy season tends to be associated with a high conception rate. Matawai society is no exception to this rule, the correlation between conception and rainfall is high (see figure 11). However, we have to be careful with the assumption of a direct relationship between climate and frequency of intercourse.

Cantrelle and Léridon (1971), for example, found in rural Senegal that the number of conceptions reaches a minimum during the rainy season and a maximum during the following quarter which is the first after harvest. They suggest that nutritional factors play a role. This finding is in agreement with recent work on biological determinants of fertility which shows the importance of nutritional factors in the reproductive process. Frisch (1975), in her article on the demographic implications of certain biological determinants, discusses the effects of nutrition on reproductive capability. She points out that nutritional factors influence all stadia of the reproductive process. Her conclusion is that undernutrition and energy-requiring activities may affect the fecundity of marginally nourished populations much more than has
been realized. One of the factors she mentions is most relevant in connection with
the seasonality of birth, the stable reproductive capability. Her discussion of the
nutritional effects on reproduction is focused on the restoration and maintenance of
a minimum fat level. In other studies it is pointed out that the suppression of ovulation
is a response to dietary deficiencies in protein, as well as calories, vitamin B, vitamin
E, and certain minerals (Katz 1972: 357; Zuckerman 1962: 294-300; Binford and
Chasko 1976: 115). Also Santley and Rose stress that protein malnutrition, as well
as deficiencies in other nutrients, appears to have marked effects on human
reproductive performance. According to them

Nutritional stress is generally relaxed or absent altogether if protein,
essential amino acids, fats, vitamins and minerals are consumed in
recommended amounts. However, if protein and other nutrients are
unavailable in required amounts or in correct proportions, not only is there
a significant increase in birth spacing but malnutrition also appears to be
causally and synergistically related to increased probability of abortion,
increased infant and adult susceptibility to disease, delayed onset of
menarche and earlier onset of menopause. Normal reproductive
performance can thus be significantly impaired and may be hampered
altogether if undernutrition is severe (1979: 192).

In Matawai society food, especially meat, is an important item in daily conversation.
The question ‘Ju feni gbangba tidei?’ (Did you find meat or fish today) has almost
the meaning of a greeting, and gbangba angi ta kii mi (I am starving from hunger
for meat) is the daily complaint. A great deal of the women's activities is focused on
food production and preparation. In most years the field supplies enough rice, plantains
and cassava for the household (3). The main staples, rice and cassava, used in large
quantities, are poor in protein and the contribution of peanuts and beans to the diet
is small. For protein Matawai depend on game and fish which have become scarce
near the populated areas (Geijskes 1954a, 1954b). Doornbos (1966: 44) mentions
the protein component as the weakest in the diet of the Bush Negroes and points
out that this component is heavily influenced by seasonal factors. At this point it is apt to return to our observation that migrant women tend to have more children than those remaining in the village. Although we suggested that the larger proportion of married women among the migrants is a major explanatory factor, it is necessary to consider nutritional factors. Recent research in rural-urban differentials in Africa, is suggestive in this respect. Caraël, for instance, has noted that the large difference in the duration of amenorrhea, 18.7 months in the rural areas of Zaire and 9.6 months in the urban areas, can probably be explained by the inadequate protein intake in the rural areas which amounts to approximately 85% of the theoretical needs, whereas in the urban population, protein requirements are adequately met (1978: 131-53, 1979). Because we do not have reliable data on the diet of the migrants we will focus on Matawai in the tribal area.

Contrary to the findings of Cantrelle and Léridon for rural Senegal, in Matawai society the time of harvest coincides with the lowest number of conceptions. But there may be another line of explanation available which keeps close to the Cantrelle and Léridon argument. The harvest months are also those when the availability of fish and game has reached a minimum and the deficiencies of the diet are most pronounced. The men, who usually provide their wives with meat and fish, are on the coast and the possibilities for women to supplement their diet with fish are restricted by the unfavourable water level and the labour intensive and time consuming rice harvest. It seems likely that the restoration of the protein and fat levels, which had dropped to a minimum by the time of the return of the men, will take a few months\(^4\). This may give an explanation for the fact that the incidence of conception is higher in the months preceding the departure of the men to the coast\(^5\).

When nutritional deficiencies play a role in the observed anomaly, we may expect that mothers with a regular reproductive pattern are less sensitive to these factors than women with an unstable reproductive capacity. Comparison of the seasonal patterns of mothers with eight and more births with those of mothers with fewer births, reveals significant differences for the three months after the return of men (see figure 12). Our data are not conclusive that these factors are
Figure 12 Seasonality of births of mothers with stable reproductive ability and of mothers with less stable reproductive ability
- births of mothers with less than 8 births
--- births of mothers with 8 births and more
exclusively nutritional. We have no information on the influence of parasitic diseases or health conditions of particular women (which would interplay with nutritional factors) on the seasonal pattern of births nor do we have reliable data on still births which also may have played a role\(^6\).

The time that elapses between the return of the men from the coast and the restoration of adequate fat and protein levels in the females of reproductive age is our main explanation of the low number of conceptions in this period. Moreover, if nutrition is an important variable causing seasonal differences in the birth rate, then we can also expect this variable to work on another level, by reducing the reproductive span (see Frisch 1975: 20). As we have pointed out earlier, the average reproductive span in Matawai is limited to about 10 years. On this point it is pertinent to return to the low fertility of the Matawai. Compared with another tribal society in Suriname, the Carib Indians of Galibi with a Total Fertility Rate of 10,400 (Kloos 1971: 102), the comparable Matawai rate is very low at 3,953. In Carib society the high level of fertility is linked with an extraordinarily long reproductive span (30 years) (Kloos 1971: 100-2). The Galibi Indians who live close to the sea have rich fish resources. Kloos (1971: 55, 269) clearly points out that their protein supply from fish is quite sufficient and that their diet is adequate. Both the comparison of Matawai and Carib fertility and the particular pattern of seasonality in Matawai birth data indicate the role of nutritional deficiencies. We have to be aware of the fact that if nutritional deficiencies cause seasonal variations in birth, they may exist the whole year but are more prominent in one half of the year.

**Final remarks**

The study of seasonal variations in births is important for the discovery of variables which influence the probability of birth and conception. The first task of such a study is the consideration of intercourse variables. Research on biological variables is complicated by the chain of intermediate variables which can cause larger ranges of variation than the direct intercourse-conception relation. Data, for instance,
on climatic, dietary or parasitic factors affecting the viability of the foetus are difficult to acquire in those societies where they are most influential. In the following flow chart (see figure 13) we summarize the suggested variables which are likely to contribute to the seasonality of birth in Matawai. We focused our analysis on seasonal variation of live births, male absenteeism and nutrition. Some factors remained unexplored, such as the relation between workload and foetal loss and the influence of parasitic diseases. Despite these unavoidable omissions we tried to unfold part of the intricate pattern of biological, social and cultural factors which stand behind demographic data in this particular Bush Negro society.

![Figure 13 Factors affecting seasonal variation in births](image)

**Eindnoten:**

1. The probability that a model birth interval of 24 months has been prolonged by a temporary absenteeism of men of three months a year is quite small. If we assume a postpartum infecundity period of ten months and a gestation period of nine months, the chance that a fertile month coincides with the absence of the man is only \( \frac{5}{24} \times \frac{3}{12} = 0.04 \). This means that male absenteeism of a few months only, will hardly reduce fertility rates.

2. We will use the total pattern of seasonality of conceptions (pre-1960 plus 1960-1974). The distribution did not change significantly after 1960 (Speakman's rank correlation test). We also assume that despite the changed labour pattern after 1960, the seasonal character of absenteeism remained unchanged. Therefore it is justified to compare the present (1973-1975) absenteeism with the total pattern of seasonality of conceptions.

3. In the downriver area households become increasingly dependent on rice and other food bought in town.

4. It has been suggested by K. de Jonge (personal communication) that also venereal factors may cause a temporary infecundity which is likely to be manifest after the return of men from the coast.

5. We must add that another nutritional factor may play a role. The first months of the year palmfruits (*kumu, awala, maipa*) enrich the diet with vitamins B and C (see Geijskes 1954b: 152).

6. We have no information of seasonal influences on foetal death. It would require specific data on the time of conception and length of gestation which were impossible to collect in a
retrospective way. Moreover, the figures we collected were too low compared with estimates of natural foetal death (see Nurge 1975: 26 and Léridon 1976: 319).
Migration

Urban migration is the most manifest social phenomenon accompanying socio-cultural change in tribal and peasant societies of developing countries. It is therefore understandable that migration and urbanization have become major topics of anthropological and sociological research (see for instance Eddy 1968; Southall 1973; Cohen 1974; Loyd 1980; Hannerz 1980). The large-scale movement of members of rural populations to urban areas is a major problem for policy makers, often insufficiently prepared to accommodate the stream of migrants.

This chapter discusses and describes the migration of Matawai who increasingly prefer to live in the coastal area. Until recently they lived primarily in their tribal villages along the Saramacca river, several days journey from Paramaribo. As a result of hardly two decades of migration almost half the Matawai population lived on the coast by the beginning of 1974.

City and urbanized district

During the plantation period, Paramaribo functioned as the governmental, economic and religious centre of the colony. The plantations were mainly situated in the fertile coastal areas along the Suriname, Saramacca, Cottica, Commewijne and Para rivers within a distance of about 60 kilometers from the city. In 1811, shortly after the abolition of the slave trade, Paramaribo accounted for only about 27% of Suriname's total population. However, after the emancipation of the slaves in 1863 and
the subsequent decline of the plantation economy, this proportion rose to a level of 50% by 1893. After this date the size of the urban population fluctuated with economic booms and busts, reaching a new peak of 40.3% in 1950. During the last few decades the population of Paramaribo has been decreasing slowly, partly due to large-scale migration to the Netherlands. At the same time, the Suriname district including the suburban area surrounding Paramaribo has been rapidly increasing in population and now has an even larger population than Paramaribo (see table 12).

*Table 12 The population of Paramaribo and the Suriname district*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1964</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramaribo</td>
<td>110.9</td>
<td>102.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Suriname</td>
<td>117.7</td>
<td>151.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Suriname in cijfers no 60

This rapid increase in the population of the suburban area is largely caused by the movement of people from other districts, including members of all of Suriname's ethnic groups as well as people of tribal origin, namely Bush Negroes and Amerindians. The largest population concentration can be found south of Paramaribo, along the so-called ‘Pad van Wanica’, the highway connecting the city with Zanderij airport. The plantations that once dominated this area have been parcelled out and divided for residential plots, with the population being especially dense closer to town. The spread of buildings running along the ‘Pad van Wanica’ and its sideroads is urban in character. People residing here are oriented toward the city, which is easily accessible by frequent buses on the mainroad. They are economically dependent on incomes from institutions based in Paramaribo. Yet, at the end of the sideroads, on the extremities of this suburban concentration, many

1) District Suriname 1964 includes Para district which was counted separately in 1971 at 17.8 (× 1000)
Hindustani farmers still live a predominantly rural life-style.

People of various tribal origins account for a significant proportion of the population in this area belting Paramaribo. In fact, 89% of all Matawai migrants live outside the borders of the city. These percentages are most likely to be smaller for Djuka and Saramaka Bush Negroes who, in absolute numbers, exceed the Matawai in the ‘Pad van Wanica’ area. Recently it was estimated that between 10 and 20,000 Bush Negroes are living today in and around Paramaribo (Estimate of official of Ministry of the Interior and Districts, cited in Wesenhagen 1978: 17-8).

Although it is our primary concern here to analyse the movement of a particular tribal group to the coast of Suriname and to the capital Paramaribo, it is appropriate to emphasize that this town can be considered a prototype of a colonial city. In Paramaribo, the economic history and in particular the import of labour forces from various parts of the world for the gainful exploitation of plantations is most strikingly reflected in the multi-ethnic nature of its population. Urbanization and urban migration are aspects of a situation in which the economic system is dominated by dependency on external markets and wherein the town forms a focus in the relationship between the colonial or neo-colonial state and the colony.

**Matawai: a mobile society**

Before the peace treaty with the government was signed in the 1760s, Matawai came occasionally to the coast to trade with slaves from the plantations and with Amerindians who were settled in Saron (see Quandt 1807: 111; 113). Thereafter, the movements of Matawai to the coast were controlled by the government, which would periodically allow small numbers of Matawai to visit Paramaribo. In town the Matawai were required to stay in a house designated for them and to provide the government with a hostage (*ostagier*) who was responsible for the behaviour of his fellow tribesmen in town. During the middle of the nineteenth century, about 20 Matawai passed through Saron per month\(^1\). Here they had to check-in with the postholder as required while on their way to Paramaribo or to the downriver plantations.

---

\(^1\) Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
According to archival sources (see p. 343), the total Matawai population at this time did not exceed 400. The Matawai mainly sold horticultural products, boats and some wood; in return they bought rum, salt, ammunition etc. After the turn of the century, the Matawai were primarily engaged in lumbering and balata gathering, working seasonally along the Saramacca river and its tributaries. The blocks of wood were sold to traders who came to the railway village of Kwakugoon. Some men returned to the villages to accompany their wives for shopping trips to Paramaribo, others went directly to town to buy the essentials for the coming year. In town they spent their nights in a small dwelling in the yard of a shopkeeper and seldom stayed longer than a week before returning to the village.

This pattern of short visits changed when the traditional way of lumbering lost its significance because of worsening market conditions and a shortage of exploitable trees in the tribal area. We will return to this point later in connection with the shifting labour possibilities.

Mobility is still an essential adaptive feature in the economic life of the Matawai. Besides regular moves of individuals and groups within the tribal boundaries, people frequently cross these on their way to the coast. Reasons for movement within the tribal area are partly connected with the principle of duolocal residence according to which a couple maintains two houses, one in the man's village and one in the village of the woman. Although the large majority of the men spend most of the time in the wife's village, they frequently visit their own village in order to participate in village affairs. Social ceremonies like weddings attract people from a wide area. In addition, the subsistence economy of the Matawai contributes to the movement of individuals within the tribal area sometimes far beyond the surroundings of the villages. Men like to go hunting in the unhabited regions where game is less scarce than around the villages. Although lumbering for the market has lost its significance, increasingly more timber is needed for the new-style Bush Negro houses which nowadays are made predominantly of wood.

Moves which cross the tribal boundaries include shopping trips,
visits to migrant relatives, seasonal wage-labour and also permanent migration to the coast. In table 13 we present data about the main motives of men from four upriver villages for trips to the coast.

**Table 13 Main motives for moves to the coastal area of adult male population from the upstream area (Boslanti, Wanati, Vertrouw, Pniel). Data collected in the period 1973-1974.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage labour</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade (boats, cash crops)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental affairs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving salaries</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical reasons</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of moves</strong></td>
<td><strong>324</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shopping is almost always combined with the other motives mentioned in table 13. Migrants return occasionally to the tribal villages, especially to attend calendrical ceremonies on New Year and Emancipation day or to spend some time during their holidays in the village. As young men prefer women from the tribal area above townswomen they will often return to seek a wife.

In a review article on adaptive strategies in urban migration Graves and Graves (1974: 117-54) emphasize the differential strategic value of three migration patterns which are useful for the description of Matawai migration. These types are:

1) *foraging* characterized by temporary forays into neighbouring regions in order to supplement local resources.

2) *circular migration* the process of shifting between urban and
3) **permanent migration**, leading to a change in residence.

The foraging pattern has long been the most dominant in Matawai society and until today many moves of members of the tribal population have a foraging character. Matawai foraging does not only involve hunting, fishing and gathering of food products but also the acquisition of other essentials such as wood for house and canoe building, the gathering of palm leaves for making traditional roofs and herbs to be used in the preparation of medicines. Circular or temporary migration also has a long tradition. Men were engaged in various activities mainly lumbering, balata gathering and transport in the gold industry to acquire a monetary income (see p. 15). These activities had a seasonal character. In the last few decades the third migration type, permanent migration began to gain significance. Permanent migration is characterized by the migrant's shift of primary identification from his rural to his urban home. This type of migration envelopes a large segment of the Matawai, causing the most radical change since the first establishment of their communities in the interior.

Definitions of migration usually include not only the objective time/space criterium but also a more subjective social component. For instance, the geographer Zelinsky observes:

> Genuine migration obviously means the perceptible and simultaneous shifts in both spacial and social locus, so that the student cannot realistically measure one kind of movement while he ignores the other. Ideally, we should observe shifts in both varieties of space in tandem but given the dearth of techniques for handling purely social movement, we are forced to rely on territorial movements as a clumsy surrogate for total mobility. When a truly serviceable index of mobility is fabricated, it will certainly be composite, bringing together measures of several dimensions (1971: 224)

Since short-term and seasonal migration have traditionally been important features in Matawai society, we need a definition of the migrant that distinguishes temporary moves to the coast from permanent or long-term migration.
The Matawai tend to identify themselves or others as residents of the coastal area or as tribal people according to the primary social and economic focus and the length of time spent at the coast. We chose the following working definition: Those Matawai are classified as migrants who consider themselves (or are considered by others) as residents of the coastal area and who actually stay more than half of the year on the coast. Although this definition reduces the complexity of the migration process in a dual division, the criteria will cause some difficulties. We will consider the usefulness of the definition by an exploration of the actual pattern of residence of all Matawai from four upriver villages during the period 1973-1974. This pattern reveals that the number of cases that remain doubtful when we only look at the time dimension, is relatively small. A requirement in the use of our working definition is that classification must be done at one point in time. The juncture we used was January 1, 1974. A man who had lived for some months in town and is intending to return to the village, is offered a permanent job and finally decides to stay in the coastal area. In such a case we have taken into account both the year preceding January 1, 1974 as well as 1974. Another problem is how to classify those Matawai who have a dual residence pattern, staying part of their time on the coast and the other part in the tribal area and who consider themselves as nango ta kon (coming and going). As this category is quite heterogeneous a threefold classification migrant, coming and going, tribal makes little sense. The distinction migrant, nango ta kon reflects merely the ideological factor rather than actual behaviour. Most of the people who call themselves nango ta kon are, in accordance with our definition, included in the migrant category. We have to admit, however, that in some cases their primary orientation is uncertain. Seasonal workers who extend their working period in a particular year to seven or eight months or even longer and who do not consider themselves migrants or nango ta kon are included in the non-migrant category. The Matawai do not perceive these wage labourers as belonging to the migrant category. In general, the closely interrelated criteria of primary identification of the individual himself or as conceived by others are given prevalence over the time criterion.

Migration is nearly everywhere accompanied by a counter-stream,
albeit much smaller of people returning to their home villages. This is evident in the case of seasonal and temporary migration, but may also be noted among people who have apparently resided more or less permanently in the coastal area and then returned to the tribal village for good. The counter-stream among the Matawai is very restricted. In some cases a village council urged men to return to assume positions of village headmen or assistants (kapiteni and basia). There are men who changed their regular jobs for the function of village official with a lower income, but with the security of maintaining this income until death. Men incidentally return if they fail to find work, women may return after divorce, and a few older people return after retirement. However, presently only about 20 out of the total adult population living in the tribal area fit into this category of return migrants.

Having provided criteria (p. 424) to distinguish migrants and non-migrants, we will now examine the mobility pattern of the present Matawai population. We base ourselves on observations during 1973 and 1974 of the total population originating from four upriver villages (Boslanti, Vertrouw, Pniël, Wanati). These villages are less affected by urban migration than villages in the middle- and downriver area. It is likely that the pattern differs from other areas where trips crossing the tribal boundaries are more frequent. Reasons to stay on the coast are in most cases primarily economic. Therefore men spend more time (as a mean 2.4 months) on the coast than women who on the average only stay one month in a year on the coast (see table 14). This period is, however, much longer when we consider only younger men. Men born between 1939 and 1948 spend on the average 4.8 months of a year on the coast. We turn now to the patterns of movement of Matawai migrants. Women tend to be away from their ‘urban’ homes longer than the men. They stay 0.5 months in the village against 0.42 for men. In fact, men in the urban area have more obligations toward their employers while many of the young women still have kinship obligations in the tribal area.
Table 14 Residence of men and women from Libasei 1 according to age, for migrants the time spent in the tribal villages and for the non-migrants the time spent in the coastal area during the years 1973 and 1974.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Migrant</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Non Migrant</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-1918</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-1928</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-1938</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1948</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-1958</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 1958</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 percentage of time non-migrants spent in the coastal area
2 percentage of time migrants spent in the tribal area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>1</th>
<th></th>
<th>2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-1918</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-1928</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-1938</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1948</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-1958</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Changing labour opportunities

It is generally agreed that economic motives play a major role in rural-urban migration. In this section we will describe the changing labour opportunities in rural and urban areas and the acceleration of permanent migration as a consequence of growing differences in accessibility to resources.

Matawai migration has been greatly influenced by economic factors. Prior to 1950 the chief male occupation was seasonal work, lumbering and balata gathering. These activities were mainly performed within the tribal boundaries along the tributaries and creeks of the Saramacca river. Lumbering was done in large groups that were needed to pull the wooden blocks out of the forest to the river (see p. 15) After 1950 other work became available for Bush Negroes. A considerable number of men were recruited from the Matawai to gather makapalmnuts along the Coppenname river (see Bruijning and Voorhoeve 1977: 87). Others worked in the district of Nickerie where large areas were cleared for rice cultivation. In the late 1950s and early 1960s many Matawai men were engaged in large surveying projects and they swarmed out along all the rivers of Suriname. At about the same time governmental services rapidly expanded employment for Bush Negroes. Initially these jobs were intended to be temporary, but soon the best labourers were selected for steady employment. Extensions of work in the interior were, in part, related to the large dam project on the Suriname river completed in 1966. These new employees were required to be on hand when their bosses needed them and for this reason many began to reside permanently in and near the city of Paramaribo. In addition, the decline of lumbering profits was an equally important factor in the process of leaving the villages in the interior. As we have already indicated, the traditional occupation became less profitable when the most valuable trees became scarce near the rivers and the lumber market declined as a result of the competition from large lumber companies. By the early 1960s the traditional labour intensive method of lumbering had completely ceased, and the coast became the most important place for the Matawai to earn money.

Presently, Bush Negroes partly continue the seasonal labour
pattern working temporarily in concession areas of Hindustani and Creole concessionaries. These areas are mostly located in the coastal plain. Relations between concessionaires and Bush Negroes are not always harmonious. Numerous stories are told of Bush Negroes who were mistreated or who returned without having received their wages after several months of work. There are also some permanent migrants who continue to work in the lumber concession areas. For some others, infrequent odd jobs provide the only source of income. Several expressions are used to refer to these odd jobs; *djap wooko*, *naki djap*, *waka waka wooko* are some of the most common. The range of incomes for these activities varies, and in some cases wages are comparable to salaries paid by the government services. Young newly arrived migrants often start with this kind of work, entering the odd job labour market with the aid of relatives or friends. Those without contacts walk around asking for work everywhere: *Mineli, ju na' wan wooko da mi?* (Mister, do you have a job for me?)

To summarize, initially migration was only seasonal, later this was partially replaced by temporary migration, and today we find permanent migration emerging as a dominant pattern for many Matawai men and women. However, the change from one pattern of migration to another does not involve a clear break. The individual choices and shifts of labour patterns do not always show the same sequence of seasonal to temporary and to permanent migration. In fact, all three patterns remain to be relevant.

Prior to 1950 when seasonal migration was dominated by lumbering and balata gathering men remained to be engaged until old age. They were assisted by younger often more able-bodied men, whom they initiated in this work. When temporary and permanent migration became important in the 1960s, many old men were unable to participate directly and stayed behind in the tribal villages to perform tasks for migrants relatives in town, such as house building and boat making or clearing garden plots for the wives of migrants who used to stay a large part of the year in the village. There are other factors that have prevented the move from seasonal to permanent migration from becoming even more widespread. The Suriname government today pays a small allowance every three months to the elderly and to single women in the tribal area.
In addition, the salaried tribal functionaries (kapiteni and basia) account for a large part of those Matawai who have remained in the tribal area. These functionaries are less dependent on regular wage labour than others. The input in terms of money in the tribal area for salaries and social security is considerable compared with other sources of income (see table 15).

Table 15 Money income for 141 adult males in four upriver villages over a two year period (1973-1974).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boat making</td>
<td>Sf. 4500.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cash crops (peanuts, ginger) (1)</td>
<td>1400.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house building for migrants</td>
<td>2100.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freight carrying</td>
<td>3500.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local functionaries (2)</td>
<td>21840.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local jobs</td>
<td>5700.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39040.-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B**

Incomes from activities outside tribal area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balata gathering, woodcutting, odd jobs</td>
<td>71440.-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C**

Incomes from social security (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18660.-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sf. 129,140.-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) includes income of 4 women, (2) of 8 women and (3) of 35 women. Estimates are made on basis of census data, length of working periods, number of boats made for sale etc. Calculations of social security and salaries paid to village officials are based on standard amounts.
Migration, sex ratios and the marriage system

The exodus of Matawai from the tribal villages to the coast started only recently in the 1960s. As the difference in the accessibility of resources in urban and rural areas is a major stimulus for migration, predominantly males in the age category 20-40 in search for wage labour initiate the move to the coast. The motivations of kinsmen who follow them tend to be more complex in nature. As a result of approximately 25 years of migration, almost half of the Matawai population has settled more or less permanently on the coast, in and around Paramaribo. Migration is a temporal process with differential effects on age and sex distribution, therefore the characteristics of the migrant population at a given point in time reflect a stage in the process. It will be shown in this case that as the process of migration develop, initial imbalances in the sex ratio and age distribution tend to level out. In figure 14 a, b, c, d we contrast the tribal and urban segments of the Matawai population originating from four different areas. The population pyramids indicate that the age category of males between 20 and 40 in particular, tends to be absent in the tribal area. This is even more predominant in the downriver villages. In all areas the peak in the pattern of male migrants corresponds with the peak of the female pattern. Comparison of the upriver and downriver clusters indicates outstanding peaks of migrants around the age of 30 as well as low percentages of young children and aged persons among the migrants in the upriver region. (see also table 16). In this region the largest differentiation exists between the two sexes. For libasei 1 we found that male migrants constitutes 15% of the total male population and for female migrants a percentage of 10.7%. Downriver (bausee 1), the area most heavily affected by migration, the relative difference is much smaller: 76.8% male migrants against 66.4% female migrants of the total populations. During a visit in 1974 we collected additional data on migration after 1974 from the upriver area. A significant number of young migrants were among the new migrants, a large part of them were unmarried in 1974. The unbalanced sex ratio in this area can only partly be explained by male migration to the coast. Of the total population originating from the four upper river villages (Libasei 1) females outnumber males and many women
Figure 14 a Population distribution of migrants compared with the total population from Libasei 1.
Figure 14 b Population distribution of migrants compared with the total population from Libasei 2.
Figure 14c Population distribution of migrants compared with the total population from Bausei I.
Figure 14d Population distribution of migrants compared with the total population from Bausei 2.
Figure 14 e Population distribution of migrants compared with the total Matawai population
Table 16 Migrancy of adults and children from libasei and bausei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libasei</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 408 children, 224 adults, 632 total.

\[ X^2 = 11.14 \] Statistically significant at 0.001 level which means that Libasei has a significantly lower percentage of children in the migrant population.

Table 17 Migration and sex ratio in four Matawai areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>area</th>
<th>% Migrants</th>
<th>Migrants</th>
<th>non-Migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 59 males, 354 females, 276 total male, 1280 total female, 420 total male, 517 total female, 810 total

Correlation coefficient % migrants and sex ratio 0.34

s.r. Sex ratio = M/F × 1000
remain single for an appreciably longer period.

In table 17 we have summarized data on adult migrant and non-migrant populations originating from different areas. We will consider here the consequences of the uneven distribution for the marriage system.

Contrary to the situation as described by Price 1975: 65-74) for upriver Saramaka, the Matawai tend in the course of their marital career to take their families with them to the city. However, many Matawai male migrants are single, due to the fact that they do not remarry easily after divorce. The large number of men who remain sometime without a partner causes a shortage of men in the tribal area. It must be remarked that this shortage is larger than our data may suggest because we have included all Matawai older than 15 years of age, while men tend to marry four to five years later than women. In addition since the Matawai have abandoned polygynous marriage after the introduction of Christianity, many women in the tribal area remain unmarried after divorce.

The sex ratio of the total -migrant plus non-migrant- population reaches a value of 930, indicating a small majority of women. Differences emerge when we divide the population in a migrant and non-migrant category resulting in sex ratios of 1440 for the migrant population and 700 for the non-migrants. A further distinction between married and non-married people of both migrants and non-migrants reveals remarkable differences in migrant and tribal sex ratios of the unmarried categories. (see table 18)

Table 18 Sex ratios, migration and marital status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total population</th>
<th>migrant</th>
<th>non-migrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>930</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not married</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19 Migration and marital status of all Matawai adults originating from 17 villages according to sex, area of origin and present place of residence (January 1, 1974, N = 952)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Libasei</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Migrant</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Migrant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Migrant</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Migrant</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data presented in table 19 enables us to examine the relationship between marital status and migration more closely. The most remarkable feature emerging from these data is the large number of divorced men in the coastal population (70% of all divorced men live on the coast) and the large percentage of divorced women in the tribal area (75% of all divorced women live in the tribal villages). Although there may be a slight tendency for tribal men to migrate after divorce our data indicate that a large number of divorced men remain unmarried for a long time. The determining factor, in this regard, is the different economic roles of the sexes in the tribal and coastal areas. In the tribal area the economic roles of men and women are complementary. Almost all activities which belong to the sphere of money are the domain of the men. Each year the men will spend some months on the coast for wage labour. However, despite this income the household economy is largely based on subsistence activities. A large part of all food is provided by the gardens. Within the subsistence domain itself, male and female activities are interdependent. The man's task is particularly important during the phase of burning, felling and clearing. While women perform the majority of activities in all other garden work. In view of the complementary tasks of men and women, marriage has become a highly functional contract. According to marital histories in the past both women and men did not remain unmarried long after divorce. Presently, as a result of sex selective migration man women remain unmarried, in particular after divorce. The maintenance of an independent household for single women is facilitated by the fact that she may insist on the help of her male relative in the preparation of a garden (see p. 77). Moreover nowadays the Surinamese government provides a small stipend quarterly.

In the city the situation for single women is quite different. Here women are dependent on an income in money and therefore on their husband's wage labour as work for unskilled women is especially difficult to find. Although about 50% of all women residing in the coastal area maintain a garden somewhere along the highway to Zanderij, along the railway to Kwakugoon, or even near the tribal villages, the importance of these activities is limited compared to the subsistence activities within the tribal area. For housing as well the woman in the coastal area is largely dependent on her husband who owns or rents the
the dwelling. As most of the Matawai women in town are not legally married, a woman has no rights if the couple divorces. Consequently, she will often return to the tribal village.

Turning now to the men we find that almost all adult men in the tribal area are married, this is particular true for the upriver area. After divorce they remarry rapidly, a process which is facilitated by the surplus of relatively young women. In fact, in the tribal area it is the men who are dependent on their wives because of the women's large contribution to the subsistence economy. Migration has caused a shift in the power balance between male and female partners.

We will summarize the main features of Matawai migration.

1) Seasonal and temporary migration of males has a long tradition in Matawai society.

2) Permanent migration only emerged as a mass phenomenon in the last few decades when men became involved in the coastal labour market and when subsequently an increasing number of women began to join their husbands in town. As a result the sex ratio of the migrant population in those areas where migration started earlier is quite in balance.

3) It seems that migration in this small-scale society is destructive for the life in the tribal villages. Some villages have lost almost the entire population and until now return migration has been limited. Recently it has been been argued that the mass character of urban migration in less developed countries is largely an illusory phenomenon (Lipton 1980: 5). This is evidently not the case in Matawai society. The mass migration among the Matawai emphasizes their particular situation in which possibilities for rural agricultural development have been restricted by the tropical forest horticulture and by the distance from the market. Migration movement tends to concentrate on the only urban centre of Suriname, Paramaribo and its immediate surroundings.

4) The Matawai migrant relies more heavily on occupations provided by the government than do the total Surinamese working population, although they too are already highly dependent on these kinds of jobs.

Eindnoten:

(1.) see for instance LA BIB 1946-50 (12).
IV Recent Developments
15 Recent Developments

Due to the recent character of migration, the particular migration flow in one direction, the enduring importance of traditional principles of social organization and the high mobility of the Matawai, this society which consists of an urban and a rural segment has maintained some features of a ‘closed’ system. The tribal segment tends to be more ‘closed’ while the urban segment is more ‘open’. We use the terms ‘open’ and ‘closed’ here to refer to principles of recruitment and boundary maintenance.

In the first chapter we will deal with the emergence of a Matawai community in the coastal area and with their adaptation to the multi-ethnic Surinamese society. Despite the complexity of migration, a process involving psychological, socio-economic, ecological and political factors at different levels of analysis, the causes of urban migration are often phrased in general terms of modernization, development or acculturation. For instance, Bennett (1976), following Zelinsky, has stressed the modernization factor in both the demographic and mobility transition. Both authors emphasize the close relation between the demographic and mobility transition\(^1\). In the case of the Matawai there is an easily discernable factor of modernization involved in the demographic changes: the introduction of medical care has been a major factor in the decline of mortality causing rapid population growth. It is likely that this growth has stimulated migration. Although agricultural land is not yet scarce, other resources indeed are. We have already pointed out that labour shortances outside the tribal area for certain kinds of work attracted many Bush Negroes to the coast.
Once a small migrant community of Matawai was initially formed, this community itself became a factor in the continuity of migration. On the one hand new migrants came to join their relatives to the coast, on the other the migrants contributed to a change in the world-view of the people who remained in the tribal villages.

The rapid urban growth which was partly due to migration of members of tribal groups, led to a reaction on the part of the Surinamese government, which wished to counter the migration stream. In the second chapter we discuss changes in the tribal villages and present a case study of a proposal for a development project initiated by the government. Although it has become unlikely that the project will be executed according to the original plan, the discussion of its remains to have relevance because the basic ideas behind the plan such as large-scale agricultural production, still dominate thinking about the development of the Bush Negro areas.

In the conclusion we focus on the interrelationship between migrant and tribal communities and its significance for development planning.

**Eindnoten:**

(1.) These transitions are seen as part of the more general concept of the ecological transition.
16
Life in the City

In this chapter we will present some results of a preliminary research conducted among the Matawai in town during a six month period following our stay in the tribal area. The aim of the study was to gain insight into the living conditions of the Matawai migrants and to supplement the population data we had collected in the tribal area. Some questions immediately emerge when considering the rapidity of Matawai migration to the coastal area. How can a small group such as the Matawai remain distinct in the multi-ethnic society of Suriname? How will this ethnic group develop in the future? And finally what is the role of the continuing rural-urban relations?

Recent work on the concept of ethnic group has emphasized the mechanism of boundary maintenance. As the total number of Matawai is small in comparison to the number of Creoles and even in comparison to the number of Djuka and Saramaka, it will be clear that the maintenance of an own identity as Matawai in the context of the coastal society will be problematic. In addition, Matawai do not live in a single well-defined separate area; their residential pattern is quite dispersed. Moreover, these days Matawai men and women often marry members of other Bush Negro groups.

In the maintenance of ethnic group boundaries we have to distinguish different levels (see for instance Wallman 1978; Bromley 1979). For most Surinamese people tribal identity carried little meaning. Belonging to the wider group of Bush Negroes is, in most contexts, more relevant than the particular tribal affiliation. It is only when people interact more frequently as workmates or as neighbours that they become acquainted.
with the individual tribal identity. At the lower level of what we may call the Bush Negro society that consists of members of the different tribes, the peculiar tribal or ethnic affiliation remains an important determinant for inter- and intra-group behaviour.

**Housing**

Matawai who stay in town temporarily often spend the nights in the lodging house Nju Combe. This is one of the two buildings provided by the Surinamese government where people from the interior, Bush Negroes and Amerindians, can stay when they visit Paramaribo. At another place, Mac Arthur, there are some houses where the gaaman stay when they are in town. Nju Combe contains separate rooms for the members of different tribal groups. People who come to the city for medical reasons may use the facilities for free, while others have to pay a small fee each night they tie their hammock at Nju Combe, or Depo as it is called by the Matawai. Especially people from the upriver region who do not have relatives in town stay at Nju Combe. Those who have kinsmen prefer to stay with them. The major complaints about the lodging house are that the place is crowded and noisy, affording no privacy and that furthermore there is the continual risk of being robbed. The deplorable conditions of this place have also been emphasized in a report made by a commission of the Surinamese government investigating the problems of the centre. The report states: ‘Some humble and dirty houses, placed together on a yard between the Kleine Saramaccastraat and the Suriname river where a human community herds together accompanied by the government, despite the stench, dirt, saw dust, lack of space and elementary sanitary provisions’ (Rapport van de commissie 1970: 7; our tr.). Despite these unfavourable conditions and the objections of the Matawai, Nju Combe is an important centre of Bush Negro life in the city where migrants meet their tribal relatives, friends and people of other tribal origins. People gather at Nju Combe to perform funerary rites at the death of one of their fellow tribesmen. Bush Negroes also gather there on the first of July when festivities are held to celebrate Emancipation day. Such occasions attract people of all tribal origins. Bush Negroes who stay in town temporarily may also rent a small one-room
Map 1 Residential zones of Matawai migrants in and around Paramaribo
**Table 1 Residence of Matawai migrants in residential zones**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>c</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>totals</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>408</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<td>VI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>224</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totals</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2 Clustering of Matawai migrants from up- and down river in residential zones around Paramaribo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults from downriver</th>
<th>Adults from upriver</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18</th>
<th>37</th>
<th>55</th>
<th>14.4</th>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>235</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dwelling at the back yard of some Libanese or Hindustani shopkeeper along the Saramaccastraat. Sometimes these houses are offered free to Bush Negroes if they in turn will do their major shopping in that particular store.

The first flow of migrants lived initially within the city borders of Paramaribo, as is also the case with a relatively large part of the newly arrived migrants. If they intend to remain longer on the coast the migrants frequently move to the outskirts of the city where they either rent a house or buy a small plot of land to build their own house. For migrants, houses in town are usually older and in a state of disrepair. In the outskirts houses tend to be newer and more spacious with yards surrounding the houses, that are sometimes used to cultivate fruit trees, vegetables and medical herbs. Most of these houses are furnished with a gasstove, refrigerator, a small table and a few chairs. In the sleeping quarters beds have replaced the traditional hammocks. Houses in the outskirts give a cleaner and a more livable impression.

To facilitate our investigation of the dispersal pattern of Matawai migrants, we distinguished the following residential zones (see map 1): (I) Paramaribo, (II) the area close to town, (III) the area extending about five kilometers from Paramaribo, (IV) the area around Lelydorp, (V) the Para district and (VI) Kwakugoon. A few migrants lives in other areas: (VIIa) in the tribal territory of other Bush Negro groups, (VIIb) elsewhere in the coastal area, or (VIIc) in the Netherlands. In table 1 it is shown that most of the migrants reside in the outskirts of Paramaribo, almost equally divided between the two neighbouring residential zones (zone II with 32% and zone III with 35.4%), while only 10% reside within the borders of Paramaribo. Some migrants initiated their move to town by first taking up residence in Onverwacht (a village in the Para district) and later moving towards Paramaribo; but most people lived initially in Paramaribo, changing residence afterwards to the outskirts. Young unmarried men who come to search for work begin by staying at Nju Combe. Later, once they have acquired a job, they move to the outskirts, frequently shifting residence in various rented houses (see case p. 454). When they find regular work their residence begins to take on a more permanent character; their wives will often join them. As may be expected children and adults are
not equally represented in the different residential zones. Particularly outstanding is the small percentage of children who reside within the city borders of Paramaribo (see table 1). This difference can be explained by the fact that the city harbours more recent migrants who do not have children or whose children remain in the tribal area to be fostered.

We find significant differences when we compare the dispersal pattern of adult migrants from the upriver area with those from the downriver area. Migrants from the downstream area reside almost exclusively in the outskirts of Paramaribo and are evenly divided over areas II and III (41.7% and 38.8%) while the number residing in town (I) is only 7.8%. Migrants from the upriver area live both in and around Paramaribo and are more evenly distributed over the three neighbouring areas (I): 23.6%, (II): 25.4% and (III): 32.5% (see table 2 and 3). These differences are a reflection of the different migration histories of the up- and downriver areas.

**Table 3 Migration of adults of down- and upriver to Paramaribo and the outskirts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>downriver</th>
<th>upriver</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramaribo</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outskirts of</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramaribo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 22.5$ significant at 0.001 level
which means that statistically significant more adult migrants from the upriver region reside within the city borders of Paramaribo than adult migrants from downriver.

The clustering of people originating from the same areas in the tribal territory, is evident in particular neighbourhoods along the different side streets of the Pad van Wanica. The situation is, however, quite complex. We may link the clustering patterns to individual migration histories. When the area was parcelled out an individual's choice of location was, in fact, largely determined by the residence of a kinsman.
at that time. In this manner clusters of Matawai began to develop around the city. An example of this process of cluster-forming is given in the next case (figure 1).

Mina (2), a woman from a lineage that originated from the village Tiveedi in the upstream area, had taken up residence in the village of Balen, downstream. She left this village nine years ago to move to the coast together with her husband Josua (3). Now, in 1974, she lives on a place along Pad van Wanica five kilometers away from Paramaribo together with her husband, their 17 year old daughter and a seven year old foster son (14). In the course of time several kinsmen came to live in the same neighbourhood. A village member of her husband, Feedi (4), who had been living in Nickerie for a long time, rented a house nearby and later brought his wife from upriver to stay there for a while. Soon others followed. Leo (7), the elder brother of Mina's foster son, who had migrated to Paramaribo during the same time as Mina and Josua, moved to their neighbourhood with his wife (16), who was affiliated to Feedi (his ZDD), their little children and their foster son, Leo's 14 year old younger brother (13). Leo's younger sister Fiida (9) and her new Saramaka husband rented a house close by, while around the corner another sister of Leo, Nola (8), came to live with her husband and children. When five years ago Stenli, a young unmarried man belonging to Mina's lineage from Tiveedi, arrived on the coast, he initially shared Mina's household, but soon, when his younger brother (6) joined him, he rented a house adjoining her's. Finally, Fiida's father Gostan, who had spent some years going back and forth between his downstream village and the coastal area looking for work, decided to bring his wife Alwina (11) and their youngest son (15) to the coast. He also chose to live in this area, thereby reuniting the family. Alwina was now living close to her three elder children: Leo (7), Nola (8) and Fiida (9) and within walking distance of two other daughters Carmen (10) and Thesa (11), who lived
Figure 1 The process of clustering of kinsmen in a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Paramaribo
closer to the city. All these adult children migrated before their parents came to the city. Her younger children also already lived in this neighbourhood: her 17 year old son (12) shifting residence between the households of his sisters Nola and Carmen; her 14 year old son (13) is fostered by his elder brother Leo, while her seven year old son (14) is fostered by Mina.

Residential mobility tends to be high during the first years following migration. Permanent residence will be established as soon as the men have saved enough money to buy a plot of land and build a house.

**Employment and the economic position of the Matawai in town**

Young Matawai men who migrate to the coast often hope to find lanti wooko (work for the government). As some state, lanti wooko provides the best opportunity to save money. Wages are better than in most other jobs, and in the afternoon you are free to find an odd job. Governmental positions, however, are hard to find because they are highly sought after and, once obtained, are rarely vacated. Of all adult male Matawai migrants, 38.1% work for the government. For a large part (13.8% of the total), they are employed by the Office for Hydroelectric Power (BWKW). The largest remaining part is associated with the police and the Geological and Mining Service (GMD) (see table 4).

Second to lanti wooko, the largest percentage of migrant jobs, 31.2% of the migrants are employed in a variety of more or less stable jobs. A few work in the bauxite industry. Others in small scale enterprises such as bus-lines or construction companies. A third category of employment is defined as waka waka wooko (day to day jobs). Finally there is a category of people without work at all. The distinction between these two later categories is not always easy to make. Waka waka wooko refers to temporary employment which is frequently difficult to find, and is actually a form of underemployment. On the other hand, the migrant who is characteristically unemployed will occasionally find an odd job. The actual differences between waka waka wooko and unemployment is only a difference of degree. Together these two categories make up

*Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Table 4 Employment of Matawai migrant males in the coastal area $n = 236$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work for the government, <em>lanti wooko</em></td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geological and Mining Service</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydroelectric works</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police etc.</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular jobs in bauxite industry, construction work, harbour work</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular jobs, <em>waka waka wooko</em> and unemployed</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbering in the coastal area</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 100%

17.8% of the adult male migrant population, 9.9% of whom stated that they were without work at the time of the census. Finally, some migrants (7.9%) have been able to earn a living by selling traditional skills to the lumber concessionaries. The income of Bush Negroes employed by the government (*lanti*) are, in most cases higher than the wages paid to many lower class Creoles.

As we have already indicated, today many Bush Negroes, especially those with regular jobs, have been able to buy their own parcel of land and build a house on it. Although the regular wages do not exceed the amount of Sfl. 300.00 it has enabled them to save enough money for the first payment. On the other hand, many older migrants who do not have regular work are in a different position. In fact, migration has introduced economic and social differentiation that is beginning to be apparent not only in the urban area, but also in the tribal areas (see also Thoden van Velzen 1977: 113). The following case shows the gradual transition of temporary to permanent migration that marks the working histories of many younger Matawai men.

*Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Baakaboi was born in the village of Vertrouw, the uppermost Matawai village. He was fostered by his mother's sister who died in 1965 when Baakaboi was 14 years old. He then moved in with the deceased woman's husband, who also lived in the upstream area. Baakaboi acquired his first paid job in February 1966, when people from town came to recruit Bush Negroes to cut lines and clear the forest for a large geodesy project in the interior of Suriname. Baakaboi joined a large group of Matawai men in the village of Paka Paka and worked for four months under the supervision of his mother's sister's husband. In June 1966, when the work was finished the Matawai workers returned to their villages. In November of the same year Baakaboi's uncle, who lived in his wife's village in the middle river region, was asked to find someone who could assist a geological expedition to the Tukumutu. He recommended his sister's son, who joined the expedition and was given the task of bringing letters and geological samples to the railhead post Kwakugoon. When the Tukumutu expedition ended, Baakaboi received his money at the office in town and was asked to stand by until other work became available. Baakaboi worked on this basis for four years. In January 1967, when Baakaboi attended the festivities of his guardian's remarriage, the geological survey team passed by to pick him up for a new trip to the Tukumutu. An other time journeying to his village the survey team passed him on the river and asked him to join the next trip. On this trip, returning to Kwakugoon with geological samples, he encountered troubles at Gaandan, one of the larger rapids in the Saramacca river, and lost a good deal of the load. Timidly, he went to the office expecting to be reprimanded. To his surprise he was offered a regular job. They paid him Sf. 3.00 for each working day, Sf. 1.44 for food and Sf. 0.26 for each night away from home. When he stayed in the city he was paid the regular wage of Sf. 3.00. In town he rented a small house for Sf. 0.50 a night. He stopped payment when he left on expedition for a few weeks or more and arranged another house on his return. In late 1969 he married
a young woman from the upriver region. At that time he was working mainly along the Coppenamer river together with several Djuka and one Matawai. There he received word to return to Paramaribo where he was ordered to go to the Kabalebo river for a course in geological techniques. At first he objected, arguing that the responsibilities would be too heavy for him. However, the prospect of higher wages changed his mind. After completing the course, he was paid Sf. 7.00 daka moni (day money), Sf. 2.88 njanjan moni (money for food) and Sf. 0.75 neti moni (money for spending the night away from home). During the following years he participated in some expeditions and worked most of the time along the Kabalebo river in West Suriname. In the beginning of 1974 he remained for a longer period in town, when most geological projects were cancelled due to lack of funds. As a result of his increased earnings, Baakaboi acquired more belongings and decided to rent a small house where he lived together with two friends from the upriver region; together they paid Sf. 17.50 rent a month. After a year they moved to a larger house built in the landlord's back yard. But they noticed that the houseowner's son possessed an extra key with which he could search their house. Seven months after his marriage his wife was brought to him by her brother and together with three other Matawai couples, they rented a large house with five sleeping rooms. They paid Sf. 75.00 for this house. They lived together for a year until, without clear reason, the arrangement dissolved. Baakaboi and his wife moved to a smaller house, together with his wife's brother who had married his mother's sister's daughter. The next year they all moved to a larger house. Finally, in 1974, they moved to a housing project of a Hindustani shopkeeper who had built some 25 small, two-room houses on his yard that he rented, mainly to Bush Negroes, for Sf. 21.00 per month. They now live there in two adjoining houses.
Inter-ethnic relations in the city

Bush Negroes constitute a clearly distinguishable group in Paramaribo. Those who live in the city reside for the most part in a more or less bounded area. The different Bush Negro groups speak distinct language variants. Speech behaviour is one factor that accentuates group boundaries. Most Bush Negroes also speak, or at least have some knowledge of the lingua franca, Sranan tongo. In conversation with members of other tribes Matawai often intersperse their speech with Sranan words.

Individual group identification is manifested in several ways, in which group boundaries are accentuated. In Matawai society, accusations of witchcraft are rare, however, in the context of the coastal society, witchcraft practices are frequently ascribed to city Creoles, Hindustani or to members of other tribal groups. When drinking at a bar, Matawai are ready to take their glass with them to the toilet, not to prevent the theft of the drink, but out of fear that a Djuka will put some wisi (witchcraft, also poison) in their glass. Djuka hide wisi under their fingernails, they believe, in order to slip it, unnoticed, into the glass of their victim. In turn Djuka fear Matawai because of their witchcraft. In fights Matawai tend to win, and the Djuka readily claim that Matawai fight with wisi; while Matawai argue that Djuka fight senselessly. Ethnic stereotyping which serves to maintain and establish the ‘we’ - ‘they’ distinction is particularly striking in the stories men tell about their experiences with members of other ethnic groups. Also in the traditional anansi tori which are told during funerary rites ethnic stereotyping has become an important theme. The particular importance that Creoles and Hindustani attach to money, is, for example, a common theme in these stories. We will not concern ourselves with the factuality of the stories but rather with some aspects of inter-ethnic relations and stereotyping that are reflected in them. Many anecdotes are told to demonstrate that Bush Negroes are in some way superior to the coastal populations. Despite the fact that they play the role of underdog when they stay in the coastal area, while Creoles and Hindustani may have easier access to money, in conflicts about money Bush Negroes are the ultimate winners. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point.
I worked together with nine Saramaka men on the coast. We worked very hard, some of us worked 20, others 40 or even 50 logs of export lumber. This wood had a high value at that time because for one piece of good-sized lumber you got Sf. 70.00. When the Hindustani came to pay, he asked us to wait, because he had not as yet received his money. For two months we stayed in town, until finally we had nothing to eat. The Saramaka went to the house of the Hindustani to complain, adding: ‘I am from the interior and when I have troubles with you, even the police does not help me. But you know what I will do, the money you have taken from us to eat it with your wife and children... okay, I am a Bush Negro and I will show you that you can not play with me’. He returned to his house and before we went to bed he chanted a curse to the Hindustani. The following morning the 19 year old daughter of the Hindustani died and a few days later her younger sister died as well. The man still had a little boy and was afraid that he too would die. Now he began to wander around to look for the Saramaka man. When he finally met him he offered to pay the money. But the Saramaka replied ‘I do not want it, because I have taken it already. I have nothing to do with you’.

Basia Sempi had a Creole friend (mati) in town with whom he had once worked in the balata fields. When he came from the work-site in the interior to town, his mati came to visit him. They had just received their wages and after counting his money Sempi had put it in his case (tompu). The Creole who had witnessed this, returned after midnight when everybody was asleep. He could not enter because the door was closed on the inside. He remained near the house and when one of the Bush Negroes went to the toilet outside the house, he took the opportunity to enter the room and waited inside till everyone was asleep again. One of them, hearing something near his case, acted as if he was asleep. When the man tried to open the case, he took him by his arm and held him firmly. Meanwhile the others awoke, and stripped the thief's clothes.
from his body to fasten him for a whipping. They beat him so hard, that he went to the police to complain. In the morning when he returned with some policemen, they saw that it was *basia* Sempí's *mati* who had visited them the day before.

Money is also a dominant theme in the stories about the *bakulu*, a small dwarf who is believed to make money for his owner. Hindustani in particular are said to keep these *bakulu*, who must be nourished with eggs and sometimes even with their own children. Creoles as well as frequently accused of witchcraft, who are said to employ *bakulu* mainly when they feel that they have been mistreated. These different accusations reflect the varying social distances between the ethnic groups. In fact, Bush Negroes interact more frequently with Creoles than with Hindustani. People often display subtle variations in behaviour when people of other tribal groups are involved.

Natalia, a young Matawai woman who migrated with her parents to the outskirts of Paramaribo, lived with 20 other Bush Negro households on the yard of a Hindustani shopkeeper. She married in town with a fellow tribesman. After a divorce, she remarried a Djuka man. When he went to his work-site in West Suriname for a few months, she had regular sexual intercourse with a Matawai and became pregnant. When her Djuka husband returned, he decided not to divorce her. A year later, however, upon discovering that she had also been having relations with a fellow Djuka, he decided to leave her, arguing that she had gone too far. He declared that if the man had been a Matawai, he would have taken it, but now his reputation was at stake.

Matawai migrants form an ethnic group in the coastal area to be distinguished from other ethnic groups. They have settled in areas which were traditionally occupied by the other groups present in the Surinamese society which include other tribal populations, Hindustani, Creoles, Javanese etc. Matawai migrants certainly develop relationships with members of other ethnic groups, but despite these inter-ethnic relations and because of the small size of the Matawai group, they constitute a fairly closed group which stresses its ethnic identity as becomes
manifest in a number of situations. We will now consider these inter- and intra-ethnic relations in the following specific contexts:

a) on the work-site
b) at ceremonial occasions
c) in a downtown bar
d) in the marriage system

a) On the work-site

Most inter-ethnic relations take place in labour situations and within labour groups. The work groups of the principal employers (BWKW and GMD) are composed of members of all Bush Negro groups as well as some Amerindians. The members of these groups frequently stay together for months and a solidarity develops within the group that often bridges ethnic differences.

Several members of a labour group who were working along the river attended the puu baaka ceremony (ending of the mourning period) in the village of Boslanti. When a young Saramaka behaved aggressively towards the son of the woman for whom the ceremony was held, the villagers shut the man in a cooking house to prevent further fighting. At that point the entire group of labourers was willing to defend the Saramaka. However, they eventually withdrew and yielded to the villagers who had felt blamed by the labourers of the Geological and Mining Service.

The friendly relations with people of other ethnic backgrounds are usually maintained after returning to the tribal area. Many older men who worked for a long time in such groups have several acquaintances and mati (formal friends) in various tribes.

At the time of the border conflict between Guyana and Suriname in 1969, Matawai were recruited to occupy the disputed inhabited area in order to validate the claims of Suriname. The men were, for the most part, volunteers who had worked for the BWKW. These Bush Negroes, without weapons at their disposal, were forced to retreat at the first sign of Guyanese aggression. Upon their return to Paramaribo, they were
dubbed heroes, and given jobs in which they had to cooperate with townspeople. In the last few years the number of Matawai searching for work in and around Paramaribo has increased steadily. Many young Matawai men now prefer city jobs. As a result of these developments, more and more Matawai come into contact with members of other ethnic groups.

b) Ceremonies and crisis rituals

A large number of Matawai on the coast are mobilized when there is a crisis situation occurring in Matawai society, whether it be in the tribal or urban area. When news of the death of a tribal relative is passed on to migrants, funerary rites are organized and attended by large numbers of Matawai from all the different villages. They gather to spend the night drinking and singing at the homestead of a migrant relative or at Nju Combe. Sometimes more than a hundred Matawai attend such ceremonies. In the tribal village the rite of passage which is held a week after birth (puu a doo) involves only a small number of close kinsmen. In the tribal area among the migrant population, such a ceremony may grow into a large dance party in which large numbers of Matawai participate. The Sundays, when most people are able to attend, are reserved for such occasions. In table 5 we present data on the recruitment of Matawai for different ceremonial occasions in town. These data are based on the ethnographer's observations supplemented by those of some key informants who attended the same occasions. Three facts emerge immediately: the number of participants is large; secondly, Matawai from all villages attend; and finally, the number of non-Matawai participating is very small. We must add that the participation of tribal Matawai, who stay temporarily on the coast, is quite large despite the fact that several of them have to travel from their worksites. These occasions provide an opportunity for tribal and migrant men to exchange opinions about lineage and village affairs. The atmosphere of village life emerges in such situations when the traditional anansi tori are told and a feeling of solidarity is clearly felt. The phenomenon of stressing tribal or ethnic identity at ceremonial occasions among migrant populations has been frequently observed (see for
Table 5 Participation of Matawai in ceremonies in town

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1) Bringing out ceremony of a child of Balen
2) Funerary rite for a migrant woman of Misalibi
3) Departure of a widow of Boslanti to her husband's village Posugunuafter his death upriver
4) Funerary rite for a man of Posugunu, who died upriver
5) Funerary rite for a woman of Paka Paka, who died in town
6) Bringing out ceremony of a child of Misalibi
7) Funerary rite for a migrant woman of Pniel, who died in town
8) Funerary rite for a woman of Pijeti, who died upriver
instance Hart 1971, Nagata 1974). In the Matawai case we have seen that people from almost all villages participate both from the upriver and downriver areas. Interaction is no longer restricted by geographical barriers or by distance.

c) In a downtown bar

A Chinese barrestaurant owner employed two young Matawai brothers who some years earlier had run away from the upriver village to settle in the coastal area. The youngest worked mainly as a bartender, while the other who had a driver's licence, drove for the takeaway service. This bar became a meeting place for young Matawai after working hours. They gathered in large numbers, especially on Saturday evenings, often breaking up into smaller groups to go to the cinema, a dance party or a traditional funerary rite. Women rarely participated in these bar cliques\(^2\). As the bar was near the major shopping centre, some Matawai women passed by during the day but they seldom stayed longer than a quarter of an hour. Occasionally, Bush Negroes of other tribal origins visited the bar but they rarely joined the Matawai group. Most of the clique members were between 18 and 30 years of age. The data we collected on eight Saturday evenings during a period of four months indicate the ethnic character of the recruitment of these groups. We counted, in total, 74 Matawai participants from all different villages, 2 Kwinti from the village of Paka Paka, 2 Kwinti from the Coppenamer river, 2 Saramaka, 2 Amerindians and 1 Hindustani. These cliques were rather fluid in character. They had little in common with the voluntary associations which flourish in African migrant societies (see for instance Little 1965, Meillassoux 1968). The common ethnic background was apparent in conversation, which was dominated by gossip about Matawai in town as well as news of events in the tribal area. These exchanges were mixed with nostalgia about the life in the tribal area, where young maidens were waiting and where the fish was free and fresh. Plans for return trips were made on New Year's day or during the holidays. The bar clique, although bounded by ethnic criteria, did not preclude contacts with other bar visitors. Occasionally a group of Saramaka, remaining quite separate, would send a bottle of beer to the
Matawai. This hardly constituted an increase of communication between the two groups. The few non-Matawai who participated in the group were Kwinti, who were in some way related with the Matawai, and a few others, who worked together with one of the Matawai. Table 6 reveals that participants came from both the up- and downstream areas. We may add that temporary or seasonal migrants all of whom came from the upriver region, were included. Migrants from the downriver area in the younger ages resided all more or less permanently in the urban area. After the two Matawai brothers were dismissed in 1976 the bar lost its significance as a meeting place for young Matawai men staying in town.

Table 6 Participation in bar cliques of Matawai men from up- and downriver on eight Saturday evenings over the last few months of 1974.

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Others include 1 Saramaka, 2 Coppenname Kwinti, 2 Amerindians, 1 Hindustani; 2 Paka Paka Kwinti are included in the downriver category.

d) Incorporation and the marriage system

Earlier (see p. 99) we have stressed the endogamous character of marriage in Matawai society, especially evident in the upriver tribal population. This area had been less effected by migration and the population of this area maintained less intensive relations with Creole balata gatherers and gold-diggers who worked in the forests along the downriver and middle river region of the Saramacca river and its tributaries. We will now turn our attention to an analysis of the reverse phenomenon of marrying out. The data collected is of migrants and
non-migrants both from the upriver and downriver areas. Tylor (1889) has already emphasized the political aspect of endogamy and exogamy. This point has been elaborated by Levi-Strauss (1949) in his synthesis of marriage systems (3). People who marry out break through the boundaries of the tribal group and tend to assimilate within a wider society. Our interest in intermarriage is based on the assumption that the degree of this phenomenon is an indicator of assimilation of an ethnic group into a wider society and of the increase of communication with members of other groups. We have, however, to keep in mind that out-marrying is only one indicator with its own specific character amid a range of others, stressing other dimensions. It is relevant here to point to the fact that marriage must be considered in relation to other aspects of social organization such as the descent principle. The incorporation of Matawai within a wider society is dependent on the strength of the matrilineal principle in relation to the recruitment of, and the control over, its members. The strength of the matrilineal principle is quite variable within Matawai society (see p. 57). Although we have relied on matrilineality as the principle of recruitment, it is important to emphasize that this principle is not always followed to the same degree. For instance, a small number of people can be considered to be marginal Matawai who only recognize their Matawai identity in a restricted number of contexts. These people have usually Creole fathers and are brought up mainly in the coastal area. We will now elaborate the development of inter-ethnic marriage of the Matawai population.

There were only a few Matawai prior to 1850 who were engaged in marital relations with members of the Djuka and the Saramaka tribe (see for instance Freytag 1927: 12). At the end of the 19th century many Creoles began to work in the interior as balata gatherers and gold-diggers. Until the 1920s these increased contacts with the Matawai only occasionally developed into marital relations. Throughout the 1920s, however, the Creoles working in the middle river section of the Saramacca river increasingly initiated marital relations with Matawai women, especially in the more isolated villages of Kwatahede, Makajapingo and also in the Kwinti village Paka Paka. In the period 1920 and 1927 approximately 20% of all women of Paka Paka were or had been
engaged in an affair with a Creole man (4). In the same period the annual reports of the congregation of Kwathahele regularly referred to the increasing influence of Creole labourers on Matawai social and religious life. The upstream area remained unaffected by Creole influences. Most of the relations with Creoles were only temporary affairs. In fact, very few of the present Matawai adult population have Creole fathers or fathers of other tribal origin. In the past the Moravian church strongly condemned marital relations with non-Christian Djuka or Saramaka and even with Matawai who belonged to the Roman Catholic church. The power of church sanctions on marital policy must not be underestimated.

The recent migration to the coast increased the frequency of interaction with members of other tribal groups and presently a large number of people from the downriver area are engaged in marital relations with non-Matawai. We define out-marrying as all marriages with non-Matawai. Table 7 presents the percentages of out-marrying in the different categories. The largest difference occurs between the two extreme categories: the category of migrant men from downriver and that of non-migrant men from upriver. In the latter category not a single man is involved in a marital relationship with a non-Matawai, while the percentage of out-marrying men reaches its height of 42.8% among the men of the downriver migrant population. The comparison of the figures for the women in these groups reveals a similar difference, if not so extreme.

### Table 7 Percentages of out-marrying men and women of the tribal and migrant population of the down- and upriver areas

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<td>42.8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non Migrant</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
Table 8 Extra tribal marriages of Matawai males and females for first marriages, all marriages and for the latest and present marriages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>first</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matawai</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>latest and present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matawai</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 1</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libasei 2</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bausei 2</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Matawai prefer marrying members of other Bush Negro tribes rather than members of other ethnic groups, some Creoles, Javanese and Hindustani are included among the marriage partners. Only men are involved in relations with Hindustani while both men and women marry Creole partners (see table 9). More first partners belong to the same tribe than second and following partners. We have to be aware that rapid migration to the coast increases the probability that in the course of years a man is likely to come into contact with members of other tribal groups. The percentage of women marrying non-Matawai increased from 11.3% for the first partner to 19% for the latest and present partners; for men the increase is slightly more from 9% to 13.9%.

Our data indicate that marriage outside the ethnic group of Bush Negroes is quite rare. This is especially evident for the population of the upriver area where only one woman and five men are presently married with a partner from the coastal area. Considering the implications of our marital data it seems that the integration of the Matawai into the Creole group or into the wider group of coastal Surinamese people is far less likely than the development of a more integrated pan Bush Negro ethnic group. The maintenance of a Matawai ethnic group is threatened in two, related ways. Migration causes demographic imbalances that force women to seek partners outside the Matawai tribal boundaries. And if they marry outside the Bush Negro ethnic group, the lineage is likely to loose control over its members.
Table 9 Marriage relations of tribal and migrant Matawai with non-Matawai (present and latest relation), according to ethnic affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Bausee</th>
<th>Libasee</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>nM</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saramaka</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djuka</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwinti (S)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwinti (C)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramaka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerindian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustani</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Bausee</th>
<th>Libasee</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saramaka</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djuka</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kwinti (C)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramaka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amerindian</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saramaka</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djuka</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwinti (S)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwinti (C)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramaka</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerindian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hindustani</td>
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<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eindnoten:

(2.) The political implications of out-marrying have been elaborated by Goody (1971: 114-49).
(1.) We used clique here to refer to an informal subgroup which is part of a larger group.
(2.) The political implications of out-marrying have been elaborated by Goody (1971: 114-49).
A Tribal Society in Change

In the previous chapters our analyses of religion, demography and migration have pointed to the rapidity of social change. In this chapter we will focus on the implications of the nation state Suriname in Matawai tribal society.

The crisis of tribal societies in many parts of the world has been aptly described by Svensson:

The industrial world of the twentieth century appears to compel the extinction of the tribal world. The confrontation between tribal populations and expanding states has been a phenomenon of every age and every continent. It has now apparently come to the final crisis, for there is no longer a geographical periphery into which the tribal peoples can withdraw. Nor is there a psychological periphery. In this ideological self-conscious age, participation in the national mission is demanded of all citizens, and tribalism is seen as having no role to play (1978: 100).

The Bush Negro societies have been characterized in the past as culturally autonomous units or as ‘States within a State’, enabled to maintain a large degree of independence as a result of the isolated geographical locations of their villages.

Particularly during the last two decennia the Bush Negroes have become increasingly incorporated into the Surinamese society at large. It became acutely evident in the 1960s that they were no longer
independent tribal entities when the construction of the Brokopondo lake in the Suriname river forced some thousands of Saramaka and Djuka to leave their original villages and resettle in the so-called transmigration villages north of the lake. The forced migration was a dramatic event in the lives of these people who lost much of their highly valued autonomy and independency. As a consequence of activities that were partly related to the dam construction and to a geological survey project of the interior of Suriname, Bush Negroes of all tribes started to work for government services. As a result of increased labour opportunities there has been a considerable flow of Bush Negro migrants to the coast.

Until recently the Surinamese government did not attempt to reduce the stream of migrants from the interior to the coastal area. It must be noted that in the last few decades the government has created a restricted number of facilities with the objective of improving living conditions in the tribal villages. Several villages were supplied with electricity, new schools were constructed, bridges were built over creeks, rice mills were introduced, etc. Near the most densely populated areas, medical clinics and air strips were constructed, which in turn facilitated communication between tribal villages and the coast. In addition, the number of village officials who were paid small salaries, was significantly increased[11]. However, despite the collapse of the traditional economic occupations such as balata gathering and logging, the government has not attempted to provide new labour opportunities within the tribal areas. Consequently, the flow of Bush Negro migrants continued.

In 1974 the Ministry of District Affairs and Decentralisation (at present the Ministry of the Interior and the Districts) presented an initial draft of a project proposal for the development of the interior which seemed to deviate from the earlier politics. The plan was motivated by the urbanization problem (see p. 416). According to the authors, the flow of Bush Negroes to Paramaribo, was depicted as presenting a threat to the coastal society. The Bush Negroes were said to live in a vacuum of authority, and did not conform to the laws of the country. Worse still, they were held responsible for the increase of crime in town (Ontwikkelingsplan 1974: 1). The planners assumed that
migration was caused primarily by the facilities which the city had to offer in contrast to the interior (labour opportunities, prospects for the future, education, pleasures, shops, drinking water, electricity and medical care). Thus the incentive to migrate would be reduced when life in the villages would become more attractive, after the introduction of these facilities. The proposal was to reduce the costs of supplying the these facilities in numerous small villages by concentrating the population in so-called development centres with populations of about 2000 people. In the planned six development centres, permanent agriculture would replace the system of shifting cultivation, necessitating the clearing of large fields of at least 1000 hectares.

In preparing this project the Ministry organized a number of meetings to provide the local population with more information and to become acquainted with the opinions of the villagers. In the following case we will give an account of the meeting which was held in 1974 in the village of Posugunu.

Shortly before the meeting was held, the gaaman of the Matawai had submitted the plans to the village headmen. He explained that all the people of the upriver region would have to move to a town that would be built near the present village of Posugunu. The village headmen met with little enthusiasm from the village councils. The general opinion of the people in the upriver area was well illustrated by Waido, one of the people with whom we discussed the project. ‘There are of course people who want the town but the majority of us do not. Where would I find a place to cultivate my garden when we will be with so many’? He also did not believe that people from various villages would live peacefully together. He pointed out that at the village council of Boslanti, they had decided that they would prefer to ask the minister for a road to their villages, so that men could find work. But if they had to move, Waido argued, he would prefer to go to a place closer to the city. ‘Who would buy your fishing here? Formerly we all lived together in the village of Toido, later we came down to settle in different villages along the
Saramacca river. Now, it is not possible to reunite again, for who knows the reason for the dispersal. Only the ancestors know. If we would all gather in one village, this would provoke trouble’.

The next day we accompanied Waido to the large meeting with the bakaa. Shortly before the meeting began, the visitors assembled in the house of the gaaman to drink coffee. The minister explained that this would be his last visit before he returned with the minister president to settle the matter. He said that he felt inspired to initiate this development project for the Bush Negroes and compared himself with the Djuka prophet Akalali who had acquired a large amount of influence among the Bush Negroes (see p. 201). In passing he mentioned the quantity of rum they had brought and informed them he would propose to make the rum from French Guiana, that was being smuggled in large quantities to Suriname, free from import duties. The visitors took their places under the raised house of the gaaman and from all directions people began to assemble. Some men carried bags of rice and bottles of beer and rum, which they placed on the floor uncovered as a visible gift from the guests. At last, the gaaman directed himself to one of his basia. ‘When I came back from town, I told you something. I informed you that the minister would come to give more details, therefore listen carefully!’ The minister gave a long speech spiced with many odo (Bush Negro proverbs).

He introduced the other members of the delegation and stressed the multi-ethnic character of his companions. ‘The government has never paid much attention to the Bush Negroes’, he went on, ‘they have always concentrated on the town while the Bush Negro villages remained unchanged’. The government wanted to improve the situation in the interior and to provide increased labour opportunities. It was, however, impossible to construct waterworks for a village with 40 inhabitants or electricity for a village with 80 people or a secondary school for a village with 100 people, but if the villages would unite, all these facilities could be provided. The minister indicated on
a map of the project the places where the facilities were planned and told how much money would be invested in the project. Did they not hear about Cruyff, who had received 8 million guilders playing football? Well, they would construct a large football field. They would install refrigerators as large as the room where they were sitting. He talked of the school, the city-like straight streets, the opening of new land, the sale of agricultural products and the transport of cash crops by airplanes. In Paramaribo they would train young Matawai men to become policemen and work in the new town. It was a long story and the Matawai were greatly impressed. The minister added that they had already presented the project in Langatabiki and Diitabiki where they had been met with enthusiasm. There had been more difficulties in Asindo opo, but finally the Saramaka had also agreed to the proposal. He was now interested in hearing the opinion of the Matawai because, as he said ‘Lanti (the people) is my boss’. In the course of the speech, he repeatedly referred to himself as pikin nenge (‘little boy’), suggesting that his experience and knowledge were limited. The Matawai went aside (nango a sé), a traditional council technique to reconsider certain matters in smaller groups, and the gaaman reminded them that upon his return from the coast, he had insisted that they give their opinion. The people of the other rivers, east, west and south had given their reaction and now it was their turn. He reiterated that never a beginning was made with the construction of the road they had been promised. A road was the first thing they desired. Afterwards they could take samples of soil to look for a place that would be most suitable for agricultural purposes. The minister’s response was expressed with disappointment: ‘What lanti says, I have to accept, but you must not later regret your decision by saying that I gave more benefits to the Djuka when we start in their area’. One of the village headmen stood up to elaborate on the importance of a road for the Matawai. It would enable them to sell food products and would facilitate the supply of city
goods. When the guesthouse had been built in Posugunu some years earlier, some 20 boats sunk with construction materials near the falls. This meant a loss for the government. The *gaaman* advised the Matawai to consider their response well and not to blame him afterwards. It remained noisy for awhile. The delegation busily calculated the length and cost of a road to the Matawai territory. After a lengthy consultation the minister informed them that such a road would be very expensive, surpassing the costs of his proposal. He would have to talk with prime minister Arron. He said that he had already been warned in Paramaribo that he would not find what he searched for among the Matawai. ‘But it is alright, I take it as it is’.

Some of the people who had been clapping their hands after each phrase of the minister, clapped again. The female *basia* looked disapprovingly at each other and whispered: ‘You do not clap your hands for such words’.

At that moment a member of the parliament who until then had restricted himself to clarifying, stood up and began presenting new arguments to try to break the impasse. Emphasizing his words with pronounced gesticulations, he pointed out that not only would construction of the road cost more than the new town, but when the road was ready, it was likely that the ministers of a new government would oppose the project.

At this point a new ‘aside’ was proposed. Some groups voiced the opinion that they should maintain their position. But there were also people who were about to give in. Back in the council, the district commissioner proposed to leave the matter aside for a while and to talk about the desires and grievances of the Matawai. The *gaaman*, however, insisted that the matter had to be discussed to reveal the results of the consultations during the ‘aside’. One of the men stood up and addressing himself to the minister said that they had not understood the plan and that they would leave the decision to the minister to do what was good for them. He continued: ‘*U ke di foto*’ (we do want to have the town). The *gaaman* was clearly surprised by the change of opinion and repeated: ‘I did not tell you
what you had to decide, because I did not want to be blamed later’. One of the headcaptains added that they had always said that they would oppose the town, and that what had happened now was a great shame to the *gaaman*. Because of this division of opinion among the Matawai, the impasse remained. The Matawai of the upriver region began to journey home.

In the boat the discussion continued. Impressed by the council meeting, some of the women in the boat we travelled in began to fantasize about life in such a town. ‘The thing that I will buy’, Efi said, ‘is a *dulopilo* (mattres) and thereafter a gas stove’. ‘The men will find work’, Abonti added, ‘and we will eat rice only once a day. At supper we will eat bread and drink tea. The Ministry of Social Affairs will have an office there, like in Brownsweg (a transmigration village).

The straight streets of Brownsweg, if you consider it well, are beautiful’. A woman who was sitting at the rear of the boat was less happy with the idea, ‘*pena, soso pena*’ (poverty, only poverty), she complained. ‘When will they begin’, Abonti asked, ‘Maybe this year’? ‘Who gave Lisiat the right to speak’, the woman in the back of the boat asked. ‘He spoke for himself’, they replied. Days after the meeting, the plans of the government and the council in Posugunu remained the topic of lively discussions. The opinions put forward in these discussions among upriver villagers were quite similar and were reflected in detailed discussions we had with Waido. He argued that the minister had tried to coerce them and that the position of the Matawai was very weak in such matters. He had the idea that if they would reject the proposal, they would lose the good will of the government. According to Waido, Lisiat's independent initiative had been most improper. If they had changed their minds they should have first talked it over with the *gaaman*. The *gaaman* having heard only objections of the part of the Matawai had been astonished. Waido forecasted that the ‘town’ would never be built. ‘They are playing a policiical game with us. It will be still three and a half years before the next elections are held. They will not be ready with the
project in the Djuka area. The Djuka will have to vote for them to insure that the work will be finished. We should have asked them for the rights to our land. The Para Negroes have ownership of their land, but since the days of the plantations the Bush Negroes have never acquired the rights to their land. While we acquired the right to log, we still had to pay tax for each tree we felled. If they want us to leave for some reason, we simply have no rights’. Asking himself why they had proposed this plan at this moment, he suggested: ‘They know that we have always worked to produce food and since they have a shortage of rice in Paramaribo, we have to help them. The horticultural products that we cultivate here, are badly needed’. Later on he tried to imagine what choices they would have if the project would, in fact, be executed. ‘I would prefer to plant peanuts and bananas because they are more profitable than cassave. Most people will insist on cultivate gardens in the upstream area near the former villages. I would plant my ginger garden upstream, because I am afraid that otherwise they would steal from it. I am afraid that it will come to fighting and they will send one plane after another to put us in jail’. The objections of Waido against the project, clearly demonstrating an attitude of distrust, were shared by many Matawai in the upriver area. Moreover, the people of the far most upriver villages feared that they would be dominated by the people of Posugunu in a concentrated settlement. Although some people had changed their opinion after the meeting with the minister, partly because the plans would provide them with work for a number of years, the majority of the people and especially the elders held firm in their opposition. One of the elders even promoted a return to the Tukumutu, where the runaways were originally kept hidden from the expeditions that were sent to search for them.

From this account it is clear that the relationship between the Bush Negro society and the government is not explicitly defined. The relative
autonomy that was guaranteed in the peace treaties has crumbled in the course of time, as can been seen, for instance, from the oath the *gaaman* must sign upon accession to office. It is also evident that the government is well aware that little can be done without the agreement and support of the local population. A main problem in the intensification of the relation between tribal and coastal society is that the position of the tribal people remains undefined and unclear. We suggest that in the near future the competence of tribal and village councils has to be formalized in order to assure that the tribal population's fundamental rights are recognized.

We now return to the content of the development plan for the interior. The basic ideas of this plan were presented in a preliminary report in 1974 and elaborated in a few later versions. The major aim of the project was to concentrate the Bush Negro population in a restricted number of development centres, which would counter the urbanization trend by offering facilities and work opportunities. Simultaneously a solution would be provided for the problem of crime and unemployment in the coastal area; a problem that involved the Bush Negro migrants in particular. The introduction of a permanent form of agriculture - meant to replace what, was considered according to the planners, the inefficient system of shifting cultivation - would provide labour opportunities and thus make it possible to concentrate a larger population in a given area. The changes, that would be initiated by the plan, are closely interrelated. We summarize the most important developments below:

a) dispersed villages → concentration of the population

b) shifting cultivation → permanent agriculture

c) subsistence economy and temporary wage labour → production for the market

d) migration to the coast → return of migrants to the interior

e) autonomy of the tribal population → participation in the nation state Suriname

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In addition to permanent agriculture, attempts would be made to introduce cattle breeding, while a small-scale agricultural industry would be developed. Basic to all these proposed developments are the transformation of shifting cultivation into permanent agriculture and the introduction of cash crops and products which could be used as cattle fodder. Both cattle breeding and the introduction of industry are dependent on agricultural production. It seems that the existing transmigration villages served as a model for the proposed population centre, in which each matri-segment or lineage would have its own street (see map, in Diepraam and van Westerloo 1974: 159). All the changes are aimed at an enlargement of scale which would, in an essential manner, transform these societies. One of the major goals was to break through the socio-economic isolation and to integrate the Bush Negroes into the Surinamese society.

The merit of the plan lies in the fact that it recognizes some of the problems of the tribal communities in Suriname. Indeed, if the process of migration continues at the same rate, the Matawai area will be completely depopulated within a period of 20 to 25 years. The consequences of such a development for the Bush Negroes and for Suriname are numerous. The choices that have to be made are dependent on the value attached to the Bush Negro culture as well as the degree to which the proposed alternatives function sufficiently well. It is apt to point here to the fact that while the proposal asserts that it is not intended to interfere with the authority of the gaaman and the cultural and religious life of the Bush Negroes, this is strikingly contradicted by the implicit purpose of the plan.

The major shortcoming of the plan is that it sacrifices a certain amount of necessary flexibility in favour of the ruling idea of concentration. As a result of the large number of uncertain factors flexibility is essential. Apart from the fact that cultural factors are consciously neglected, there are still other weaknesses in the plan.

No attention is paid to the problematic nature of the agricultural potential of the rainforests in South America. The prominent archeologist, Meggers, is of the opinion that the introduction of agriculture on a large scale in these areas will have disastrous consequences for the eco-system (Meggers 1971). These objections are shared by the
anthropologist Van der Elst, who in a critique of the development plan emphasizes, among other points the following:

The plan invites ecological disaster. The homeland of the tribes is a climax rain forest. This means that flora and fauna are widely but thinly distributed, and that all life depends upon an exceedingly thin layer of fertile soil. This is among the most vulnerable of ecosystems, and as the experience of the Amazonian farmers has shown, efficient modern agriculture is not possible without total dependence upon expensive artificial fertilizers. One simply cannot alter the natural balances very much without destroying the habitat.

The effects of heavy rainfall and other erosive agents are well known to conspire against man's efforts along such lines. Yet, incredibly, not only does the plan call for massive agricultural efforts, it actually proposes the introduction of sheep and goats, animals whose eating habits have turned far less sensitive ecozones than this into desert (1977: 14).

The plan's optimism concerning cattle breeding is also ill-founded. Masefield points out that tropical forest areas are far from favourable for cattle breeding and that cattle tend to remain small in size. Moreover, the chance that the cattle would be affected by disease and parasites is greater than in other areas (1974: 23). Furthermore, Bush Negroes have little experience in cattle breeding and the idea of raising pigs fills them with horror. Besides agriculture and cattle breeding a third economic sector is introduced, namely a small-scale agricultural industry. Although it is not clear what is meant by the term industry, it is likely that the costs of management and the upkeep of the technical installations in the interior will be quite high. Another factor that is neglected is the demographic composition of the present tribal population, the lack of men between the age of 20 and 40 in the tribal area is remarkable (see p. 433). Yet, if the ambitious plans have to be realized it is precisely this category of younger men that will be needed. As the plan has been insufficiently tested in terms of agricultural, ecological and economic criteria, the success of the project remains largely dependent on random factors. The outcome of a dead
failure is inherent in the plan and it is likely that the only effect will be an acceleration of the exodus to the city. Our final point of objection to the plan concerns the primary goal of enlargement of scale. As Köbben has pointed out, new artificial political structures would have to be created and it is inevitable that this would give rise to serious conflicts with the consequence that people will tend to draw back from the villages to the garden camps, resulting in permanent settlement in these ‘more primitive’ dwellings (Köbben 1979: 176).

Our advice follows from the objections we have mentioned. We suggest that agricultural experiments in the neighbourhood of the existing villages be initiated. The recent exploratory work researching the possibilities of improving the system of shifting cultivation or introducing agro-forestry, can be a guide in this direction (see for instance Douglas 1973, Greenland 1975 and Grandstaff 1978). A number of experimental projects along these lines could be initiated under the shared responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture (LVV) and the Ministry of the Interior and Districts with a large degree of local participation.

As a result of increasing participation in the total Surinamese society, the tribal populations have developed an awareness that they have certain rights. In discussions of the plans of the Surinamese government, Bush Negroes repeatedly expressed their desire to acquire the rights of ownership to their land. Although the peace treaties contain a statement about the right to live in the area above the falls (see, de Groot 1977: 11), the legal status of these treaties remains uncertain (see, Dew 1979: 194).

Shortly before the turn of the century a man called H. Beth sent a request to the Queen of the Netherlands to give land to a number of poor Creoles for agricultural purposes. He also pleaded to recognize the rights of the Bush Negroes to their land. The governor invited a number of people who had signed the request to explain the matter further. One of these people explained that the intention was to bring civilization to the Bush Negroes and Indians. The governor replied that no Bush Negro or Indian had ever come to the government to ask for land and that one must not trust it upon them. According to him they were fully entitled to cultivate gardens where, and as long as, they wanted.
He added that it would be wrong to bring them to civilization, but that civilization had to be brought in the course of time to them\(^2\).

The issue of land rights for the people of the interior has become actual through the development project West Suriname, when the legal positions of the Amerindian populations of Washabo and Apura turned out to be very weak. As a result of this project, a committee was established with the aim of serving the interests of the Bush Negroes and Indians concerning land rights\(^3\).

Notwithstanding the attempts of the Surinamese government to develop the interior, it seems likely that the Bush Negroes will lose their cultural autonomy (see Lenoir 1975 for a case study of this process among the Paramaka). However, this does not imply that the process of incorporation will proceed without resistance from the Bush Negroes. We will briefly consider some of the relations with coastal institutions that are beginning to have an impact on Matawai society. A civil servant and a policeman, settled in the village of Kwakugoon, situated at the border of the Matawai territory, occasionally visit the Matawai villages. In conflicts, however, it is difficult to obtain the cooperation of the local population, who are strongly resistant to the intervention of the police in matters that are considered to be internal affairs. Formerly, communication with the coastal area was in the hands of the medical mission, who warned the government in cases of conflict. Since 1974 the gaaman has, at his disposal, a radio transmitter, to communicate directly with the Ministry of the Interior.

There are several other indications that the relative isolation will be broken down. Nowadays, decisions that involve the tribal societies are often made in the coastal area. In the chapter on migration we have shown that social allowances to older people and single women, and the salaries paid to the local functionaries, contribute to a large part of the total monetary income in the village. In the future this contribution will become even larger with the addition of child allowances. Thus dependency on institutions outside the tribal area will further increase and the significance of traditional kinship obligations will concomitantly tend to become weaker. It is important to note that as a result of the migration of a majority of the younger
lineage members, the position of many older people has become increasingly difficult, especially in the more isolated villages.

The Matawai have also become dependent on the medical services which have been introduced in the tribal area. The Medical Mission established two clinics in the 1960s; the clinic opposite of Posugunu is permanently occupied by a nurse, while the Njukonde clinic is visited once in a fortnight by a nurse or doctor. Although traditional cures remain important, the large number of visits made to the clinic indicate the significance of western medicine for the Matawai. In 1973 almost 5000 visits were registered at the clinic of Posugunu, with a total population of about 800 people upriver.

These days, the Matawai assert their rights in the field of education. Since people are increasingly dependent on a monetary income in the coastal area, the lack of adequate education has become more evident. During a visit of the governor to the Matawai area in 1974, he was confronted with the request of improved education. The Matawai argued that although now three new schools were built in the tribal area, during a large part of the year no lessons were held because the teachers did not want to stay upriver. They emphasized the necessity of standardizing the school system in the interior (the so-called ‘Bosland’ education) in accordance with the school system in town (primary education GLO). In the past it was the school teachers who complained about Matawai parents who were inclined to keep their children away from school during the peaks in the horticultural cycle. Now it is the parents who complain about teachers when they do not return to the school after the holidays, or if they return months after the school should have been reopened. During the last few years, some of the best pupils are selected by the teacher for secondary education in town, after finishing the village school.

Some months after the military coup of February 25, 1980 the gaaman were invited to meet the newly established government. At the meeting with the prime minister, he argued that previously the interior and the town were always considered as two separate entities, but that the new government would consider Suriname as one nation. Also the minister of the Interior and the Districts explained that it was the aim of the
new government to involve the interior in the development process, not only by bringing electricity and water but also by the improvement of economic life by the stimulation of agricultural production. The minister asked the village headmen and *basía* to remain on their posts in the villages (De Ware Tijd May 24, 1980: 1, 12).

**Eindnoten:**

(1.) In 1974 the number of functionaries in the Matawai area was, 1 *gaaman*, 18 village headmen, 36 male *basía* and 36 female *basía*.
(2.) see LA GR 2128: March 16, 1898; LA GR 3837: March 20, 1898.
(3.) *The declaration of Santigrón*

Today, 1st July, the day of Emancipation, have we representatives of the Committee for Landrights Washabo-Apura, the Regional Committee Lower-Maroni, the Organisation ‘Tangiba’ from Santigrón, come together in Santigrón to discuss the problems in relation to the emancipation of the Surinamese living in the interior, to whom we belong and whose mouthpiece we form.

We have considered:
+ that the claims in the interior on their living grounds are not recognized by the Government;
+ that the lands upon which our ancestors have fought and which we inherited from them, are sacred to us and belong to us by right;
+ that we can only develop ourselves IN OUR WAY, when these claims are recognized;
+ that we have several times appealed to the Government to arrange for recognition of our rights;
+ that on April 20, 1977, an Advisory Commission on land claims in the interior was established;
+ that this commission has never taken into account our rightful wishes and is about to submit an advice which is not based on the legal usage which is valid in our communities.

On the ground of these considerations, we have decided:
+ that we will resist this advice;
+ that we will appeal to organisations and individuals in our country and in the world for solidarity in our struggle.

And we demand from the Government of the Republic of Surinam:
1. A legal arrangement which is in accordance with the legal usages in our communities;
2. A ban on all activities which do not take into consideration the fundamental recognition of our rights;
3. Support for all development activities which we ourselves want to undertake in our communities.
18 Conclusion

In this part we have elaborated on some of the recent developments in Matawai tribal and urban societies. We have indicated the interdependence of the two segments and pointed to the fact that both are becoming increasingly involved in the wider Surinamese society.

As has been frequently observed migration may have positive effects on the area of origin. This is often the case when migration is circular or seasonal, when close contacts are maintained and monetary remittances are sent to relatives in the village. Moreover, returning migrants may develop new initiatives or may use the money they have earned to invest in small-scale enterprises in the village. The positive function migration may have, has been emphasized in studies of Watson (1958) and van Velsen (1960).

However, more often migration has less positive effects for the area of origin. Migration and in particular labour migration tends to be selective in the sense that the most capable persons are among the migrants (but see for a critical review on selective migration, Hofstee 1952). It may result in a decline of the local food production (see Nolan 1974). In this context we may also refer to the extensive neo-Marxist literature in which the decline of the domestic mode of production and the proletarization of the migrant workers are stressed (Amin 1973; Amselle 1976).

In the case of the Matawai, the effect of migration on the home community is closely related to the phase of the migratory process. The rate of migration and the consequences for the area of origin, varies in the upriver and downriver areas. In the upriver area where
migration started only recently, most of the men are engaged in seasonal work in the coastal area and return after a period of three to four months in boats laden with city goods. A number of young men now live more or less permanently on the coast. These migrants, who often maintain close relations with their relatives in the villages, have created new labour opportunities by temporary employing relatives in house building and boat making. Several of the older men no longer participate each year in wage labour on the coast and remain in the village during the labour season. In the middle- and downriver villages where migration has a longer tradition, the situation is quite different. Most men are away and the few older men who remain in the village belong almost all to the category of village functionaries.

To analyse the consequences of migration in the different areas, it is apt to consider migration as a process in which successive decisions are made by the individual migrant. Following the vocabulary of the Cultural Ecologists we may call this process adaptive strategy (Bennett 1976; Whitten and Whitten 1972; Graves and Graves 1974). In the course of the decision making process the migrant will exchange options in the tribal area for new ones in the coastal area. The loss of options in the village will be particularly great when his career coincides with a flow of people from his home village to the coast. Many of the men, for example, who work in the coastal area plan to return when they reach superannuation age. However, the chance that an individual will return diminishes if most of his relatives have joined him in the city and his home village is largely deserted. There is a certain point in the process of adaptation to town life (that may be indicated by the number of people who work in specific city jobs such as taxi-driver or shopkeeper), when the migration process becomes irreversible and return migration becomes increasingly unlikely.

The significant point as regards policy making for the interior is that conditions of the migrant community are as relevant as the situation in the tribal villages. Developments in both areas are inseparable. Therefore, policies should aim at affecting the migrant community as well as the tribal villages.
Demographic Terms

*Age Specific Fertility Rate:* annual births per 1,000 women in age-group divided by the midyear population of women.

*Birth interval:* time period between two successive live births of one mother.

*Child Mortality Rate:* number of deaths to children under five years of age in a given period divided by the number of children born in the same period; this rate is given per 1,000.

*Cohort:* A sum of persons who experience a certain event within the same period of time (marriage cohort, birth cohort).

*Crude Birth Rate:* the number of births in a given year divided by the total population in the middle of the given year; this rate is given per 1,000.

*Fecundity:* the capacity to reproduce.

*Fertility:* the actual reproductive performance.

*Life expectancy at age x:* mean number of years to be lived beginning at the xth birthday.

*Postpartum amenorrhoea:* absence of menstruation after childbirth.

*Reproductive span:* the time between first menses (menarche) and the cessation of menstruation (menopause) in women.

*Total Fertility Rate:* the sum total of age specific fertility. This rate represents the number of children that would be born per 1,000 females experiencing no mortality.
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<td>Wetering, Wilhelmina van</td>
<td><em>Hekserij bij de Djuka: een sociologische benadering.</em> Academisch proefschrift, Amsterdam</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westermark, E.</td>
<td><em>The History of Human Marriage.</em> New York: Macmillan.</td>
<td>1922</td>
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Samenvatting

Deze studie is gebaseerd op antropologisch onderzoek bij de Matawai, een Bosneger groep in Suriname. Het veldwerk werd gedurende de periode 1973 en 1974 verricht in een cluster van de vier meest zuidelijke dorpen aan de Saramacca rivier. De Matawai met zijn bevolking van ongeveer 1700 behoort tot de kleinere Bosneger stammen, die zich in het binnenland hebben gevestigd aan de bovenloop van de rivieren. Ongeveer tegelijkertijd met de Saramaka die thans aan de Suriname rivier gevestigd zijn, vluchten de voorouders van de Matawai van de plantages. De beschikbare gegevens over de Matawai zijn tot nog toe vrij beperkt. Bij ons onderzoek hebben wij een poging gedaan om de intensieve studie van een dorpssamenleving te combineren met het verzamelen van uitgebreide kwantitatieve gegevens betreffende aspecten van sociale organisatie en demografie. Het doel hiervan was inzicht te krijgen in regionale verschillen die zich binnen deze betrekkelijk kleine stam voordoen. In deze samenleving hebben zich in de loop van de tijd zulke belangrijke veranderings processen voorgedaan in demografisch en religieus opzicht, dat het ons zinvol leek om deze als voornaamste themas van onze studie te beschouwen.

Tijdens het veldwerk bleek ons al spoedig dat Matawai begrippen en categorieën een belangrijk uitgangspunt kunnen bieden voor een analyse. Dit geldt niet alleen voor bepaalde religieuze begrippen waarachter vaak uitgebreide theorieën over verbanden in de sociale structuur schuilgaan, maar ook voor matrilineale verwantschapsgroepen die in deze samenleving samen kunnen vallen met locale groepen. Op grond van uitgebreide genealogische gegevens die werden verzameld voor de verwantschaps
groepen in het Matawai gebied, die enkele duizenden mensen omvatte, was het mogelijk gedetailleerde vestigingsgeschiedenissen samen te stellen. De bevolkingslijsten, huwelijksgeschiedenissen, en census gegevens bij zowel mannen als vrouwen, migranten als niet-migranten, waren van onschatbare waarde voor onze demografische analyses en migratie studie. De voordelen die deze methode heeft voor toepassing in een betrekkelijk kleine samenleving, waar men als onderzoeker zelf alle gegevens verzamelt en een sluitend systeem bereikt door de vele interne controles (zoals aanvullende gegevens uit kerkregisters), weegt dan ook op tegen het nadeel als het geduld en de lange tijd die voor dit soort onderzoek nodig is.

In deze studie worden een aantal aspecten van sociale organisatie behandeld. Met name wordt aandacht besteed aan huwelijk en echtscheiding, matrilineale verwantschap, huishoudens en het systeem van pleegouderschap. Aangetoond wordt dat mede door de grote verschillen in migratie traditie variatie in vrijwel alle aspecten van sociale organisatie is waar te nemen. Een van de opvallende conclusies is dat matrilinealiteit een overheersende rol blijft spelen met name in het bovenstrooms gebied. Dit ondanks een aantal ontwikkelingen die een bedreiging voor het systeem vormen, zoals de invloed van de kerk die verschillende aspecten van deze organisatie heeft trachten te bestrijden en de toenemende economische differentiatie als gevolg van het meer individualiserende karakter van het huidige systeem van permanente en tijdelijke loonarbeid. In de vestigingspatronen van echtparen hebben zich een aantal opmerkelijke verschuivingen voorgedaan. Ongeveer 50 jaar geleden, toen polygyne huwelijken nog gesloten werden, bleken echtparen meer af te wisselen tussen de dorpen van hun matrilineages, waar zij of tesamen of apart hun tijd doorbrachten; thans echter wordt de meeste van de gezamenlijke tijd doorgebracht in het dorp van de vrouw. Wat dit betreft hebben de Matawai enerzijds en Djuka en Saramaka anderszijds een tegenovergestelde ontwikkeling doorgemaakt. De positie van de lineage van de vrouw is er in feite in het bovenstrooms gebied sterker op geworden, mede dankzij het feit dat onder de druk van het Christendom polygynie werd afgeschaft en de huwelijks stabiliteit toenam. Thans is de lineage is staat om de eis te stellen dat de vrouw bij een huwelijk met een migrant in haar eigen dorp gevestigd blijft. Maar ook
hierin komt een kentering naarmate migranten langer in de stad verblijven en meer permanent werk vinden, zoals onze gegevens uit het benedenstrooms gebied laten zien.

Het belang van matrilineale verwantschap blijkt onder andere ook uit het feit dat de meeste kinderen die door anderen dan de moeder worden opgevoed (40% van alle kinderen), in hun eigen dorp worden uitbesteed en dat de weinigen die in andere dorpen zijn opgevoed terugkeren naar het dorp van hun lineage bij het bereiken van de volwassenheid. Kinderen worden om verschillende redenen door anderen opgevoed, zowel de huwelijksstatus van de moeder, de pariteit van het kind, de positie van degene aan wie het kind wordt gegeven, alsmede de verwantschapsrelatie tussen moeder en pleegmoeder spelen daarbij een rol. Tracering van de gevallen naar het tijdstip waarop de transactie plaats vond geeft ons toch wel enkele aanwijzingen. Het blijkt dat voor het merendeel van de kinderen van gescheiden ouders die door anderen worden opgevoed, de transactie heeft plaats gevonden toen de ouders nog samenleefden. Het zijn vooral kinderloze vrouwen (zij die geen kinderen hebben gekregen, of wier kinderen volwassen zijn), die de verantwoordelijkheid over kinderen van anderen krijgen. Angetoond wordt dat door dit systeem het aantal jaren waarin een vrouw kinderen verzorgt aanzienlijk wordt verlengd, zonder dat dit de tijdperiode voor de moeder zelf vermindert.

De Afro-Amerikaanse religies in Suriname zoals die door de Creolen en de verschillende Bosnegergroepen worden beleden vertonen sterke overeenkomsten. De mate waarin zij door het Christendom zijn beïnvloed is betrekkelijk variabel. De Matawai zijn het sterkst door het Christendom beïnvloed. Zij kwamen met deze religie in contact via de Matawai profeet Johannes King die in zijn visioenen werd aangespoord tot het Christendom over te gaan, en aansluiting zocht bij de Evangelische Broedergemeente. King (1830-1898) heeft grote invloed gehad op de kerstening van de Matawai en trachtte tevens andere stammen voor deze religie te winnen. Mede door zijn optreden en dat van zijn volgelingen waren aan het begin van deze eeuw bijna alle Matawai gedoopt en ontwikkelden de kerkgenootschappen die zich in hun dorpen vestigden zich tot bloeiende gemeenten. De ontwikkeling van het Christendom geschiedde in een aantal fasen waarbij het brandpunt zich in de loop van de tijd verplaatste van het benedenstroomse naar het bovenstroomse gebied. De
traditionele Afro-Amerikaanse religie heeft zich ondanks alle tegenstand van de zending opmerkelijk goed weten te handhaven. Het resultaat is dat beide religies betrekkelijk onafhankelijk van elkaar functioneren. Toch is er een spanningveld en bestaan er conflicten tussen de beide religies. In de loop van de tijd zijn er een aantal mechanismen ontwikkeld die het naast elkaar bestaan van twee religieuze systemen hebben mogelijk gemaakt. Deze zijn er veelal op gericht openlijke conflicten te vermijden.

Een opvallende uitkomst van de analyse van reproductieve geschiedenissen van vrouwen die de leeftijd van 45 zijn gepasseerd, is dat 50% van alle vrouwen die de leeftijd van 29 hebben bereikt niet meer aan de reproductie deelnemen. Dit hoge percentage is des te opmerkelijker omdat in deze samenleving anti-conceptionele middelen niet worden toegepast. Zowel uit gegevens van cohorten als uit recente geboorten blijkt dat het geboorteniveau van de Matawai betrekkelijk laag ligt, met waarden van de cumulatieve vruchtbaarheid die schommelen rond de 4 geboorten per vrouw aan het einde van de reproductieve periode. Ondanks het lage geboorte niveau is er een duidelijke groei van de bevolking te constateren. In het afgelopen decennium kan deze groei voor een groot deel worden toegeschreven aan de daling van kindersterfte. Een tweede factor die genoemd moet worden is de betrekkelijke hoge levensverwachting na het bereiken van het vijfde levensjaar. Uit genealogische gegevens kan met enige zekerheid worden afgeleid dat geboortecijfers rond de eeuwwisseling een hoger niveau bereikten dan dat van de huidige bevolking. De daling van de vruchtbaarheid kan voor een deel worden toegeschreven aan de invloed van venerische factoren.

Het patroon van seizoens variatie in geboorten laat een verband zien tussen mannelijke afwezigheid ten gevolge van seizoensmigratie en het geringe aantal concepties tijdens die periode. Echter de verwachting dat na de terugkomst van de mannen een duidelijke stijging van het aantal concepties zal plaatsvinden, is niet in overeenstemming met onze waarnemingen. Het conceptie niveau blijft laag voor een periode van enkele maanden volgend op de terugkeer van mannen naar de dorpen. Vergelijking van het seizoenspatroon van vrouwen die een betrekkelijk hoge vruchtbaarheid vertonen en dat van vrouwen met een lagere vruchtbaarheid, vertoont een opmerkelijk verschil juist in de periode van drie
maanden na terugkomst van de mannen. Omdat het arbeidspatroon voor het gebied en de periode waarop deze gegevens betrekking hebben vrij uniform was, moet de oorzaak gezocht worden in biologische factoren. De meest evidente biologische factor die varieert naar seizoen is voeding. De voorziening van vooral eiwitrijk voedsel gedurende de afwezigheid van mannen is gedaald tot een minimum. Een periode van herstel van enkele maanden zou een verklaring kunnen zijn voor het feit dat mannen aanzienlijk meer kinderen verwekken voordat ze naar de kust vertrekken dan in de periode na hun terugkeer. De verklaring sluit aan bij recent onderzoek naar de rol van voeding in fertilité.

Een recente ontwikkeling in de Matawai samenleving is migratie die een ware exodus naar de kust heeft veroorzaakt. Economische factoren hebben er in belangrijke mate toe bijgedragen dat mannen naar het kustgebied gingen. Regeringsdiensten ten behoeve van werkzaamheden in het binnenland trokken veel Bosnegers aan. Bovendien was er een sterke teruggang in de houtkap en balata verzameling in het tribale gebied. De snelheid van de migratie wordt gereflecteerd in de bevolkingspyramiden van de migranten en van de tribale bevolking. De invloed van de ongelijke leeftijds- en sexe verdeling is vooral duidelijk op het huwelijksysteem. In toenemende mate worden partners van andere Bosneger groepen betrokken; huwelijken met leden van groeperingen die vanouds de kust bevlochten zijn beperkt van betekenis gebleven. Dit wijst erop dat er eerder een neiging bestaat tot de vorming van een ethische groep die het Bosneger-ziijn benadrukt dan van een incorporatie in de Creoolse of Surinaamse samenleving. De Matawai identiteit wordt nog sterk benadrukt hetgeen blijkt uit de grote betrokkenheid van Matawai afkomstig van alle dorpen bij ceremoniële gelegenheden binnen de migranten gemeenschap.

Migratie heeft een aanzet gegeven tot processen van incorporatie van de tribale samenleving in de Surinaamse samenleving. De intensivering van contacten geldt niet alleen voor de migranten gemeenschap, maar ook voor de Matawai die hun voornaamste residentie in het tribale gebied hebben behouden. Dit laatste punt kwam onder meer tot uiting bij de plannen van de vorige Surinaamse regering ontwikkelingskernen in het binnenland te vestigen die ten doel zouden hebben de Bosnegers op enkele locaties te concentreren en werkgelegenheid in de landbouw te scheppen.

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Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
Curriculum vitae


Curriculum vitae

Stellingen van Chris de Beet bij het proefschrift *People in Between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*.

1. Hsu's onderscheid tussen positief en neutraal ethnocentrisme is van nut voor de evaluatie van zowel het buitenlands beleid met betrekking tot ontwikkelingslanden als dat ten aanzien van groeperingen met een andere culturele achtergrond.

   Hsu, Francis L.K.  
   1979 The Cultural Problem of the Cultural Anthropologist.  

2. Het opstellen van stertetafels van archeologische populaties (zie Swedlund and Armelagos 1976: 42-55) wordt belemmerd door de ondervertegenwoordiging van jonge kinderen, veroorzaakt onder meer door afwijkende begrafenisgewoonten en door de grotere vergankelijkheid van skeletresten van zuigelingen.

   Swedlund, Alan C. and George J. Armelagos  


   Lee-Wrangler, J.P.  
   Keesing, Roger M.  

4. De discrepantie tussen normen en feitelijk gedrag wordt in vergelijkend onderzoek te weinig gezien als een grootheid die covarieert met het patroon van culturele waarden.
5. Daar het niet uitgesloten is dat verkiezingsuitslagen worden beïnvloed door tussentijds onderzoek naar stemgedrag, dient de contrôler hierop even serieus te worden genomen als die bij de verkiezingen zelf.

6. Het verdient aanbeveling de mogelijkheden voor de aanleg van viskweekvijvers in het surinaamse binnenland te onderzoeken.

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname
Stellingen van Miriam Sterman bij het proefschrift *People in Between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname.*

1. Het aantal publicaties dat betrekking heeft op indices voor sociale complexiteit staat in geen enkele verhouding tot de theoretische waarde ervan. Zie bijvoorbeeld

   Bowder, E.

   Schaefer, James M.

2. Rivière verbindt het verschijnsel van de couvade met de dualiteit van lichaam en ziel. Zijn zienswijze werpt een nieuw licht op een vraagstuk dat een lange geschiedenis heeft in de antropologie.

   Rivière, P.G.

3. De demografische ontwikkeling van de verschillende Indiaanse bevolkingsgroepen sedert de komst van de Europeanen vormt een belangrijke leemte in de Surinaamse geschiedschrijving.

4. Het Summer Institute of Linguistics dat onder de dekmantel van wetenschappelijk taalonderzoek, grootscheepse progammas voor zendingsactiviteiten ontwikkelt in Latijns-Amerika, vooral in Colombia, Ecuador en Peru, vormt een ernstige bedreiging voor de autonomie van de locale gemeenschappen en van de autochtone Indiaanse cultuur.

5. Te weinig is ons bekend over de omstandigheden waaronder kennisoverdracht plaatsvindt in mondelinge overleveringen, en de specifiek factoren die van invloed zijn op de inhoudelijke selectie hierbij.

6. Het verdient aanbeveling buitenlandse kinderfilms na te synchroniseren in plaats van te voorzien van ondertitels.

Chris de Beet en Miriam Sterman, *People in between: the Matawai Maroons of Suriname*