

Summary

FROM ISOLATION TO INTEGRATION

THE SURINAM MAROONS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE DJUKA TRIBE (1845 - 1863)

This study is intended to give information on sociological aspects of contacts between Negroes, especially Maroons or Bush Negroes, and the colonial administration in Surinam in the period immediately preceding the abolition of slavery in 1863.

From the end of the 17th century on, runaway slaves organised themselves into tribes in the interior and attacked and robbed plantations. The colonial authorities reacted by sending expeditions against them. In 1761, however, peace was made with the three different groups of these runaway slaves. In the peace treaty, the escaped slaves were declared free, and were promised periodical material help. The Bush Negroes agreed to send back new runaway slaves and to refrain from attacks. A civil servant, called postholder, was sent as a representative of the government to live in the village-residence of the governor ("Gran-man") of each of the three Bush Negro groups. His task was to see that they kept to the rules of the treaty and to intervene when differences arose between them and the government in Paramaribo. In order to keep the number of Bush Negroes travelling down the rivers strictly limited he had to supply them with passes to travel and trade. He had to keep a diary and to report monthly on the behaviour of the Bush Negroes to the government and to execute governmental instructions.

Until about 1845 the government preferred to keep them in isolation for fear of new revolts. Only in the second half of the 19th century did they start to try to persuade the different tribes to settle in the cultivated area in order to profit from their labour.

This article deals with the first efforts of the government to increase the contact with the Djuka tribe on the Upper Marowynne river during the period 1845 - 1863. The material for this study has been compiled from the extensive correspondence between the postholders and the government. After an historical introduction (chapter I) it describes the function of the postholder and his administrative duties. It gives a description of the personalities of the three postholders concerned (chapter II) and an outline of their activities (chapter III) including: the organisation and distribution of material help, such as iron imple-

ments, cotton materials, hunting rifles and powder (1849 - 1850), the introduction and the execution of new, liberalized regulations for the Bush Negroes with regard to circulation and trade on the rivers (1856), the introduction of an official salary for the Bush Negroes' governor (1857) and an official investigation on possibilities of introducing Protestant mission among the Bush Negroes (1856).

Finally, a description is given of the liberation of the Bonni tribe (a group formed of slaves who had run away after the peace treaties) which had been placed under the control of the Djukas (1860).