



# CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY

Produced as part of the Sabajo ESIA



# Cultural Resources Survey

Produced as part of the Sabajo ESIA report

August 2017 | Final report

---

**Produced for:**

Golder Associates /  
Newmont Suriname

**Produced by:**



in association with



Siriusstraat 14, Elizabethshof  
Paramaribo, Suriname  
Tel: (+597) 457885  
[www.social-solutions.net](http://www.social-solutions.net)

**Authors:**

Celine Duijves and Marieke Heemskerk,  
E-mail: [mheemskerk@yahoo.com](mailto:mheemskerk@yahoo.com)  
E-mail: [celineduijves@hotmail.com](mailto:celineduijves@hotmail.com)

**Reviewed by:**

Golder Associates  
Newmont Suriname Social Responsibility Team

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

Conducting this study would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of many individuals and organized groups. Foremost, the consultant expresses its gratitude to the traditional authorities and inhabitants of the communities of Asigron, Drepada, Balingsoela, Compagniekreek, Boslanti and Tapoeripa, who welcomed us to their communities and shared valuable information and insights about their culture. Gratitude also is expressed towards the Kawina people and their authorities, who made themselves available for interviews in Paramaribo and in Sabajo. They helped us understand the origins of the Kawina people, their history and current society and cultural practices.

Newmont Suriname commissioned the study as part of its environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for the Sabajo project in Suriname. The Surinamese social science consultancy firm, Social Solutions, conducted the fieldwork under the auspices of the Surinamese engineering firm ILACO. The US based consultancy firm Golder Associates Ltd., which is responsible for development of the entire ESIA document, provided supervision and advice where needed. The team is grateful to the Newmont Suriname Social Responsibility team for their support and assistance with contacting key-stakeholders and facilitating fieldwork.

DISCLAIMER: The opinions expressed in this report correspond to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Golder, Newmont, or any other organizations involved in the Sabajo ESIA. The authors are responsible for all errors in translation and interpretation.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

---

### ABBREVIATIONS

CR	Cultural Resources
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
GoS	Government of Suriname
GPS	Global Positioning System
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IGSR	Institute for Graduate Studies and Research
NDY	Ndyuka language
NIMOS	National Institute of Environment and Development Suriname ( <i>Nationaal Instituut voor Milieu en Ontwikkeling in Suriname</i> )
SAR	Saamaka language
VSG	Association of Saamaka Authorities ( <i>Vereniging van Saramakaanse Gezagsdragers</i> )

### GLOSSARY

*Aboma*: Anaconda (snake)

*Azan Pau (SAR)*: A gate placed at the entrance – or different entrances- of the village, which is meant to keep evil spirits outside.

*Basja (=basia, bassia)*: administrative assistants.

*Boko dee*: Literally: till the sun comes up. People are together at the kee oso/kee wosu until the next day.

*Den twalufu (NDY)*: The twelve clans, how the Ndyuka refer to themselves.

*Dragiman*: Carriers of the coffin.

*Dresiman / Dresi-uman*: Traditional healer (M/F)

*Faagi wosu (SAR)*: Hut where women sleep during their menstrual period.

*Faaka Tiki (NDY)*: Pole/shrine used to deliver libations to ancestral spirits.

*Faaka Pau (SAR)*: Pole/shrine used to deliver libations to ancestral spirits.

*Gadu sneki*: Boa Constrictor (snake)

*Gi kosu (SAR)*: Ritual that is performed to determine the transition from girl to adolescent.

*Gi kwei (NDY)*: Ritual that is performed to determine the transition from a young girl to an older girl, usually when she starts to get breasts.

*Gi Panggi (NDY)*: Ritual that is performed to determine the transition from girl to adolescent.

*Go gadu (SAR)*: The lord God or The great God.

*Goon mii (SAR)*: Child of the land.

*Goon pikin (NDY)*: Child of the land.

*Granman (=gaanman, gaama)*: Paramount chief of a Maroon tribe.

*Grongadu oso*: Place where people go to pray to Mother Earth.

*Hoofd Kapitein (=ede kabiten)*: Head of a Lo

*Intangible heritage*: the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills (including instruments, objects, artifacts, cultural spaces), that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

*Kamisa*: Pangi worn by men, worn on the chest, knotted on one shoulder.

*Kankantrie*: Tropical tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), in Suriname considered to be sacred. In English this tree is referred to as Kapok or Ceiba.

*Kapitein*: Traditional authority of a Maroon or Indigenous community. Among the Maroons, this is typically the head of a clan in a village.

*Katu (SAR)*: Sacred tree (*Moraceae Ficus*), an epiphyte.

*Kawina*: The word “Kawina” literally means “Commewijne” (SUR), and as such refers to both a geographic area –the floodplain of the Commewijne River- and the people living in this area.

*Kawina people* or *Kawina Ndyuka*: In this report, we use the terms Kawina people or Kawina Ndyuka to refer to the inhabitants of the upper Commewijne area who trace their ancestry to the communities of Java, Pennenica (=Nengrekondrepere), Moismoiskondre (=Moengotapoe), Maripa-Ondro and Gododrai (=Mapane). They are ethnically Ndyuka, with some mix with Indigenous peoples. When referring to other people who may consider themselves “Kawina”, this will be explicitly mentioned.

*Kee oso (NDY) (=dede oso, gaanwan oso)*: House of mourning

*Kee wosu (SAR) (=dede oso, gaanwan oso)*: House of mourning

*Kosu (SAR) (=pangi)*: Piece of fabric, worn as a wrap by women and grown-up girls.

*Kunu oso*: Place where people go to pray to Mother Earth.

*Kwatakama*: Sacred tree

*Kweí*: Cloth worn by young girls, which covers their genitals. Girls receive the kwei when they start to get breasts. Even though Maroons today mostly wear Western clothing, especially near the city, giving the kwei continues to have ritual significance.

*Living cultural heritage*: other name for Intangible Heritage

*Lo*: Subgroup within the larger tribal group, or (matri-) clan. Children belong to the *lo* of their father’s mother. The Saamaka consist of 12 lo, the Ndyuka have 14.

*Lontu kondre*: A walk through the village e.g. during tap yari.

*Lukuman*: Diviner, prophet

*Mamapikien (NDY)*: Members of different families with a common grandmother or grand grandmother.

*Mama konde*: Community of the mother.

*Maroons*: Tribal people of African descent. In Suriname, six different Maroon groups (NDY/SAR: *Nási* or *Gaan-lo*) claim traditional rights to different territories in the country's interior. These groups are the Ndyuka (also: Aukaners, Okanisi, Djoeka), Saamaka (also: Saramaka, Saramaccaners), Paamaka (also: Paramaka, Paramaccaners), Kwinti, Matawai, and Aluku (also: Boni).

*Masaa gadu (NDY)*: The lord God or The great God.

*Moon oso (NDY)*: Hut where women sleep during their menstrual period.

*Nasi (=gaanlo)*: Motherclan

*Ndyuka*: One of the six Suriname Maroon groups, whose traditional living territory includes the Tapanahoni River and part of the Marowijne river. Subgroups of the Ndyuka have established along the Sarakreek (Saakiki), Cottica, and Commewijne Rivers. The Ndyuka also are referred to as Aukaners or Okanisi (NDY).

*Ndyuka language*: An English-Dutch based creole language, with influence from African languages in its grammar and sounds

*Nkatu (NDY)*: Sacred tree

*Obia man*: medicine man using the power of *obia* (supernatural forces), religious practices developed among enslaved West Africans.

*Obia Oso*: A shrine where people pray to deities and spirits from the *winti* religion. Different spirits may have their own shrine.

*Oso (NDY)*: House

*Pangi (NDY)*: Piece of fabric, worn as a wrap by women and grown-up girls. Pangi cloth is a cotton fabric with multi-colored vertical and horizontal stripes.

*Patu*: A pan with a traditionally made medicine, made of leaves, branches and barks)

*Project area*: concession as a whole plus the length of the Merian Sabajo haul road

*Project Footprint*: 886 ha area directly occupied by project

*Puu pikin a doo/Puu mii a doo (SAR)*: Bring the baby outside, a ritual for newborns.

*Saakiki Ndyuka*: Sub-group of the Ndyuka, which established itself along the Sarakreek in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*Saamaka (= Saramaka, Saramacca)*: One of six Maroon groups. The ancestral territory of the Saamaka Maroons is the Suriname River.

*Sabajo Project (the Project)*: all Sabajo/Santa Barbara/Margo mining areas plus the haul road to Merian.

*Sranantongo*: Suriname Creole language and lingua franca.

*Sweli*: Ritual with the use of oracles tied in a bundle and attached to a long plank. Two men hold the plank on their heads and then questions are put to the oracle. The way the plank moves, answers the questions.

*Sweli oso*: A place where a *sweli* is prepared and performed.

*Tangible heritage*: refers to objects that are significant to the archaeology, architecture, science and/or technology of a specific culture. It includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future.

*Tjufunga tiki (NDY)*: A gate placed at the entrance – or different entrances- of the village, which is meant to keep evil spirits outside.

*Towe wataa*: Literally: throw water. Libation.

*Trefu*: Taboo

*Wasipesi*: Place in the river or creek to bath.

*Wosu (SAR)*: House

*Wosu dendoe (SAR)*: Members of different families with a common grandmother or grand grandmother.

*Yeye*: Soul/spirit

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

This Cultural Resources (CR) survey focusses on tangible (i.e. places of worship, artifacts) and intangible (customs and beliefs, rites, traditional knowledge) heritage of both the Kawina people who have traditionally used the Commewijne watershed area, and communities that are located near the Sabajo project. Archeology is part of the CR study but is included in a separate report. The Indigenous communities of the Carolina area will also be described in a separate report. The main ethnic groups of relevance to this study are the Saamaka Maroons (communities: Balingsoela, Asigron and Drepada) and two subgroups of Ndyuka Maroons: the Kawina Ndyuka (communities: Java, Pennenica, Gododrai/Mapane<sup>1</sup>, Moismoiskondre/Moengotapoe and Maripa-Ondro/Mooimankondre) and Saakiiki Ndyuka (communities: Tapoeripa, Compagniekreek and Boslanti). Life of the Kawina people and of Maroons in the Afobaka villages does not occur in one place or only in their traditional villages. They feel interconnected, come together on different occasions and attach great importance to their tangible and intangible heritage.

The different Maroon groups have a comparable traditional authority structure, with the granman (paramount chief) as head of the tribal group and *kapiteins* (clan heads) as main authorities in the villages. Politics and religion are interwoven, with the granman and *kapiteins* being central persons in communicating with the ancestors and the outside world. Suriname's Maroon societies have a matrilineal descent structure. Within the tribal group, important kin groups include:

- *lo* (clan, descendants of slaves who escaped from the same plantation);
- *bee* (descendants of one common (mythical) ancestress); and
- *oso* (NDY)/*wosoe* (SAR), which consists of a mother and her children (belonging to the same matrilineage) and the mother's spouse.

Religion is central to Ndyuka and Saamaka daily life. Among the target Afobaka communities, one can roughly distinguish Christian (missionized) villages and non-Christian villages, where the traditional *winti* religion is dominant. In reality, the divide is less strict; inhabitants of Christianized communities take part in *winti* rituals, and in Non-Christianized communities one finds Christened people who may not obey certain traditional cultural codes. The *Winti* religion is animist and polytheistic, and ancestral spirit veneration plays an important role. Due to historic differences in missionary activity, all Saamaka communities in the sample were "Christian" (Roman Catholic, Moravian, and Apostolic) and all Ndyuka communities were "non-Christian".

The two ancestral shrines of most significance are the:

- Mortuary (*kee oso* (NDY), *kee wosu* (SAR); also: *dede oso*, *gaanwan oso*; NDY & SAR), and
- Ancestor pole/flag pole (*faaka-tiki* (NDY) or *faaka pau* (SAR)).

Without these two structures, a settlement is not considered a real (ancestral) "village" but a *kampu* (camp), regardless of the number of inhabitants and layout.

In addition, the majority of villages have one or more:

- *Obia oso*: a hut with a shrine and spiritually loaded artifacts inside

---

<sup>1</sup> The community was originally named Gododrai, but after the road was built the community was moved to have road access, and re-named Mapane.



- *Tjufunga tiki* (NDY)/*Azan pau* (SAR): gate at the village entrance(s) to keep evil spirits outside
- *Moon oso* (NDY)/ *faagi wosu* (SAR): hut where women go in seclusion during their menstrual period.
- *Sweli oso*: is a place where a *sweli* is prepared and performed (see below).
- *kunu oso* and *grongadu oso*: Place where people go to pray to mother earth (only Tapoeripa).

Such ritual places are also found in the old Kawina villages and are still used. Both younger and older Kawina reported that they went back for ritual purposes<sup>2</sup>.

All communities reported one or more locations with special sacred significance. Sacred trees include: Kankantrie (*Ceiba pentandra*), Katu (SAR) or Nkatu (NDY) (*Moraceae Ficus*), and Kwatakama (*Parkia spp.*). Various snakes (Boa Constrictor, Anaconda, Boa Spp.) are considered sacred animals.

Maroons have rites of passage during the most important transitions in their lives. The most important among these celebrations include the various rituals related to death, and *gi panggi* (NDY)/*gi kosu* (SAR) for girls and *gi kamisa* for boys, which signifies transition to adulthood. Important rituals are libation to call upon ancestral spirits, and *sweli* - consultation of an oracle and sacred bundle to investigate the supernatural cause of an accident, illness or death.

Winti followers adhere to a large number of taboos, both personal (e.g. food) and communal. Communal weekly taboo days (*kina dee*) are days on which one is not allowed to perform heavy physical labor. Menstrual taboos tend to be most rigidly maintained in the non-Christian communities, where (virtually) all women go into seclusion when they have their period. Yet also women who are Christian may follow certain rules, such as not cooking for men during menstruation. Menstrual taboos only apply to girls after they have undergone the *gi panggi* ceremony. Creeks also involve many taboos, both creek specific and common. Common creek taboos include a prohibition of women who have their menstrual period to bathe in the creek, a prohibition to defecate in the creek, and the prohibition to throw certain items in the creek such as lime, rice, pepper and soap.

In times of illness, community members rely on a combination of Medical Mission Primary PHC clinics, *dresiman* and/or *obiaman*, traditional herbal remedies prepared in a special bowl (*patu*), and home remedies. In all consulted communities there was at least one *dresiman*, and often also *obiaman*, traditional midwives, and other specialized healers.

Outsiders visiting the community for formal/professional reasons should arrange their visit through the traditional authorities preferably 1-3 weeks in advance. When arranging community meetings, it is important that representatives of different community sections and/or different clans are represented. More generally, when visiting and communicating with traditional communities, outsiders should be aware of the importance of tangible and intangible heritage and the value attached to these cultural resources.

---

<sup>2</sup> The researcher has not visited the villages and cannot confirm this statement.

# CONTENTS

---

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abbreviations and Glossary .....	4
Abbreviations .....	4
Glossary.....	4
Executive Summary.....	8
1 Introduction .....	12
2 Methods.....	16
2.1 General.....	16
2.2 Research ethics .....	16
2.3 Literature study.....	17
2.4 Fieldwork.....	17
2.5 Research Instruments .....	18
2.6 Limitations.....	19
3 Background to the target populations.....	20
3.1 Ndyuka Maroons.....	20
3.2 Kawina people.....	22
3.3 Saamaka .....	24
3.4 Saakiiki Ndyuka .....	25
4 Intangible heritage results .....	26
4.1 Leadership structures and appointment .....	26
4.2 Tribal, Clan and family structures .....	28
4.3 Religion.....	30
4.3.1 Winti.....	30
4.3.2 Christianity .....	32
4.4 Shrines, places of worship .....	33
4.4.1 Ritual places (human made) in and around the communities.....	33
4.4.2 Ritual places (natural) or natural places with special meaning around the communities .	36
4.4.3 Sacred trees .....	37
4.4.4 Sacred animals .....	38
4.5 Rites of passage, rituals, and celebrations.....	38

4.5.1	Rites of passage.....	38
4.5.2	Celebrations .....	41
4.5.3	Rituals.....	42
4.6	Taboos.....	43
4.6.1	Taboo days .....	43
4.6.2	Menstrual taboos.....	44
4.6.3	Creek and river taboos.....	46
4.7	Traditional and spiritual healers .....	47
4.8	Visiting the community: Protocol for outsiders .....	49
5	References .....	51
	ANNEX 1. Focus Group participants and other consulted stakeholders .....	52
	ANNEX 2. Historical map of East Suriname with Maroon fleeing routes and historic locations of relevance.....	56

# 1 INTRODUCTION

---

This document (“CR Survey”) provides a description of Cultural Resources (CR) of both the Kawina people<sup>3</sup> who have traditionally used the Commewijne watershed area, and communities that are located most closely to the Sabajo project proposed by Newmont Suriname, LLC (“Newmont Suriname”). Cultural Resources encompass the “legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations” (UNESCO, 2017).

The Sabajo Gold Project (“Sabajo”) is located in Para district in the northeastern part of Suriname, 30 km west of Merian and about 20 km northeast of the Afobaka dam (Figure 1). Access to the site is through existing roads. The Sabajo Project proposes to develop and mine the Sabajo deposit as a satellite to the Merian operation and will only involve mining activities and the transport of ore by haul road to the mill at Merian for processing. This CR survey is part of the Sabajo Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) that Newmont plans to submit to the National Institute of Environment and Development Suriname (NIMOS) and interested stakeholders in February 2018.

This CR survey focuses on both tangible cultural elements (i.e. archaeological sites, places of worship, artifacts) and intangible heritage (customs and beliefs, rites, traditional knowledge) in communities in and around the Sabajo Project. Tangible and intangible heritage are very broad concepts, and a very detailed description of all cultural resources related to the target communities would be beyond the scope of this assignment. Instead, the study focused specifically on cultural elements that are of importance to Newmont Suriname in the context of development of the Sabajo Project, namely:

- (a) Tangible heritage and intangible heritage sites in the Sabajo Project Area, that might be disturbed by infrastructural activities related to development of the Sabajo project, or otherwise negatively impacted.
- (b) Customs, manners and beliefs that are important to know and understand in order to maintain a constructive working relationship with nearby and/or possibly impacted communities.

Newmont Suriname, as the project proponent, is responsible for the preparation of the ESIA. Newmont hired Golder Associates to lead the effort and additional local Surinamese and international experts to support the baseline studies and the evaluation of potential impacts. The CR survey was executed by Suriname social science consultancy firm Social Solutions, working under the auspices of the engineering firm ILACO.

In the following pages, the CR survey proceeds as follows.

**Chapter 2** provides a description of the methods that have been used for data collection, as well as ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sabajo is part of the Commewijne River watershed and located in the triangle between the Little Commewijne Creek and the Tempati Creek – both tributaries of the Commewijne River. This general area has historically been used by people who refer to themselves as “Kawina”, meaning “Commewijne” in Suriname Creole language Sranantongo.

**Chapter 3** presents a brief historic background of the different ethnic groups that are the focus of this study: the Kawina, the Saakiiki Ndyuka, and the Saamaka.

**Chapter 4** presents the results of the intangible heritage<sup>4</sup> study, describing culture as experienced in today's villages and among the Kawina. This section includes a description of physical cultural infrastructure, i.e. tangible heritage, which continues to be used.

The archaeological part of the study was conducted by Dr. Cheryl White, and can be found in **Chapter 5** of the report.

The **Conclusions** offers a final synthesis of the findings that are most relevant for Newmont for understanding Cultural Resources and Newmont's possible impact on such resources in communities with traditional interests in, and/or located relatively closest to, the Sabajo Project - including the Kawina people.

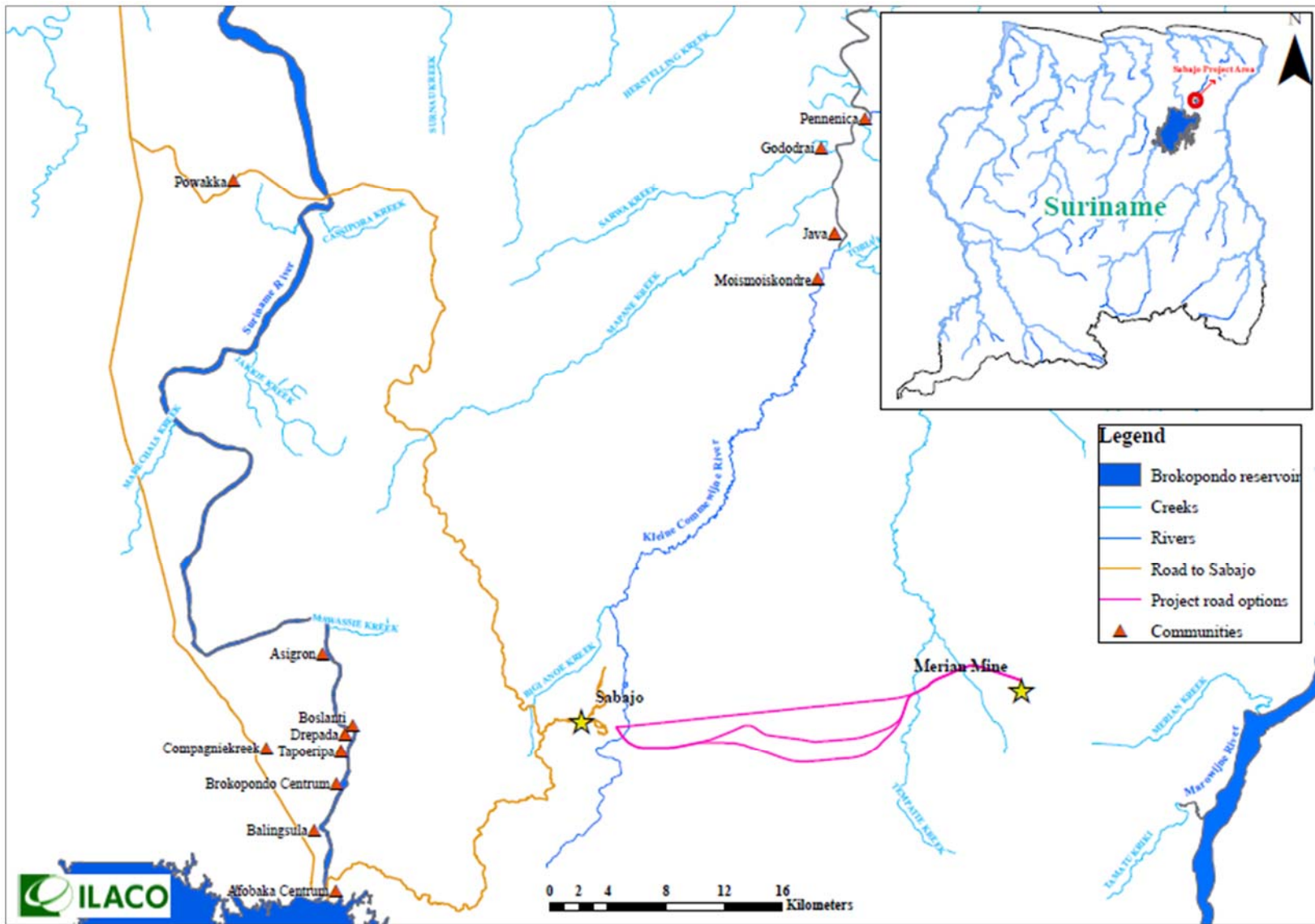
---

<sup>4</sup> Tangible heritage is described in detail in the draft report written by Dr. White. Submitted August 18, 2017.

Figure 1. Location of the Sabajo project in reference to Afobaka communities and Kawina communities <sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The community of Maripa Ondre could not be located. According to Kapitein Noordzee, this community is not located along the road but along the upper Commewijne river. It has been completely destroyed during the interior war (R. Noordzee, 16/11/17). Internet sources suggest that this community was located south of Pennenica creek.



## 2 METHODS

---

### 2.1 GENERAL

The CR survey consists of two separate sections: a section on tangible heritage and a section on intangible heritage. Tangible heritage refers to objects that are significant to the archaeology, architecture, science and/or technology of a specific culture. It includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future (UNESCO, 2017).

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage defines Intangible Heritage as "...the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity." (UNESCO, 2003).

As explained in the introduction, this CR survey does not focus on all possible aspects that are part of the Cultural Heritage of the target communities. More specifically, this survey provides:

- 1) The location (GPS) as well as a detailed description of archaeological sites in and around the Sabajo project area.
- 2) A description of intangible heritage elements including beliefs, rituals, customary practices, and sacred places among the Kawina and of intangible heritage elements in the Afobaka communities located most closely to the Project area;
- 3) A description of community use of specific and general sacred sites;
- 4) A description of custodians maintaining cultural resources; and
- 5) The traditional/cultural significance of land.

A Cultural Resources Management Plan that considers all findings and identifies measures for preserving cultural heritage and prevention of impacts to cultural heritage will be submitted as a separate document.

### 2.2 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research procedures adhered to professional ethical standards for social science research, including the American Anthropological Association *Ethics Handbook*. Furthermore, the CR survey was conducted in line with the principles of International Finance Corporation (IFC) standard # 7 considering Indigenous Peoples (which includes the Maroons), particularly with regard to obtaining Free Prior Informed Consent prior to data collection.

In practice, this approach meant that prior to data collection, the proposed research and methodology were presented to the target communities. On Sunday June 18<sup>th</sup>, Newmont Suriname organized a methods validation meeting for the Kawina people. During this meeting, Newmont's Social Responsibility team introduced the researchers to the participants, and explained the ESIA research in more general terms. Next, the consultant presented the objectives and proposed methods for the CR survey to Kawina



community leaders and other community members, including traditional authorities. The consultant also explained to the target group that their participation was voluntary, and that they were not obliged to answer all or any of the questions. No objections were voiced with regard to the proposed approach.

On June 20 and 21, Newmont Suriname organized methods validation meetings in the six target communities along the Afobaka road: Asigron, Compagniekreek, Balingsoela, Tapoeripa, Drepada and Boslanti. These meetings had the same structure as the Kawina methods validation meeting, and were facilitated by the Newmont SR team. During these meetings, the consultant explained the upcoming study and the methods that would be used, and obtained informed consent from the community populations.

During fieldwork, the researchers introduced themselves again and explained the purpose and approach of the survey once again. It was also explained that the consultant is not part of Newmont and cannot answer questions with regard to Newmont Suriname's future plans in the area and possible employment. Photographs have only been taken with participant consent.

### 2.3 LITERATURE STUDY

Throughout the course of the study, literature has been consulted to obtain prior information about cultural places and customs, and to complement and verify information gathered through interviews. Not much has been written about the Kawina Ndyuka, though some references to these people were found in the work on Ndyuka culture and history by the Dutch anthropologist H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen. In order to better understand the historic settlement of the Kawina and their establishment as a separate group, the consultant also reviewed old maps in the National archives and Suriname history books. Existing studies about Saamaka culture included those of Sally and Richard Price (various books and papers). In this study for the Sabajo ESIA, information obtained from review of literature has been combined with the author's personal knowledge of Ndyuka and Saamaka culture, and with information from interviews. Where information is obtained from existing literature, the sources are cited.

### 2.4 FIELDWORK

Fieldwork was conducted between July 24<sup>th</sup> and August 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Afobaka communities (Table 1) and on intermittent days in July and August with Kawina people in the Sabajo area and Paramaribo. In each Afobaka community, the consultant conducted three focus groups with men (including older men, traditional authorities and hunters) women (including older women and traditional authorities, and youth (boys and girls, mostly attending middle and high schools). The focus groups were organized in advance by local *resource persons* in each of the communities and participants were brought together on the day of the event. Newmont Suriname together with the Consultant identified the resource persons during the method validation meetings. Focus groups with adults lasted about two hours and focus groups with youngsters lasted about one hour.

Because the Kawina people live dispersed throughout Paramaribo (and in many other places), it was difficult to locate representatives of this group and bring them together. Ultimately, the consultant spoke with one group of women during a larger Kawina meeting organized by the Institute for Graduate Studies and Research (IGSR) (Aug. 6). IGSR was conducting a socio-economic study for the Sabajo ESIA. A group of

young people were brought together by a contact from that larger meeting (Aug. 12). Traditional authorities and other men from the Kawina people were consulted on different dates in individual or in two-person interviews (Table 1). Annex 1 lists the focus group participants and other consulted stakeholders.

Table 1. Field work locations and dates

Community/group	Ethnic group	Date
<b>Asigron</b>	Saamaka	24 July
<b>Compagniekreek</b>	Saakiiki Ndyuka	25 July
<b>Balingsoela</b>	Saamaka	28 July
<b>Tapoeripa</b>	Saakiiki Ndyuka	29 July
<b>Drepada</b>	Saamaka	1 August
<b>Boslanti*</b>	Saakiiki Ndyuka	2 August
<b>Kawina – Traditional authorities</b>	Kawina Ndyuka	17 July
<b>Kawina – Men</b>	Kawina Ndyuka	1-2 July (Sabajo), 16 July, August 14
<b>Kawina- Women</b>	Kawina Ndyuka	6 August
<b>Kawina- Youth</b>	Kawina Ndyuka	12 August

\*An additional separate meeting was organized with *Kapitein* Waisi Losia of Boslanti, on August 17<sup>th</sup>, in Paramaribo.

Balingsoela, Drepada and Asigron are original Saamaka communities, which existed in this location prior to construction of the Brokopondo hydropower dam and reservoir. Compagniekreek, Boslanti and Tapoeripa are so-called transmigration communities of Saakiiki Ndyuka. These villages were built by the Dutch colonial government when the original Saakiiki communities were flooded due to construction of the hydropower lake.

## 2.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The focus groups were conducted according to a pre-established list of questions (focus group guide), which covered the following topics:

- Protocol for visiting communities
- Traditional authorities
- Conflict resolution
- Holy sites, shrines and other locations with special meaning
- Taboos, including menstrual taboos
- Cultural celebrations and days with special meaning
- Family and personal relations

For focus groups with the Kawina, the questions were adjusted to reflect their living conditions in Paramaribo. Moreover, questions were added about their ongoing connection to the Kawina community, culture, and territory.

The Focus Group Guide is presented in Annex 2.

Qualitative interviews with individual Kawina were conducted to obtain a better understanding of the Kawina history of settlement and resource use. For these interviews, the consultant used lead questions

that were targeted to the specific person, and asked further questions on the basis of the answers that were given. Thus the interviews were conversational and not overly directed or constrained by the interview guide.

## 2.6 LIMITATIONS

There are three main limitations to the study:

- Anthropological fieldwork relies on building rapport with, and gaining trust from the local communities with whom the research is conducted. Establishing a close working relationship with local people, however, is difficult in a very short fieldwork period. As a result, in some cases the researchers felt it was inappropriate to ask sensitive questions. It is also possible that specific details about culture and community organization were kept from the researchers.
- Interview responses are subject to self-reporting. Responses may be influenced by response bias if respondents are familiar with desired behavior and respond in the 'correct' way, or if they do not want to give certain information but still want to give an answer. Long-term experience conducting research with interior populations in Suriname, and the use of control questions and observations helped the consultant minimize this bias.
- Because the Kawina people live mostly in Paramaribo, it was not possible to walk around and have informal conversations based on random encounters with Kawina people, as one would do in a village. The consultant observed that the Kawina focus group participants and people who frequented the Newmont Kawina meetings consisted of a relatively small group of the same, perhaps 50-80 individuals. As the Kawina consist of a larger (i.e. 500 persons) group, this means that many Kawina were not part of the focus group sessions. We have no way of knowing whether the selective participation of Kawina in meetings and focus groups biased the results for this ethnic group.

## 3 BACKGROUND TO THE TARGET POPULATIONS

---

### 3.1 NDYUKA MAROONS

The Ndyuka are one of six Maroon groups in Suriname. Anthropologist Richard Price estimated their 2014 numbers at 26,000 in the Suriname interior and another 30,000 individuals in Paramaribo and environs (Price, 2013). The traditional living areas of the Ndyuka in Suriname include the Tapanahoni River (named: Ndyuka River), Cottica/Moengo regions, and the Sarakreek (NDY: *Saakiiki*) (Figure 2). Inhabitants of this latter region mostly moved to Brokopondo, north of the lake when the hydropower dam was built. In addition, smaller concentrations of Ndyuka live along the Lawa, Marowijne, and Commewijne rivers.

The founders of the current Ndyuka tribe fled plantations along the Commewijne River, the Tempati Creek and the Cottica River around 1710 (Hoogbergen, 1989). In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a group of 1500-1600 Maroons lived in the area of the Marowijne and Mama Ndyuka Creek (Hartsinck, 1770; see also De Groot 1977). They regularly absorbed new runaways from that area, especially in 1757, after the slave uprisings along the Tempati Creek. They were called the black people of behind “Auka”<sup>6</sup>, a Jewish plantation (Annex 2). It was at the Mama Ndyuka Creek, that the 12 *lo* (matri-clans) first came together and selected a *granman*. On 10 October 1760<sup>7</sup>, the Ndyuka signed a peace treaty (*vredesverdrag*) with the Dutch colonial government<sup>8</sup>. From then on the Colonial Government officially designated the tribe as the “pacified Bush Negroes beyond Auca”, or the “Aucaners”, since the treaty had been concluded at Ndyuka Creek, which is 57 miles beyond Auca plantation on the Suriname River (Groot, 1977). The group named itself Ndyuka, and its territory also as Ndyuka. The peace treaty recognized the Ndyuka as free people, and allowed them to “continue to live in the area where they were living at that moment, and on all the land they need surrounding it, as long as it is at least two days or ten travel hours from any plantation.”<sup>9</sup> (Hartsinck, 1770: 781). After the treaty, the Ndyuka left their settlements on the Mama Ndyuka Creek and moved to the Tapanahoni River (Thoden van Velzen, 1991)<sup>10</sup>.

Soon after, however, Ndyukas started their trek to the coast. Around 1790, Ndyuka settlements were built near the confluence of the Sarakreek and the Suriname River, and in first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they moved further towards the coast to settle on the banks of the Cottica, Courmotibo and Lower Saramacca Rivers<sup>11</sup>. Ndyuka men in these locations were primarily active as lumberers (Thoden van Velzen, 1991). By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, between 1000 and 1,500 Ndyuka (out of a total of 3,000-3,500) had settled in the Cottica and Commewijne regions, where they earned money in the lumber industry.

---

<sup>6</sup> Which was the basis for the later name: Aukaners or Okanisi

<sup>7</sup> The Dutch were particularly pushed to sign a peace treaty after the slave uprisings on plantations along the Tempatie Creek, in 1757, which led to large losses for the planters and the colonial government.

<sup>8</sup> “Articulen van Verdrag met de Negers achter Auka” (Hartsinck, 1770).

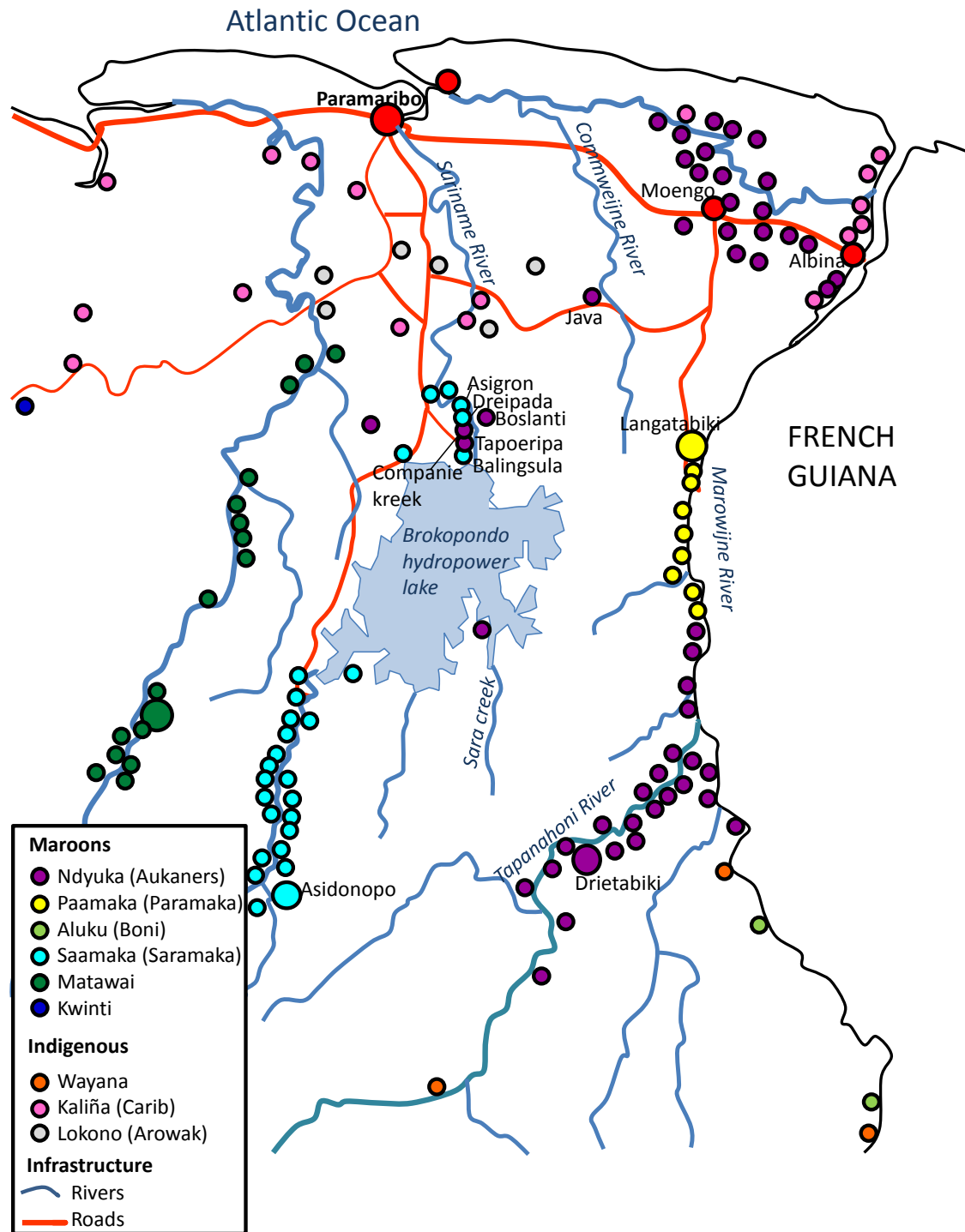
<sup>9</sup> Art. III of the peace treaty reads: “Dat zy vry zullen blyven wonen ter plaatse daar zy nu zyn, en al het nodige Land aldaar in 't ronde, mids niet dichter als ten minsten twee Dagen of tien Uuren gaans van eenige Plantagiën zyn; ...” This article is often interpreted as granting the Ndyuka (and other Maroon groups) territorial autonomy.

<sup>10</sup> This move was completed by ~ 1790.

<sup>11</sup> In 1835, a census among the Ndyuka counted a total of 3,202 individuals, among whom 250 in the Sarakreek region, 200 on the lower courses of the Saramacca River, and 900 in the Cottica region (Thoden van Velzen, 1991)

Both in the interior and in Paramaribo, Ndyuka people continue to adhere to traditional cultural rites and customs, and speak their own language (Ndyuka, a Dutch-English-based Creole language, with African influences in grammar and sounds).

Figure 2. Main Maroon and Indigenous communities in East Suriname with their tribal affiliation



### 3.2 KAWINA PEOPLE

The project area is located entirely in the Commewijne River watershed; in the triangle between the Bigi Anu Creek/ Little Commewijne River and its tributary, the Tempati Creek (Figure 1). This general area has historically been used by people who refer to themselves as “Kawina”, meaning “Commewijne” in Ndyuka<sup>12</sup>. Among people who call themselves “Kawina”, one can distinguish people from the lower Commewijne River –who are mostly Indigenous mixed with Creoles- and people from the upper Commewijne River, who are ethnically predominantly Ndyuka<sup>13</sup>.

The upper Commewijne people are the descendants of a group of Ndyuka Maroons who left the Cottica area<sup>14</sup> in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century because they had discovered valuable wood species along the Commewijne River, which they wanted to exploit for the Paramaribo wood market (Thoden van Velzen, anthropologist and oral historian, pers. com. 17 Feb 2017)<sup>15</sup>. Here they established the communities of Pennenica, Gododrai (later moved closer to the road and renamed Mapane), Java, Maripa-Ondro (NDY: Maipa Ondoo) and Moismoiskondre (later moved and renamed Moengotapoe) (Figure 1). Post holder reports from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century confirm the presence of Maroons in the upper Commewijne River area<sup>16</sup>. Records of slave names suggest that the ancestors of some Kawina families originate from Commewijne plantations, but the records do not reveal whether they were among the original Ndyuka settlers in the area (those who came from the Tapanahoni) or new runaways<sup>17</sup>. The Ndyuka in the Commewijne area

---

<sup>12</sup> Both Kawina traditional authorities and other Kawina individuals mentioned in focus groups and personal interviews that Kawina people, mostly men, historically used this general area for logging, fishing and hunting. During such trips, men built temporary shelters in the forest. One Kawina gold miner, Mr. Misiedjang, reported that his grandparents lived some years in a settlement (*kampu*) along the Bigi Anu creek (pers. com, R. Misidjang, 05-08-17). They called this place Lemiki bong (Lemon tree). Mr. Misidjang found it difficult to estimate the exact distance from this Santa Barbara, but estimated it at about 2-3 km. The family fished, hunted and planted in this location, but moved when their children grew older and they wanted to send them to school. Information about other families that settled in this area may be revealed in the land rights study. There is no evidence that there have been larger permanent villages in this area.

<sup>13</sup> There does not seem to be a clear land mark that divides the upper Commewijne River area from the Lower Commewijne River. In the small-scale mining study one respondent reported that everything from Gododrai southward is Upper Commewijne (Mr. Francis and Mr. Misiedjan, pers. com. 19/07/17). According to another respondent in this study, everything down river from Cassiwinica is lower Commewijne (Jopoi, gold equipment owner, pers. com. 031117).

<sup>14</sup> The Cottica Ndyuka are a group of Ndyuka who left their traditional living areas along the Tapanahoni around 1800 to engage in commercial logging activities in the Cottica area.

<sup>15</sup> A 1850 map confirms that the area between the Small Commewijne and Tempati Creeks is inhabited by black people (the map refers to “Neger gronden”) but does not specify who.

<sup>16</sup> After the peace treaties, the Maroons were allowed to live in the interior behind a certain point. Governmental post holders (*posthouders*) were installed to control the maroons traveling to the coastal area. Post holder Kappler reported that already prior to 1836, the Pamaka in settlements in the highlands on several hours distance from the Marowijne river, had made foot paths “so that they could stay in contact with the Maroons of the upper Commewijne area and with the Ndyuka (“waardoor zij in gemeenschap waren met de Boschnegers in de Boven Commewijne en met de Aucaner boschnegers.”) (Source: Landsarchief; Brievenboek 1872, Indianen en Boschnegers. “Over de Paramacca of Pramaca negers gevestigd nabij den oever der rivier (Hollandsche gedeelte), 12/1/1872”.

<sup>17</sup> Slave records from plantations along the Commewijne river feature several typical Kawina family names, including “Noordzee” (upper Commewijne area, plantation Cannawapibo), and Grootfaam and Francis (Lower Commewijne area). Information about family names given to slaves, per plantation, van be found on the website:

(“Kawina Ndyuka”) mingled somewhat with Indigenous peoples, but maintained their traditional tribal structures and culture, and fall under the responsibility of the Ndyuka granman at the Tapanahoni.

During the interior war (1986-1992), a civil conflict between the military government and Maroon insurgents, the Kawina villages in the interior were burned by military troops. The inhabitants fled to French Guiana, to other villages in Marowijne, to Paramaribo, and further into the forest. Nowadays the traditional communities are mostly abandoned. It has been reported that the villages of Maipa Ondoo and Moismoiskondre were already (mostly) abandoned before the interior war<sup>18</sup>. Maipa Ondoo was located along the Commewijne River without road access, and its inhabitants moved to the other communities to benefit from better accessibility. People had moved from Moismoiskondre because there was no school; the closest school was in Carolina. A former inhabitant of Moismoiskondre reported that people did continue to return to the village regularly, but in the 1980s few people stayed permanently in Moismoiskondre<sup>19</sup>. The Interior War made this continued connection impossible. Nowadays both Maipa Ondoo and Moengotapoe are reportedly entirely overtaken by the forest<sup>20</sup>.

According to respondents, the villages of Java, Pennenica and Mapane are still maintained and visited<sup>21</sup>. During the validation meeting and follow-up consultations, it was mentioned that about 20 persons (5 households) live permanently in the community of Pennenica<sup>22</sup>. In follow-up communication, the *kapitein* of Mapane reported that also in Mapane several persons live permanently<sup>23</sup>. These permanent inhabitants of the Kawina villages are reportedly primarily hunters and women who are planting. In addition, during different focus groups and consultations, Kawina individuals reported that they visited the Kawina villages either frequently<sup>24</sup> (e.g. to plant) or on rare occasions (e.g. for a New Year’s celebration).

In interviews, Kawina respondents from all villages expressed the desire to redevelop the villages and return to their ancestral area. Women from different villages reported that they are planting in the area.

---

[http://www.surinamistiek.nl/main/slavernijverleden/Familienamen\\_en\\_Plantages.pdf](http://www.surinamistiek.nl/main/slavernijverleden/Familienamen_en_Plantages.pdf). See also website of [Surinameplantages.com](http://www.surinameplantages.com) where one can search by family names given to slaves of specific plantations at Emancipation. On the website of the Dutch National Archives, section on “Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen: Vrijverklarde slaven (Emancipatie 1863)” one can also trace family names of emancipated slaves to certain plantation.

<sup>18</sup> *Kapitein* F. Nijda of Pennenica, pers. com. 17/11/17. Confirmed by Maroon expert B. Eersteling, pers. com. 17/11/17. When Eersteling visited the upper-Commewijne communities in the period 1980-1986, Maipa Ondoo was already abandoned. Also confirmed by N. Nijda, former inhabitant of Moismoiskondre (pers. com. 20/11/17)

<sup>19</sup> N. Nijda, pers. com. 20/11/17.

<sup>20</sup> *Kapitein* F. Nijda of Pennenica, pers. com. 17/11/17. *Kapitein* G. Nijda of Moismoiskondre confirmed that the traditional community is now overtaken by the forest, there is nothing more there (pers. com. 20/11/17).

<sup>21</sup> Validation meeting (05/11/17), also mentioned by *Kapitein* Nijda of Pennenica (17/11/17),

<sup>22</sup> Two inhabitants from pennenica, an older woman and a young adult man, were present during the validation meeting, 05/11/17. The continued presence of inhabitants in this community was not reported during earlier interviews. The researchers have not visited the villages and cannot confirm the presence of households

<sup>23</sup> *Kapitein* Nijda of Pennenica, pers. com. 17/11/17.

<sup>24</sup> For example, *kapitein* Nijda of Penenica reported that he regularly spent time in the village; sometimes for a couple of days, sometimes for some weeks (pers. com. 17/11/17). Also during the focus group discussion with women, several women reported that they maintained agricultural plots near their traditional village, which required their regular attention (focus group meetings, 06/08/17).

In some cases, concrete steps have been taken to start rebuilding the communities. For example, the *kapitein* Misiedjan of Gododrai reported that money in the village fund was used to buy a saw mill and a tractor to help prepare the land and build houses<sup>25</sup>. Also Kawina small-scale gold miners reported that they had been collecting money to use for the development of their old villages.

### 3.3 SAAMAKA

The Saamaka (also: Saramacca, Saramaka) are one of the six Maroon groups in Suriname. Anthropologist Richard Price estimated their 2014 numbers at 28,500 in the Suriname interior and another 29,000 individuals in Paramaribo and environs (Price, 2013). The Saamaka Maroons have traditionally lived along the Suriname River, where most of their communities are still situated – both north and south of the lake.

The ancestors of the present-day Saamaka probably fled from the plantations in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>; 1690 is believed to be the year of the first mass escape of slaves who would form the group's founding core. Price (1976:30) gives 1712 as the date of the last significant influx of escaped slaves into the group. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, several smaller groups were established along the Suriname River, and its tributaries, the Gaánlío and the Pikilío, where they continued to be joined by newcomers (Price, 1983). In 1762, the Saamaka won their freedom and signed a peace treaty with the Dutch Crown to acknowledge their territorial rights and trading privileges. After construction of a hydropower dam that created the Brokopondo lake, approximately half of the Saamaka tribal territory was inundated and lost to the dam. Several villages were relocated as so-called "transmigration villages" north of the lake (e.g. Nyun Lombe, Klaaskreek), among the Saamaka communities that were already there. The Saamaka continue to adhere to many traditional cultural practices and speak their own language (Saamakatongo, a Portuguese-English-based Creole language, with elements of African language structure and tones).

In the mid-1990s, the Association of Saamaka Authorities (*Vereniging van Saramakaanse Gezagsdraggers* - VSG) filed a complaint before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to protest violation of their customary land rights. In November 2007, the Inter-American Court for Human Rights ruled in favor of the Saamaka people against the government of Suriname (Price, 2011). Specifically, the Court concluded that the Saamaka are to be considered "a tribal community", to which the Court's jurisprudence regarding indigenous people's rights also apply (Price, 2011: 212-13). The Court acknowledged the Saamaka's "special relationship with their ancestral lands", and ruled that "the State has an obligation to adopt special measures to recognize, respect, protect and guarantee the communal property rights of the Saamaka community to said territory." (Price, 2011: 213). With regard to their right to natural resources, the Court decided that the Saamaka can claim property rights *only* to "those natural resources traditionally used and necessary for the very survival, development and continuation of such people's way of life." (Price, 2011: 2014). In other words, proof of traditional use of a resource by the tribal group is a prerequisite for their ownership rights in that resource. Based on Saamaka resource use

---

<sup>25</sup> The money from this fund was obtained from the village logging concession, *Kapitein* Misiedjan, pers. com. 16/11/17.

<sup>26</sup> One of the clans, the Matjau, trace their ancestry to the plantation of a Portuguese Jew, Mr. Machado, in the Commewijne River area. In 1690 there was a large slave uprising on this plantation (Price, 1983). Another clan (Io), the Abaísas, traces its ancestry to a slave uprising to a plantation run by Labadists, a religious community, in 1693.



maps, the Court concluded that the forest and river resource depicted in that map were indeed essential to the Saamaka continued physical and cultural survival. Furthermore, the Court ruled that in the case of large-scale development projects that have major impacts on Saamaka lands (e.g. logging, mining), the State has the duty to obtain their “free, prior and informed consent, according to their customs and traditions” (Price, 2011: 215). To date, the Government of Suriname (GoS) has not proceeded with demarcation and the granting of formal rights to land for the Saamaka or other Maroon and Indigenous groups in Suriname.

### 3.4 SAAKIKI NDYUKA

*The Saakiiki people* are Ndyuka Maroons who settled in the Sarakreek (Saakiiki) region in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Annex 2). Several Saakiiki Ndyuka communities were resettled north of the Brokopondo lake when the hydropower dam was built; mostly along the Suriname River (1964). Even though these communities, such as Tapoeripa, Compagniekreek and Boslanti (Figure 2), do not have a centuries’ long presence in the area, they do claim territorial rights to the land around the communities they were forced to move to. In 1958, when the district of Brokopondo was established, the Suriname government made an appeal to the Ndyuka granman to cooperate with placing his dignitaries in the Sara creek region administratively on the list of the granman of the Saamaka. The granman of the Ndyuka granted permission but with the restriction that he did not transfer his territory and his people to the Saamaka granman leadership. When the hydropower lake was constructed, some of the Saakiiki Ndyuka also came to live in the territory of the Saamaka. The Ndyuka granman Gazon Matodya asked the Saamaka granman Agbago Aboikoni to take over responsibility over these communities because they were too far from his territory. The Saamaka granman agreed to this (~1968)<sup>27</sup>. As a result, the Saakiiki Ndyuka in the communities below (north of) the hydropower lake presently fall under the Saamaka granman and they are considered his subjects.

---

<sup>27</sup> S. Boobe, Companiekreek, pers. com. 17/11/17; D, Zeegenaar, interim kapitein Companiekreek, pers. com. 17/11/17.

## 4 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE RESULTS

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES AND APPOINTMENT

The system of traditional authority consists of several functions. Although very few Kawina reported living in their traditional villages, their leadership structure is still organized according to the traditional system. The highest authority function in Maroon and Indigenous ethnic groups is that of *granman* (also *gaanman* or *gaama*); the paramount chief. The *granman* is assisted by a council of elders, *hoofd-kapiteins* (*ede-kabiten*; head of the lo) and *kapiteins* (*kabiten*; village chiefs). Most villages have two or three *kapiteins* representing their own Lo. The *granman* and *kapiteins* are assisted by *basjas* (also *basia*, *bassia*), who are administrative assistants. To date, female *granmans* have not existed among the Maroons, but *kapiteins* and *basjas* can be women (ACT, 2010). The female and male traditional authorities have however, very different tasks. Consultation and negotiation with outsiders remains primarily a male task.

During the validation meeting it was commented that the fact that many traditional authorities have not yet been installed is a problem for the communities. For example, Boslanti and Drepada have no installed (government acknowledged) *kapitein*. In Compagniekreek, the installed *kapitein* is very old and no longer equipped to perform official tasks, while a new *kapitein* was appointed but not yet installed. When an official document needs to be signed, there is no-one who is able and authorized to perform this task.

Table X. Number of male and female traditional authorities in the target communities, with in brackets () the number of authorities that have been appointed by the community but have not yet been formally installed by the government.

Community	<i>Hoofdkapitein</i>		<i>Kapitein</i>		<i>Basja</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Balingsoela	0	0	1 (+1)	0	4	4
Compagniekreek	0	0	1 (+1)	0	1	4
Boslanti	0	0	0 (+1)	0	2	2
Tapoeripa	1	0	1 (+1)	0	2	0 (+3)
Drepada	0	0	0 (+1)	0	1 (+1)	1 (+1)
Asigron	0	0	1	0	2	2
Java	0	0	1	0		
Pennenica	0	0	1	0		
Gododrai/Mapane	0	0	1	0	2	2
Moismoiskondre/ Moengotapoe	0	0	(+1)	0		
Maripa Ondro <sup>28</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>28</sup> The Kapitein of Gododrai mentioned that Maripa Ondro currently falls under his authority. They are working on getting their own traditional authority structure.

The political offices of the granman, *kapitein* and *basja* last for life. Traditionally, each new granman is chosen from one and the same lo (subgroup within the larger tribal group), although in some tribes there are two lo that may provide the granman (De Groot, 1974). Traditionally, succession rights is determined on the basis of matrilineal kin relations<sup>29</sup>. When a traditional authority member passes away, the successor will typically be a sister's child (*sisa pikin/sisa mii*)<sup>30</sup>. It must be noted that among the Maroons, nieces are also considered sisters. Generally, the eldest son of the deceased granman's (*kapitein's*) eldest sister holds preference for succession. Yet other matrilineal relations may also qualify such as, for example, the son of the mother's brother. Because both skills and power play a role as well, succession is not straightforward (De Groot 1974; Hoogbergen 1990). The candidate is inaugurated by the Government of Suriname through an official appointment (*beschikking*). The appointment states the rank of the authority and area the candidate is responsible for (ACT, 2010).

After a granman passes away<sup>31</sup>, appointment of a new granman typically takes several years. When Ndyuka granman Matodja Gazon (granman from 1966 to 2011) passed away in 2011, it took until 2015 before all appropriate rituals related to departure and succession had been performed and a new granman, Bono Velanti<sup>32</sup>, was installed. The Ndyuka granman resides in Drietabbetje. After the former Saamaka granman Belfon Aboikoni (granman from 2005 to 2014) passed away, the different Saamaka clans could not arrive at internal agreement about his succession. In the meantime, by 2017, three different men were supposedly inaugurated as granman by different factions of the Saamaka, a conflict that deeply divides the tribal group today.

The (*hoofd*) *kapitein* is succeeded by a person from the same lo. The position of *basja* is often linked to the *bee* (see under 4.2).

Because the positions of granman, *kapitein* and *basja* are for life, and the successor is typically someone from the next generation (e.g. a nephew), traditional authorities are often middle aged or older when they take on their role. In a focus group discussion, Kawina youth brought forward that elderly decision makers do not always understand the need and wishes of their age group. They suggested that a youth organization should be part of, or consulted by, traditional leadership. Kawina youngsters also explained that their captains play a role when family's need assistance or when individuals have problems. One of their captains in particular was described as helpful and someone who can give advice to the younger Kawina's when needed.

With most Maroon groups, politics and religion are interwoven, with the granman and *kapiteins* being central persons in communication with the ancestors and the outside world (ACT, 2010). In religious ceremonies such as burials, the *aiti-dee* (eight day memorial of a death) and the *puu baaka* (end of the mourning period), traditional leaders typically play a central role (See also 4.5). They also are the ones

---

<sup>29</sup> In other words, the descent line of the mother is followed. Sister's children and niece's children from the side of the father are not considered for succession.

<sup>30</sup> B. Eersteling, Maroon expert, pers. com. 17/11/17.

<sup>31</sup> A granman doesn't die, he goes to sleep.

<sup>32</sup> Bono Velanti is the first son of ma Amedan (a younger sister of granman Akontoe Velanti, who was granman from 1950 to 1964) and da Kwasiba (from the village of Poeketi)

begging or thanking the ancestors at the end of village meetings (*krutus*), by libation, suggesting their special connection with the supernatural (ACT, 2010).

## 4.2 TRIBAL, CLAN AND FAMILY STRUCTURES

Suriname's Maroon societies have (largely) the same matrilineal<sup>33</sup> descent structure, with heritage and family relations being traced to the *Oso*, *Mamapikin*, *Bee*, *Lo* en *Nási*. The following section describes family organization and social structure<sup>34</sup>.

***Oso (NDY) / (Wosu)***. The smallest family unit is the *oso/wosu* (house), the nuclear family, which consists of a mother and her children (belonging to the same matrilineage) and the mother's spouse (as long as he remains the spouse of the mother's children).

***Mamapikin (NDY)/Wosu dendoe (SAR)*** consists of the members of different families, with a common grandmother or grand grandmother.

The ***bee*** ("people of the belly", or matrilineage) consists of one or more *mamapikin/wosu dendoe* who trace their ancestry to one common female ancestor, typically a woman who was brought by slave traders from Africa to Suriname. For example, the children of one's sister are part of one's *bee*. Furthermore, in the community of one's mother (*mama konde*) you are a *goon mii* (SAR) or *goon pikin* (NDY), that is, a child of the land. In that village you will have special rights and they will not send you away if you did wrong (e.g. broke taboos or rules). In one's father's village, one does not have the same position<sup>35</sup>.

Different ***bee*** make up one ***lo*** or matri-clan<sup>36</sup>. The *lo* is a primary family unit in Ndyuka and Saamaka societies, which consists of one or more *bee*. The *lo* originated from a particular group of runaway slaves of a specific plantation, and many *lo* names refer to the former plantations or their owners, such as, among the Saamaka: Matjau (from Machado), Nasi (from Nassy), Kadosu (from Cardoso), Biitu (from Brito), and Dombi (Dutch, from "dominee" Baseliers). Among the Ndyuka, one finds, among others, the *lo*'s Beei (former slaves of Major Bley), Compagnie (from the *Geoctroyeerde Societeit van Suriname*; i.e. a Company), Nyanfai (from Jan Faai) and Prika (from Plantation Perika). In all visited Afobaka communities, focus group participants reported that a child belongs to the *lo* of their father's mother<sup>37</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup> Matrilineal descent refers to a kinship system in which ancestral descent is traced through maternal instead of paternal lines. Hence a child is part of the family and community of its mother. The mother's brother often plays a very important (father-like) role in the upbringing of the child, especially for boys.

<sup>34</sup> Much of the information in this section was obtained from the website of the Saamaka Maroon organization Totomboti. URL: <http://www.totomboti.nl/marrons.html>. It was verified through interviews and other literature, e.g. Köbben (1979)

<sup>35</sup> Information obtained from focus group interviews.

<sup>36</sup> Matrilineal = a clan, with membership is determined by matrilineal descent from a common ancestor.

<sup>37</sup> This finding was surprising to the researchers because it seemed to contradict the matrilineal descent structure. In a matrilineal descent system, an individual is considered to belong to the same descent group as her or his mother. However, both men and women, in both Ndyuka and Saamaka villages, insisted that the child is associated firstly with the *lo* of the father's mother, and not the *lo* of its own mother. In his study on the Cottica Ndyuka, anthropologist Köbben (1979) argues that the father's matrilineal group also plays an important role in a child's upbringing and life, especially in cases where the child grows up in the father's village.

It is very unlikely that the runaways from one plantation were all related, let alone matrilineally related to one another. Still, this is how it is presented in Maroon societies. For example, if a certain lo consists of five *bee* (matrilineages), people say that these five ancestresses were five sisters (Köbben, 1979).

The **nasi** (also Gaan-lo) is the motherclan, which is composed of a different *lo*.

The Saamaka consist of 12 lo. Even though the Ndyuka refer to themselves as the twelve clans (NDY: *den twalufu*), they consist in fact of 14 clans; the thirteenth clan being a neutral clan from which the granman is chosen, and the fourteenth clan consisting of a group that joined after signing of the 1760 Peace treaty.

For Maroon individuals these kinship lineages are very important in determining who is to be trusted, who will help you in times of need, and with whom one associates – and who are suitable marriage candidates. For example, people from the same *bee* cannot have a relationship, but there is no problem with that for people from the same lo.

In order to understand the various communities, it is important to be aware of these lineages. This will help determine whether the interests of different groups in a community are represented, and if one group does not benefit at the expense of others<sup>38</sup>. The physical structure of the village is not necessarily the most important unit that Maroon individuals will associate with. The lineage or lo is more important, which may have consequences for the distribution of benefits in the communities.

About their lo in the Brokopondo communities, people reported the following:

- Asigrón: Misiedjan lo and Matjau lo. There are two *bee*: Maabo and Sinei. Maabo brought Sinei to Asigrón, maybe 120-125 years ago.
- Boslanti: Misiedjan lo
- Compagniekreek: Misiedjan lo and Dyu lo
- Tapoeripa: Misiedjan lo
- In Drepada there are 3 lo: Bakabusi, Misiedjan and Papoto. The Papoto lo established Drepada,
- Balingsoela: Matjau lo and Kastoel lo

For the Kawina:

- Java: Wanabo<sup>39</sup>
- Pennenica: Misiedjan
- Moengotapu (prev. Moismoiskondre): Nyanfai<sup>40</sup>
- Maripa-Ondro: Beei<sup>41</sup>, also links to Nyanfai<sup>42</sup>
- Mapane (prev. Gododrai): Beei, Misiedjan, Dju<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> In Asigrón, men reported that it was not a problem if not both *bee* would be present during a meeting. Still it would be important to double-check when organizing meetings.

<sup>39</sup> Kaptitein Noordzee of Java, pers. com. 17/11/17

<sup>40</sup> Kapitein Glen Nijda of Moismoiskondre, pers. Com. 21/11/17

<sup>41</sup> Kaptitein Misiedjan of Mapane, pers. com. 16/11/17

<sup>42</sup> Mr. N. Nijda, former inhabitant of Moismoiskondre, pers. com. 20/11/17

<sup>43</sup> Kapt. Misiedjan of Mapane, pers. com. 16/11/17

In the consulted villages and among Kawina in Paramaribo, most youth did not know what *bee* or *lo* they belonged. Some of the consulted Kawina women who lived in Paramaribo also did not know to what *lo* they belonged, but consulted men did. In the villages, both women and men could name their *lo*. This observation suggests that the *lo* plays a less important role in individual's lives when they live in the city, where their daily social circle includes a larger diversity of people<sup>44</sup>.

## 4.3 RELIGION

Religion is central to Ndyuka and Saamaka life, and influences how individuals view and participate in traditions and rituals. One can roughly distinguish Christian (or missionized) villages and non-Christian villages<sup>45</sup>. Non-Christians typically adhere to their traditional *winti* religion. Non-Christians can also be referred to as *kondë sembe* (lit. people of the original village)<sup>46</sup>. Evidence of adherence to other religions (e.g. Muslim, Hindu) or atheism was not encountered in the visited communities.

### 4.3.1 Winti

For many Maroons cultural expressions that are rooted in the *winti* religion are an intrinsic part of their everyday life. For example, people may carry an amulet, take herbal/healing baths, obey certain taboos, pour some beer on the ground before drinking the bottle, and so forth. These people may not self-identify as *winti*-believers, but see these expressions as part of their traditional Maroon culture. A smaller group of people refers to themselves as *winti*-believers, and is more actively involved in *winti* religious practices such as ancestor veneration and consultation of supernatural forces.

The origins of the *winti* religion can be traced to old African traditions and ideas about life and death. *Winti* is a religion of animism and is polytheistic, in which ancestral spirit veneration plays an important role. The three-tiered hierarchy of higher and lower Gods plays a crucial role in every aspect of Ndyuka and Saamaka life, though perhaps less so for individuals who have been converted to Christianity.

In *winti* religion, the creator, the god who is most powerful, is called **Masaa gadu** (NDY) or **Go gadu** (SAR) ("the Lord God" or the "Great God"). *Masaa Gadu* does not directly intervene in human affairs and the Maroons seldom pray to him directly; they may make a libation to him prior to a journey.

On the next tier down, the Ndyuka distinguish three to four Great Deities (in-between Gods) that do directly and regularly intervene in human life:

- **Gaan Gadu** (Great God), **Gaan Tata** (Great Father) or **Sweli Gado**; Led Ndjukas out of slavery, defends his people against oppression.
- **Na Ogi** (Tata Ogi; Father Danger); Lord of forest and river.
- **Agedeonsu** (also: Ndyuka Gadu); God of fertility. Provided the Ndyuka with shelter, fertile fields and plenty of game and fish. Keeper of life; protector of pregnant women, newborns, and children in general.

---

<sup>44</sup> For example, not one of the six women in the Kawina focus group was married to a Kawina man, simply because they had met someone else.

<sup>45</sup> The Maroons themselves also make this distinction. They may say; "this is a pagan [i.e. non-Christian] village" when explaining why certain traditions are maintained.

<sup>46</sup> Validation meeting, pers. com. Mr. Adipi and Mr. Maabo, 01-11-17

- **Tebu;** God of Mount Tepu (which was added later and seems less prominent)

Countless deities or spirits are part of the third tier of both the Ndyuka and Saamaka cosmology. While some are benevolent, others are hostile to people. Spirits are usually organized in four to five different pantheons:

- Yooka; Ancestor Spirits, i.e. the deceased ancestors of the Maroons
- Papa Gadu (father God) or Vodou; reptile spirits
- Ampuku - Bush Spirits
- Kumanti – Spirits residing in celestial phenomena, such as thunder and lightning, carrion birds or other animals of prey.<sup>47</sup>

(Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering, 1991)

These spirits are also called *obia*<sup>48</sup>. Spirits communicate with the human world through mediums. Certain humans, such as *obia-man*, can actively seek contact with these spirits. However, often this contact is the result of involuntary possession. Each village, or each lineage, has a number of active mediums –male and female- who may be consulted for divination or remedial action. They are referred to as *lukuman* (diviner/prophet) or *obiaman* (medicine man). Being an obiaman or lukuman is typically not a full time occupation, but depending on one’s skills and reputation it can be. For example, the obiaman in Compagniekreek also gets customers from other parts of Suriname and abroad (i.e. French Guiana), so he spends quite some time on his work as an obiaman. Obiaman are not only consulted in the case of problems. One also may ask for help in preventing problems and for protection, for example, people may ask the obiaman for ritual washes (of themselves and/or their clothing) before they smuggle drugs or before going to court. The obiaman is generally a respected person.

In addition to the mentioned spirits there are also *bakuu* (demons, tormenting spirits).

Breaking the rules and taboos that have been imposed by the various deities will upset their ancestral spirits. Avenging, ancestral spirits are called *kunu* and must be appeased when a wrong is committed, for example through libations and sacrifices. Accidents, sickness (especially serious illness) and death are often seen to be the result of *kunu* action. Those incidents of misfortune do not necessarily need to follow immediately after the misdoing. For example, if gold miners work on *kina-dee* (taboo day on which one should not work), and a day, a week, or even a month later someone gets severely hurt in a bad accident or a brand new piece of equipment breaks down, Maroon gold miners will know that the deeper cause of this accident is not worldly (i.e. technical or simply improper use of equipment). Instead, it is the wrath of some deity/spirit, and possibly rituals need to be performed to prevent worse from happening. Therefore,

---

<sup>47</sup> One can also use another classification, i.e. that of spirits of the earth, the water and the sky (respectively goon gadu, wataa gadu, tapu gadu)

<sup>48</sup> In fact, *obia* has two meanings; it is the spirit or energy itself, which can take possession of a human being. It is also the name for magical medicine or amulets that are used as to communicate with these spirits and for protection against evil spirits.

when a sin is committed, atonement is made quickly as directed by religious practitioners (priests and mediums) to prevent the wrath from happening.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Christianity

Much more than the Ndyuka, the Saamaka have been the target of missionary activity. From 1765 onwards (though with brief breaks), German Moravian missionaries executed their missionary activities, and Protestant and Roman Catholic missionary schools have existed in some of the villages since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Jap A Joe, 2015). In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical (*Volle Evangelie*) and other religious denominations also established themselves among the Saamaka. Despite all this religious pressure, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century still only one quarter of Saamaka considered themselves Christian (Price, 1990).

The following churches were present in the Afobaka communities:

- Asigron: New Apostolic church
- Balingsoela: Moravian church (*Evangelische Broeder Gemeente – EBG*); New Apostolic church.
- Drepada: Roman Catholic church
- Compagniekreek: New Apostolic church
- Boslanti: No church
- Tapoeripa: New Apostolic church

Among the study area communities, Boslanti, Compagniekreek and Tapoeripa considered themselves non-Christian villages<sup>50</sup>. The fact that a community is “non-Christian” does not mean that none of the community members are Christian or that all villagers adhere to the traditional Maroon religion (winti). For example, even though focus group participants in Compagniekreek and Tapoeripa referred to their communities as “non-Christian”, both communities have a church (both New-Apostolic, recently built), and the communities have a Christian minority. Such a mixed community typically has two burial sites, or one burial site with two sections; one for people who adhere to the traditional Maroon religion (winti), and another burial site or section for the Christians<sup>51</sup>.

Likewise, being a “Christian” community does not mean that all villagers are Christian or that all traditions related to the winti religion are abandoned. In some cases, conversion to Christianity is rather loose and combined with winti beliefs, so that, for example Jesus, God's Son (as they call him) is simply added to the pantheon of gods. In Drepada, a Traditional Authority member reported that even though the community has hosted the Roman Catholic church for many years, still a significant share of the villagers follow the winti religion<sup>52</sup>. Also in Asigron, an informant estimated that half of the people went to church, while the other half did not go<sup>53</sup>. In fact, focus group participants in the Saamaka communities of the Afobaka road

---

<sup>49</sup> See Blogspot Kwekudee. <https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/06/ndyuka-aukan-people-surinames.html>

<sup>50</sup> People in the non-Christian villages often call their communities “pagan” communities, but because of the negative connotation associated with this term we will use the term non-Christian.

<sup>51</sup> Tapoeripa has one burial site with two sections; one for church people and the other section for people who are not Christened. Meanwhile Asigron only has a Christian burial site.

<sup>52</sup> Basja Vola, pers. com. 28-09-17

<sup>53</sup> Sienita Sinei, pers.com. 28-09-17.



(Balingsoela, Drepada and Asigron), reported that the church does not interfere with the traditional beliefs and taboo beliefs, and people still respect their traditions. Individuals who are Christian partake in many traditional rites and ceremonies, including libations and spiritual possession. Hence in all three Christian communities in our sample, there are ancestral shrines, people adhere to taboos, and libation for the ancestors is common. Community members noted that evangelical churches put more pressure on their followers to abandon ancient traditions. In Tapoeripa, there is an apostolic church. However, very few individuals attend church, and the village has many places to honor different deities and spirits.

Even though the Roman Catholic and Moravian churches, which have a historic presence in many Maroon communities, did not put much pressure on their followers to abandon their traditions, one witnesses a difference with the “Christian” Saamaka communities and the “non-Christian” Saakiiki Ndyuka communities Compagniekreek, Tapoeripa and Boslanti. In these non-Christian communities, traditional cultural expressions seem more strongly maintained and manifested. Taboos (e.g. menstrual taboos) appear more important, and places of spiritual worship seem better maintained and more central to community life. For example, in Boslanti women say ‘everyone goes to the *moon oso*, there are no church people’. Also, the Ndyuka generally seem to use charms, amulets, and fetishes to protect themselves from evil more than the Saamaka do. These differences between Christian and non-Christian communities are also apparent in the below descriptions of places of worship, rites and taboos.

## 4.4 SHRINES, PLACES OF WORSHIP

### 4.4.1 Ritual places (human made) in and around the communities

The two ancestral shrines of most significance are the mortuary (*kee oso* (NDY), *kee wosu* (SAR); also: *dede oso*, *gaanwan oso*; NDY & SAR) and the ancestor pole/flagpole (*faaka-tiki* (NDY) or *faaka pau* (SAR)). As well, the majority of villages have one or more *obia oso*, *tjufunga tiki/azan pau*, *moon oso*, *sweli oso*, *kunu oso* and *grongadu oso* (table 2). Some of these ritual places are also present in Kawina villages and are still used when Kawina go back for ritual purposes according to respondents. Various Kawina stated that all villages have a *faaka tiki* and *dede oso* and that they are being maintained (Validation meeting 05-11-17). All respondents indicated that it is not permitted to take pictures of ritual places. However, when necessary one should ask the *kapitein*. In different communities people said that the images would not show/turn out black.

Figure 3. *kee oso/kee wosu*<sup>54</sup>

A *kee oso* (NDY)/*kee wosu* (SAR) (literally: crying house) is the place where a deceased person is placed on a bier until the funeral is held (figure 3). This is also the location where people hold the *dede oso*; nights where family and friends come together to eat, drink, commemorate the deceased, and express support to the family.

Ndyuka and Saamaka who pass away in Paramaribo and who are not being brought back to their village have their *kee oso/kee wosu* in Paramaribo, often at Nyun Combé (Kleine Saramaccastraat, city centre). In the case of an urban burial, some rituals may be left out or are performed in a simplified manner.



Figure 4. *Faaka tiki/faaka pau*<sup>55</sup>



All communities featured one or more *faaka tiki* (NDY) / *faaka pau* (SAR) (figure 4). This pole, with a cross and most often a white flag, is used to deliver libations to ancestral spirits. The *faaka tiki* is an ancestral shrine where one speaks with the Gods and spirits. One would go to the *faaka tiki* when someone is ill, passed away or when there is a problem. In the gold mining areas, Ndyuka people often build shrines to honor their deities and spirits. In the Santa Barbara area, for example, Kawina gold miners have constructed a place where they do their libation, and beg for accidents and misfortune not to happen to them. To visit these worship places one needs to be pure. Hence women who have their menstruation are not allowed to come near. Also, after having sex one is not allowed to visit holy places.

An *Obia oso* is a hut with a shrine and spiritually loaded artifacts inside (figure 5). Community members go there once in a while, often when someone is possessed by a certain obia, or when one wants to consult a specific obia. This is also the place where the obiaman prepares his 'medicine'. Animistic entities may speak through the mouth of possessed people in a special language, *kromanti*, which only selected people can understand and interpret. In Boslanti it was reported that women cannot enter the *obia oso*, unless they are older than 60 (i.e. in menopause) or pregnant. Women are allowed to stand just outside, though in the most traditional communities women having their period were not allowed to get close to any shrines.

Figure 5. *Saamaka obia oso*, 1968 (Price, 1990)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6TfqvVOpwU>

<sup>55</sup> [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-GIJX80tyPU4/TuU8Lr15I0I/AAAAAAAAASzQ/LeNOwrDJ4ew/s1600/IMG\\_2508.JPG](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-GIJX80tyPU4/TuU8Lr15I0I/AAAAAAAAASzQ/LeNOwrDJ4ew/s1600/IMG_2508.JPG)



A ***tjufunga tiki* (NDY)** or ***azan pau* (SAR)** is a gate placed at the entrance – or different entrances- of the village, which is meant to keep evil spirits outside (figure 6). Compagniekreek, for example, has 12 *tjufunga tiki* at every possible entrance into the village. Women who have their menstruation may not walk underneath the gate but have to pass it on the side.

Figure 6. *Tjufunga tiki* (NDY) or *Azan pau* (SAR) at the entrance of a Maroon village



A ***moon oso* (NDY)/*faagi wosu* (SAR)** is a hut where women go in seclusion when they have their menstrual period. More about the menstrual hut is explained in section 4.6.2 under “menstrual taboos”.

A ***sweli oso*** is a place where a *sweli* is prepared and performed; a ritual or consultation of an oracle and sacred bundle to investigate the supernatural cause of an accident, illness or death (also 4.5).

A ***kunu oso*** and ***Grongadu oso*** were only named in Tapoeripa as locations where people go to pray for Mother Earth.

Table 2. Presence of cultural places and places for ancestral worship in the Afobaka communities

NDY SAR	Faaka tiki Faaka pau	Tjufunga tiki Azan Pau	Kee oso (dede oso) Kee wosu	Obia oso Winti wosu	Moon oso Fagi wosu	Other
Balingsoela	3	3	1	4	0	
Drepada	1	1	1	4	1	
Asigron	2 <sup>5</sup>	0	1	5	0	
Compagniekreek	2	12	2	8+ <sup>4</sup>	2	Sweli oso <sup>3</sup>
Boslanti	1	6	1	1	3	Sweli oso
Tapoeripa	1	2	1	3	4	Kunu oso <sup>6</sup> Grongadu oso <sup>2</sup>

1. Also named: *Gaan wan oso*
2. Used for praying to Mother earth (gron mama)
3. The sweli oso is in Kleine Compagny, a subsection of the community
4. Additional obia oso can be found in Kleine Compagnie, a sub-section of the community
5. One is broken
6. To honor old ghosts of dead people

It is important to note that a community can only claim “village” (*konde*) status if it has a flagpole and a mortuary. Without these two shrines, a place is considered a settlement (*kampu*) regardless of the number of its inhabitants.

#### 4.4.2 Ritual places (natural) or natural places with special meaning around the communities

Community members reported that there are specific places in the forest where you may not go; but in many cases, one only recognizes such a place upon approach. Specific locations with cultural significance outside the communities have been described in the tangible heritage report (C. White, 2017).

Sacred sites that were mentioned in multiple communities were:

- Beetoyah; a pagan burial site and location of old military post. Women are not allowed to enter.
- Brokopondo island; where a raft with Maroon runaways sank,
- Pang wataa (where the Compagnie Kreek enters the Suriname River); people from Compagnie Kreek are not allowed to go there because at some point in time an ancestor killed someone there.

Other sacred and/or *kina* (taboo) places were typically mentioned by just one specific community, including:

**Asigron:** Mawasi Creek is an important creek of the ancestors; a *dumi-matu* (sleep forest). There are special hunting grounds there. There is also a special camp where they carry out cultural activities.

**Tapoeripa:** People are forbidden from going to the mouth of the Tapoeripa Creek; people have died there. Also, there are two holy trees at the back of the village (Peprepatu and Ingipipa). Villagers go to the area of the trees for ritual baths (*wasi*). Women are not allowed to enter the pagan part of the cemetery. Furthermore, one is not allowed to go to the *wasipesi* (wash place) on the riverside, where the deceased are being washed.

**Balingsoela:** Outsiders and women are not allowed to go to Kankantrikreek, near the spiritual place Brokopondo Island. Also, on the path to the river there is a special tree where men perform their *winti*

(traditional religion) prayers; women are not allowed to go there during child bearing years, only after they have reached menopause. In **Boslanti**: at about 10 minutes walking from the village there is a Kankantrie where people go to pray (traditional religion). There also is a rock in the river where people are not allowed to bathe.

In Compagniekreek and Drepada, no additional specific places were mentioned other than those listed above and creeks in general. In fact, all creeks have certain taboos, which are discussed in greater detail in section 5.6.3.

For all communities, the burial sites are special places that must be preserved and maintained. If a person passes away, the family decides at what burial place the person will be interred. For example, if someone passes away in Paramaribo, the family may bring the body to the village to bury, and vice versa. If someone dies in a Christian village that features a Christian funeral site (e.g. Drepada) but the person was not Christian, the person can be buried at the nearby non-Christian burial site, in this case Beetoyah.

#### 4.4.3 Sacred trees

In all consulted communities, including the Kawina community in Paramaribo, the same trees were mentioned as being sacred trees, or trees where certain spirits such as Ampuku reside. These include:

**Kankantrie** (*Ceiba pentandra*): The Kankantrie is a tree with very high cultural significance not only for the Maroons, but also for other Surinamese. Saamaka people at Drepada reported that you cannot even touch it or point to it.

**Katu** (SAR) or **Nkatu** (NDY) (*Moraceae Ficus*, an epiphyte): If you cut this tree, it will cut you back. There are different kinds, including the Abasan Nkatu, which is a vine-like tree that strangles other trees.

**Kwatakama** (*Parkia spp.*). This tree was only mentioned in Asigrón, but in literature it is also mentioned by Maroons as a tree for which one must have respect, and that cannot be cut<sup>56</sup>.

People in the different communities were not unanimous on what should happen if Newmont were to encounter one of these sacred trees in its Project Footprint. Generally, it was recommended that if one encountered such a tree during road planning and building, the road should go around it.

When found in areas designated for other development, such as mines, it is understood that the company may not be able to work around it. In most villages, the community members recommended that in such cases when trees are encountered, it would be best if Newmont management/higher level staff would discuss the matter with Maroon staff. They can discuss what to do in the specific case, for example libation, a ritual, or wash the tree with specific leaves. If a knowledgeable person washes the Kankantrie with special leaves, the tree will die by itself after 8 days, and the soul/spirit (*yeye*) will go to another host. It was emphasized that if you do not respect these rules you may lose the gold, or someone might get in an accident. In Compagniekreek, community members commented that local gold miners work around the mentioned trees, but Brazilians do not care. As a result one sees accidents happen.

---

<sup>56</sup> See for example, the website of Sacred Natural Sites: <http://sacrednaturalsites.org/items/winti-belief-helps-protect-forests-in-suriname/>

Only in Asigrón, elders were of the opinion that it would be no problem to cut these trees. They actually advised against performing some type of ritual because, they said, once you start with libations (*towe wata*) and such, these type of supernatural forces will be awakened and become active.

#### 4.4.4 Sacred animals

The only sacred animal mentioned during consultations in the communities was the Boa constrictor (NL: *tapijtslang*, SUR: *Gadu sneki*) which is believed to be a host for Papa Gadu or Vedu (deity, see above). Also certain Anaconda and Boa species (SUR: *Aboma*), and specific species of caiman must be respected and cannot be killed. When these animals are killed they will take possession of you (or a matrilineal related relative) and harm may come to you and your kin.

In Asigrón, men also quoted as a general rule of thumb for the killing of animals; “when you do not eat an animal you should not kill it” e.g. snakes, certain birds (owl, young crow). But this rule does not necessarily have a spiritual underpinning.

### 4.5 RITES OF PASSAGE, RITUALS, AND CELEBRATIONS

Maroons have rites of passage during the most important transitions in their lives; birth, puberty, maturity, marriage and death. The size of the event depends on the character of the community (incl. the dominant religion), on the position of the individual, the preference of the family and of the financial situation. Besides rites of passage there are also days of celebration and rituals. Maroons living outside their traditional village still attach value to these rituals and celebrations and occasionally Maroons who live abroad come back to give a family member *pangi* (*gi panggi*) (piece of fabric, worn as a wrap by women and grown-up girls) or to prove the last honor to the deceased.

Activities often take place in the village, but for people who live in Paramaribo, people may attend rituals and celebrations at locations in Paramaribo that are suitable and especially designed for these activities.

Kawina women living in Paramaribo explained that they return to Pennenica for ritual activities approximately once a year with other Kawina who wish to participate. The annual ritual lasts three days, but normally they take more time to come and go. This account was confirmed by Kawina youth, who said that a number of times a year, Kawina go back to the villages, jointly by bus, most often for *puu baaka* (a ritual indicating the end of a mourning period).

This section below provides an overview of rites of passage performed by Ndyuka and Saamaka Maroons. However, the description is not a “blue print” or recipe. The performance of rituals and celebrations slightly differs between tribes, clans, communities and even between families living in the same village. Festivities can be celebrated communally, but can also be held at home with a small number of guests.

#### 4.5.1 Rites of passage

**Birth:** After birth the baby should stay inside the house with the mother. After approximately a week (no set date was mentioned) the mother can bring the baby outside *Puu pikin a doo/Puu mii a doo* (SAR) (bring the baby outside). This moment is celebrated with a ceremony. In some families the mother and baby are being wrapped in cloth (*pangis*); other families only sit together and give presents to mother and child.



**Gi kwei (NDY)/Gi kojo (SAR)** is the ritual that is performed to determine the transition from little girl to puberty, when breasts and pubic hair first become visible. The father's sisters tie a cord around the girl's waste. The mother has made a kwei/kojo (loincloth) that is attached to the cord and covers the private parts (figure 7).

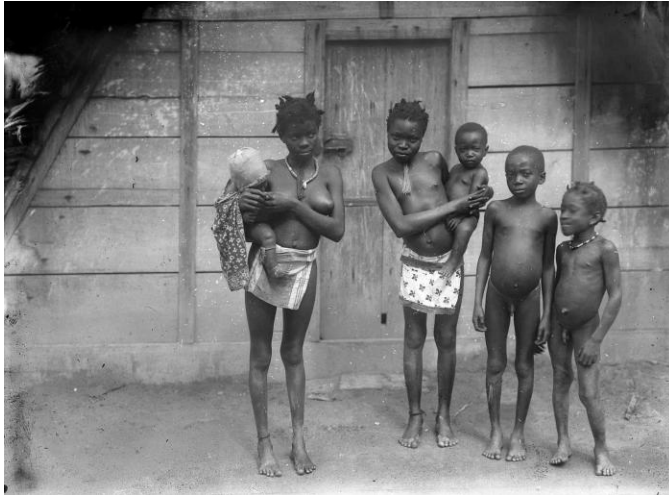


Figure 7. Two girls wearing the kwei, indicating that they are not yet mature (Image ca. 1910). Source: Blogspot "Trip down to Memory Lane"<sup>57</sup>

**Gi pangi (NDY)/kosu (SAR):** during this ritual a girl is declared to be a woman. Although the earlier ritual (gi kwei/kojo) had little effect on the life of the girl, the *gi pangi/kosu* ritual or initiation is a real turning point. During the ceremony the girl is dressed in *pangis* by the sisters of her father and gets advice on how to live her life as a grown-up woman. As presents she receives everything an adult woman needs; kitchen utensils such as pots, cutlery but also dozens of *pangis* and sheets. The girl who is now dressed in *pangis* is taken out of the house and brought to the *moon oso* (menstruation hut, see below. This varies per community). They bring her inside the *moon oso*, take her out and repeat the process a couple of times. After this she has to walk through the village, singing and dancing, with her female family members. In other villages, for example Asigron, the beginning of womanhood is celebrated in a family setting. After this ritual the woman can live with a man or live by herself.

The *gi pangi/kosu ritual* is the moment all the menstrual taboos become relevant. From now on the woman cannot cook during menstruation, cannot sleep in her own bed nor use her own chair (see par. 4.6.2.). If a girl gets pregnant before receiving *pangi* this is a shame for her and her family. She will get her *pangi* during her pregnancy but in a simplified way without festivities, and she only receives one piece of fabric instead of the more than a hundred *pangis* other girls might receive. In Drepada, women in the focus group reported that when a girl gets pregnant before receiving the *pangi*, the boy and the girl will be placed in the middle of the village, naked. They will get cursed by the people from the village, and have to walk around through the village naked.

---

<sup>57</sup> See: <https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/06/ndyuka-aukan-people-surinames.html>

**Gi kamisa:** this ritual for boys corresponds with the *pangi* ritual for the girls. It signifies that a boy has become a man. The boy stays at home or at the house of a family member and receives dozens of *kamisas* (cloth worn on a man's chest, knotted on one shoulder). Male family members take the boy through the village with music and dance. The man also receives other presents, like hammocks and a gun. The difference with the ritual for girls is that for the men nothing really changes, there are no new rules or restrictions to their everyday life.

**Marriage:** Getting married usually occurs traditionally even in the villages that are Christian. The family of the man asks the family of the girl for permission to marry. After approval the man gives *paaka* (payment; dowry – usually symbolic SAR), *sopi* (alcoholic drink), and/or a carved and painted boat paddle (NDY) to the woman and holds a small party. The woman gives embroidered *kamisas* to the man.

Ndyuka and Saamaka society are polygamous, meaning that a man is allowed to marry multiple wives. Not all marriages are polygamous though<sup>58</sup>, and the number of wives seldom exceeds three. A man only is allowed to have as many wives as he can economically support, and the multiple wives are expected to be treated equally<sup>59</sup>. Especially in the more traditional communities, a fair amount of social control is executed to ensure that the different wives are treated fairly. The various Christian churches advocate against polygamy, and hence this marriage form is less common in missionized communities. Divorce is relatively easy and common.

**Death:** death plays an important role in the Maroon culture and the associated rituals are summarized here. Performance of associated rituals depends on various factors, such as the (supernatural) cause of death, the religion of the deceased and the family, location of rituals and of funeral. A general summary of rituals and beliefs related to death is provided below.

In the winti religion, one believes that after death the soul lives on in another form. After someone passes away a male *basja* is called. The *basja* walks through the village and tells the villagers that there is a message and invites them for a meeting (*krutu*) in the *kee oso/kee wosu* (mortuary, litt: crying house). When the messages reaches the *basja* in the late evening or night, the *krutu* will be held the day after in the early morning. During the *krutu* the *basja* explains that someone has passed away. In a non-Christian setting, the community also may try to find out what the (supernatural) cause of death was through a *sweli* (consultation with a sacred bundle or oracle; see section 4.5.3), to know what kind of funeral the person should get<sup>60</sup> or what kind of rituals need to be performed<sup>61</sup>.

The body will be washed at a special washing place and placed on a bier in the *kee oso/kee wosu*. The exclamations of woe that have started at the house of the deceased will be continued at the *kee oso/wosu*. This is also the place where people eat, drink, commemorate the deceased, and express support to the

---

<sup>58</sup> One website reports that one third of Ndyuka marriages are polygynous, but the source is not reported (URL:

<sup>59</sup> For example, if the man buys a new bed for the first wife, he will need to buy a new bed or something of equal value for the second wife as well.

<sup>60</sup> For example, among the Ndyuka, if it turns out that the person was a witch or *bakuu basi* (master of demons), different rituals must be performed.

<sup>61</sup> For example, if the person died because the person or someone in his or her lineage upset certain spirits or Gods (i.e. through a curse), a ritual must be performed to appease these spirits/Gods and prevent them from inflicting more harm upon the lineage.



family. Followers of the winti religion dance in a circle during the evening and night (*tuka* (NDY)). Christians usually do not dance. In the evening they sit together with a church leader and sing church songs, an event that is named *singi neti* (sing night). The last night before the funeral is *booko dee* (break the day) when people are at the *dede oso* until the sun comes up and the preparations for the funeral begin. When people are buried in Paramaribo, *dede oso* ceremonies and the *singi neti* can be held at locations in Paramaribo such as Kleine Combé (cultural activities), Loge Victorie (Christian singing nights) or at people's homes. Kawina women say that since the Interior War, Kawina no longer have been buried in the traditional Kawina villages.

After the *dede oso* the deceased is prepared for the coffin. The carriers of the coffin (SUR *dragiman*) bring the deceased to the cemetery, accompanied by music and ritual dance. The movements must prevent the spirit of the deceased from following him or her on the way to the cemetery. There is some variation in who is to attend the burial itself. Respondents in Balingsoela conveyed that only men bury, while focus group participants in Tapoeripa reported that all adults are allowed to bury. Children are only permitted to attend the burial if they are closely related (daughter/son). Generally, women are not allowed to enter the cemetery where winti believers are buried.

Among winti believers, after the burial, close family usually stays for 3 nights at the *dede oso*. On the third day there is one day of prayer, which is called *dii dee wataa* (three days of water). Hereafter everybody can return home. Three months after a person has died, people will go to the *faaka tiki* to ritually share *sopi* (alcoholic drink) and to announce that they will give food to the person who passed away. This is called *dii mun wataa* (three month's water) or *dii mun njang* (three month's food). The food is put on banana leaves next to the *dede oso*.

Christians perform a ritual named *aiti dee* (8<sup>th</sup> day) a week after the funeral. The *aiti dee* is a mourning meeting comparable to the *dede oso*, and is repeated six weeks after the funeral during the *siksi wiki* (6<sup>th</sup> week). The mourning period is closed during a *puu baka* (pull of the black) ritual in the *kee oso/kee wosu*, when the soul of the deceased is liberated. The loss must now be accepted. For Ndyuka this happens after approximately one year, in consultation with family and traditional authorities. For persons of large communal and cultural significance, such as a *kapitein* or *granman*, the mourning period will be longer. The spouse of the deceased will wear black, blue and white clothing during the mourning period. The color red shows that the period of mourning is over. A *puu baaka* ritual is often held for all persons that passed away in the previous year.

It is common practice that all family members, relatives and friends support the family of the deceased with money, food and drinks.

#### 4.5.2 Celebrations

**Tap yari:** during this annual party people from the community celebrate the closing of the past year and celebrate the beginning of the current year. Every village has its own tap yari but the day of celebration is mutually agreed among other villages. This leads to a sequence of tap yari celebrations in the first approx. three months of the year. Every community has a *pangi* design selected for this day and all villagers, visitors from surrounding communities and other participants wear this *pangi*, clothing made of this fabric, or at least wear similar colors. During the day, soccer (for men) and *slagbal* (type of baseball, for

women) are played. There is live music and food and drinks are sold in the streets. Usually the participants hold a procession through the community (SUR: *lontu kondre*). In some villages the procession ends at the river or creek, where the participants run into the water to cleanse themselves for the new year.

#### 4.5.3 Rituals

**Libation – (AUC/SAR towe wataa).** In the winti religion, it is believed that a deceased person continues to live onward in another form, in the land of the dead. Veneration of the ancestors is supported by the notion that the land of the dead and the earth where human beings live, are one unified society. The relationship between the dead/ancestral spirits and the living is maintained in various ways. Ancestral spirits have roughly two ways of maintaining in contact with the living: (1) appearing in dreams, and (2) returning and taking possession of a living person. Living human beings also have two ways to maintain contact with the ancestors: (1) offering (alcoholic) drinks as a libation; and (2) evoking the spirits of the ancestors, either directly or through a medium (Jabini, 2012). Libation is offered during different activities and rituals, such as at the start of a meeting (*krutu*); when asking for healing at a *faaka tiki/pau*; or at the *obia oso*. In Boslanti, focus group participants reported that they visited the *faaka tiki* monthly to ask for forgiveness for mistakes, or ask for blessing or help. A man from the focus group in Boslanti explained: “For example, how men go to gold fields you ask that they will not get an accident, and you ask that women who go to their fields will not meet a snake” (2 Aug. 2015).

Most often men perform libation rituals, which is a skill that has to be learned. In Asigrón, it was explained that you ask deceased persons who have done good for the village for help. In most villages, respondents reported that women are not allowed to give libation. In Balingsoela and Tapoeripa, however, women in the focus groups reported that in their community, women can pour libation when there is no man available. In Asigrón, women say they are not allowed to give libation, they can only clap hands. In Boslanti women may perform libation.

**Sweli.** In some cases when misfortune occurs, the cause is not immediately clear or the offender is unknown. In such cases a ritual named *sweli* (in SAR also *fii*) may be undertaken to determine the cause of the illness (i.e. who is to blame for the accident/sickness/death by their sin). This can be accomplished through the use of oracles (in the case of dead, often hair of the deceased) tied in a bundle and attached to a long plank. Two men hold the plank on their heads and then questions are put to the oracle. The way the plank moves, answers the questions (figure 8). In the communities along the Afobaka road, this ritual is still practiced.



Figure 8. Men performing sweli. Source: Price & Price, 2003)

## 4.6 TABOOS

Followers of the *winti* religion adhere to a large number of taboos. Some of these taboos are personal, for example an individual may not be allowed to consume a specific type of meat, fish or other food. But many taboos are communal, and apply to anyone in a certain location or certain circumstances. Violation of the taboos may cause the wrath of spirit Gods and lead to illness and death, not only for the person who “sinned”, but also for others in his or her lineage.

### 4.6.1 Taboo days

Different areas have different taboo days (*kina-dee*). On these days, one is not allowed to perform hard physical labor. For example, men cannot work in the forest or cut and/or burn agricultural land. Women should not shovel and weed in their gardens, but they can harvest or perform household tasks that do not require too much effort. In church communities (in this case all Saamaka communities), inhabitants often respect Sunday as a Christian rest day, and may have an additional traditional *kina-dee*. Conducting a meeting on *kina-dee* is no problem, and may even be preferred since many people are not at work in the forest (e.g. planting, timber cutting).

In the gold mining areas, people will not work for either half a day or the entire day in *kina-dee*. There are many stories of outside (e.g. Brazilian) gold miners who ignored the taboos and subsequently got into an accident or had their equipment break down. During the validation meetings with Brokopondo communities, it was commented that if a company like Newmont wants to respect *kina-dee* but still needs

to work seven days a week, a ritual can be performed (i.e. libation), to ask for pardon for working on the kina-dee<sup>62</sup>.

The different villages reported different *kina-dees*, sometimes even different days for different sections of the community.

- Balingsoela: Sunday is church day; across the creek in the forest the *kina-dee* is Wednesday; and on this side of the creek it is Tuesday.
- Drepada: Sunday is church day; in and around the village *kina-dee* is Thursday, but across the creek *kina-dee* is Wednesday.
- Asigron: Sunday is a free day because of church. Wednesday is *kina-dee* across the creek; Thursday is *kina-dee* at Mapane Creek
- Boslanti: Wednesday is *kina-dee*, also in the small-scale mining areas of the village.
- Compagniekreek: Wednesday is *kina-dee*.
- Tapoeripa: Tuesday is *kina-dee*.

#### 4.6.2 Menstrual taboos

In all visited communities, women and men adhered to rather strict menstrual taboos, which are related to women being “impure” during this period. Four out of the six communities featured one or more menstruation huts (NDY: *moon oso*, SAR: *faagi wosu*). During their menstrual period, women who adhere to the winti religion will leave their home to sleep in the menstruation hut. During these days, they will not enter their home, and rely on their sisters, mothers or daughters to bring them food or have to cook for themselves in the *moon oso/faagi wosu*. During their menstruation women also will sit on a separate chair or stool, which will not be used by others (especially not by men). In Asigron we were told that government chairs do not have taboo powers (*kina*), so being in a meeting in the meeting room is not a problem for women having their menstruation.

During their menstrual period, women also cannot cook for men or serve food to them<sup>63</sup>. A representative from Balingsoela emphasized that with regard to the Newmont kitchen, women should not cook or serve food. They can wash the dishes in the kitchen during their period<sup>64</sup>. Furthermore, women cannot bath in the creek during their period. When they bathe using a bucket, the water may not run into the creek. These taboos are valid in the creeks running through the Sabajo Project as well. For bathing in the river, different places have different rules; in some places women can go but in a special place. Women with their period cannot come near sacred places or shrines, nor attend certain rituals.

In Balingsoela, there was a *moon oso* until the church arrived (app. 30 years ago). Now women stay in their house but they are not allowed to attend cultural rites. Also in Asigron, women reported that there used to be a menstruation hut in the village, but it is broken now and no longer in use. On the other hand, in the much smaller community of Tapoeripa, there were four *moon osos*. Moreover, while in some villages all women went into seclusion (e.g. Boslanti), in other villages focus group participants reported that there were also women – especially those who attend church- who did not use it (e.g.

---

<sup>62</sup> Validation meeting with Afobaka, Balingsoela, Companiekreek (31/10/17)

<sup>63</sup> Men reported that they would get a stomach ache when they ate the food of women in their period.

<sup>64</sup> pers. com. Mr. Paansa, 1-11-17

Compagniekreek). In Boslanti, not going into seclusion was not considered an option. It was commented that if a woman continues to sleep in her house, she will bleed for two whole months.

Not going in seclusion does not excuse women from following certain rules. Women who do not go into seclusion typically stay (much) at home, do not visit other people, and also adhere to the other prohibitions (e.g. not bathing in the creek, no cooking for men, not touching any food that men will eat). Women can cook for themselves, and for their children as long as the boys have not reached adulthood (i.e. received the *kamisa*), but usually the husband, a daughter or another relative will take over cooking during these days. Women who experience their menstruation at home usually sleep in a different room from men. If the house has only one sleeping room, they may sleep in the cooking hut – unless it has a doorstep (SAR: *gunsei*), in which case you are not allowed to sleep there during the menstruation. If a woman slept in the cooking hut, after her menstruation is over she will have to clean the entire cooking hut and throw away all the wood. There is no strict rule as to whether or not women sleep separately from men. In Asigron, for example, women reported that it is up to the couple to decide whether or not they will sleep apart.

Living in Paramaribo, Kawina women still adhere to menstrual taboos but slightly adjusted. Consulted women reported that when they have their menstruation, they do not sleep in their own bed. They sleep in another room or in the living room - even when there is no man living in the house. A woman explained that because they now live in Paramaribo, they do not sleep in a separate house, but when they go back to the interior they stay in a separate hut during their period. Young girls also said that they adhered to these taboos. When they have a boyfriend they will either sleep in a separate room, or on the floor in the same room. The girls and women in Paramaribo also will not prepare food for men, and have their own chair to sit on. Women in the Kawina focus group reported jokingly that the only difference is that in the past they had to sit on a hard wooden bench, and now they use a softer plastic chair. During the validation meeting, one woman commented that she would not want her son to marry a non-Maroon wife because such women do not respect the taboos, and as a result her son may be hurt<sup>65</sup>.

Girls will only start obeying the menstrual taboos after they have received the *pangi* (NDY) or *kosu* (SAR) which is typically around the age of 17 or 18. Hence if a girl reaches menarche (first occurrence of menstruation) at the age of 13 and she gets her *pangi* at the age of 18, there will 5 years during which she can have her period without having to follow the “menstruation-rules”. When girls were asked whether they would want their daughters to follow the same rules, they unanimously confirmed that they wanted to keep the tradition. One Kawina girl said that it was good to have these traditions because you are treated as a princess.

Not obeying menstrual taboos may have many kinds of unwanted consequences, ranging from bad luck to illness or death for the victims - usually men.

An interesting observation from Boslanti is that women were not allowed to enter the *obia oso* and the fence surrounding the *faaka tiki*, unless they are past 60 or pregnant, in which case they will not have had their menstruation for some time.

---

<sup>65</sup> Validation meeting, 05/11/17

For Newmont employees, the above means that if a female staff member visits one of the communities during her menstrual period, it would be most appropriate to notify a female *basja* or another woman. You may attend the meeting, but there may be certain restrictions on, for example, shaking the hand of men and walking around in the village. . In addition, it would be good to take into account that Maroon women working in the kitchen may not feel comfortable preparing food during their menstrual period, while on their part male workers may wish to avoid food prepared by women during their menstruation.

#### 4.6.3 Creek and river taboos

Creeks are subject to many taboos. While some taboos are universal, other taboos are specific to specific creeks. The taboos (*trefu*) for the creeks apply per watershed area. For example, an elder from Asigron explained that because the Maiwassi Creek, Mapane Creek, Small Commewijne Creek (incl. Bigi anu creek) and their tributaries all originate from the same mountain, they all have the same *trefus*.

Through trial and error, the ancestors have found out what *trefus* apply to what creeks, and these are to be strictly adhered to by everyone – regardless of whether or not people attend church or live in the city.

Universal taboos include:

- Women who have their menstruation may not bathe in the creek<sup>66</sup>. When they bathe with a bucket, the water may not enter the creek.
- Women who just had their baby (first three months) may not bathe in, or enter the creek.
- One may not defecate in or near the creeks. Also, after defecation, one may not wash ones behind in the creek.
- Animal blood may not run into the creek. Also, you cannot shoot fish with your gun, because fish-blood also may not run into the creek.
- One cannot throw pepper in the creek
- One cannot throw lime in the creek
- One cannot throw sugar cane in the creek
- One may not spill soap in the creek, e.g. for dish washing
- You may not fell a tree that falls across the water
- One may not use the creek sand to wash pots, or take that sand with you<sup>67</sup>

The Compagniekreek and its tributaries (e.g. Mawasi Creek, Mapane Creek) are creeks that are spiritually strong places, with many taboos. Additional taboos for these places include:

- One cannot involve in a fishing technique named *ponsu*<sup>68</sup>. Also, when you cut a piece of the *neku* liana plant, which is used for *ponsu*, you cannot cross the creek with it because the sap may drip into the creek.
- Cooked rice cannot be thrown in the creek –uncooked rice is not a problem.

---

<sup>66</sup> This rule only applies after the girls have received the *pangi*, see section 4.6.2 Menstrual Taboos

<sup>67</sup> This taboo was mentioned only once, by women from Asigron.

<sup>68</sup> *Ponsu* is a fishing technique where one throws pieces of a liana (SUR: *Neku*) that has anesthetic properties in the creek, so that the fish get stupefied and can easily be caught

In Drepada, it was mentioned that the creeks just behind the community, Sede Creek and Baas Creek, were subject to separate regulations. No metal items are allowed to enter these creeks. Moreover, one cannot wash a *dii futu patu* in the creek (figure 9). The *dii futu patu* (also: *obia patu*) is a pot from pure iron, with three feet, which is used for ritual purposes. The same applies for the creeks in and around Tapoeripa.



Figure 9. *Dii futu patu*

The creek mouth of the Tapoeripa Creek is a spiritually powerful place. The people of Tapoeripa have been informed by the people from Drepada, who gave them this place to live, that no one can go there. Some people drowned in the river there and were buried there.

When people violate the taboos willingly, bad things may happen to them, including death. We heard many stories about people who had died because of violation of the trefus. For example, a Hindustani man who was in the forest threw the left-overs from his meal in the creek, including pepper – even though he had been warned. He became very ill and died. In the Sabajo area, a Brazilian man defecated not far from the creek, even though he had been told not to do so. When it rained that evening, the water rose and his feces ran into the creek. The next morning he was found dead in his hammock. At the Kleine Commewijne, at a place referred to as “bojo”, twenty Saamaka died because they did not live according to the rules.

When people violate the taboos unknowingly or coincidentally, the consequences are not as severe. Still, if one is aware, it would be good to perform certain rituals to beg pardon for such violations. Such rituals typically involve libation and may take place either in the community or at the location where the incident took place.

The taboos are universally known, and were mentioned in focus groups in the Afobaka communities and in interviews with Kawina individuals. Also in all communities, we found that youth (~16-25) could generally name one or two taboos (e.g. with regard to menstruation) but were not well informed about all taboo-rules. In Compagniekreek, elders complained that youngsters no longer wanted to listen to such warnings, and did whatever they wanted to.

The rivers do not have taboos – although women who have their menstruation may not bathe or enter the river everywhere. Furthermore, at Boslanti, there is a large rock in the river, which has a soul (*yeye*); you have to treat it with respect. In Drepada, it was mentioned that the palm fruit Palepoe should not be thrown into the water.

#### 4.7 TRADITIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALERS

*Dresiman* (traditional healer, man) and *dresi-uma* (traditional healer, woman) have a profound knowledge of the medicinal plants and the diseases and conditions they treat. In all Afobaka communities, consulted community members reported the presence of traditional healers.

In Compagniekreek, there is an active *dresiman* who also serves as *obiaman*<sup>69</sup>. He can evoke the spirits by rituals to solve physical, psychological, or social problems. He also can heal broken bones, treat headaches and wounds, solve problems related to menstruation and pregnancy and can manage spiritual possession. His clients come from both the community and outside, including French Guiana. He also goes to places to visit clients who cannot come to him themselves. The Compagniekreek *dresiman* has two *wintis*, spirits by whom he may get possessed. If he wants to do consult these *wintis*, he has to perform a ritual the evening in advance to wake up his *winti*. In case of emergency, the *wintis* themselves wake up. The Compagniekreek *dresiman* reported receiving 5-7 clients a week. In the same village resides a woman who works in collaboration with the *dresiman*, who is specialized in female healing. She conducts massages when women have problems with their fertility, menstruation or pregnancy.

Asigron has a *dresi-uman* who makes traditional medicines. There also is a traditional midwife. However, nowadays villagers more often go to the city for deliveries, especially in the case of teenage girls. The youth in Asigron say that they would go to Balingsoela or Drepada for broken bones. Boslanti has 3 *dresiman* (M/F); two women and one man who you can visit for all kinds of illnesses. Women in Boslanti explained that when you get *winti* you can go to the *dresiman* as well; you cannot go to the Medical Mission. Drepada has one traditional healer, there are many different people who can do herbal healings baths (spiritual cleansing) and there are 2 traditional midwives. In Balingsoela there is also just one *dresiman*, however, youngster say there are 4. In Tapoeripa there is one *dresiman* who is still strong. Another one is weak. Older people in the village can make herbal potions that are used for ritual washing (*patu*). Villagers go to Medical Mission Primary Health Care (Medical Mission-PHC)<sup>70</sup> for most illnesses, but for broken bones they go to the *dresiman*.

Besides *dresiman* villages have *obiaman*. In Drepada for example there are five *obiaman*. When an evil spirit is tormenting a person, the *obia* person can stop it. It was explained that if your own spirit is strong, these external spirits will not bother you.

All target communities featured a Medical Mission Primary PHC, and had one or more *dresiman* and/or *obiaman*. In addition, in all Afobaka villages lived older men and/or women who can make a *patu* (a pan with a traditionally made medicine, made of leaves, branches and barks) for various complaints and diseases. And villagers produce a wide selection of home remedies. So villagers have the choice to visit an MZ clinic, to visit a *dresiman*, to ask a knowledgeable person to produce a *patu*, use home-medicine, or a combination of the above. For example, women will go with their newborns to the Medical Mission PHC clinic for prenatal care, but they also will wash the baby with specific herbal extracts. In the case of illness, pills (e.g. antibiotics pain killers) may be obtained from the Medical Mission PHC clinic, while also a

---

<sup>69</sup> An *obiaman* serves as intermediaries between man, specific *wintis* and the spirits of ancestors.

<sup>70</sup> The Medical Mission PHC is a Foundation, which is financed by the GoS Ministry of Health (all working expenses) and donor organizations (additional expenses). The Medical Mission PHC provides primary health care to Indigenous and Maroon communities in the Suriname Interior through a network of 52 health care centers, scattered over a 130.000 square kilometer area, serving approximately 54.000 people. (For more information see the Medical Mission PHC website: [http://www.medischezending.sr/en\\_home/](http://www.medischezending.sr/en_home/))



*dresiman* or *obiaman* may be visited to explore the real cause of illness or get additional treatment. For some treatments, such as vaccinations of babies and infants, villagers exclusively rely on the Medical Mission PHC clinics, and today childbirth rarely takes place without certified health workers. On the other hand, Focus Group participants indicated that in particular broken bones are being treated by *dresiman*. The Medical Mission clinics are not opposed to consultations with traditional healers, and there are even cross-referrals (IDB, 2006). For example, a *dresiman* will send a malaria patient to the Medical Mission PHC clinic, and the Medical Mission health workers may advise a patient to (also) consult a *dresiman* for the healing of cuts and wounds, or a flu.

#### 4.8 VISITING THE COMMUNITY: PROTOCOL FOR OUTSIDERS

When planning to visit the villages along the Afobaka road or the old Kawina villages for professional purposes (e.g. research, consultations), one should first make an appointment with the traditional authorities (*kapitein*) and explain the background of the visit. In Drepada villagers requested that ‘When Newmont or another outsider wants to visit the village it is best to send the message 1-3 weeks in advance’. In the case of a meeting with a group of villagers one should keep in mind the various *lo* and *bee* that are invited/present. In several focus groups, respondents indicated that in the case of a large meeting an official setting (e.g. signing of an agreement, handing over a present), bringing a bottle of *sopi* (strong liquor) is good practice. The alcohol is used for libation, and very little of it is consumed.

A day in advance of the visit, Newmont should make contact with the *kapitein* to see if the visit is still feasible. Rituals and festivities as described above (e.g. *gi pangi*, burial rituals) can cause a last minute change of plans. When visiting the village one should wear appropriate clothes. Respondents explained that there is no dress code and there are no strict rules. Long trousers/a skirt, a shirt/blouse and sandals are OK. A hat may be worn. There is no need to wear closed shoes or long sleeves.

When entering the village one should announce the arrival to the *kapitein* or to the person who was assigned as contact person by the *kapitein*. When Newmont wants to get an impression of the village or wants to visit a specific location in the village they can ask for a guide to walk them through the village. One should keep in mind the presence of shrines and places of worship; some are easy to recognize, others can easily be overlooked. Besides, houses in interior communities typically do not have fences or clear delineations and one should avoid walking through a garden or entering people’s private domains. A guide can also ensure that the places that should not be visited will not be visited. When women have their menstruation it would be good manners to inform the guide before starting the walk through the village. It was also stated that you should not shake hands with the *kapitein*, or at least you should not take the initiative. If the *kapitein* offers a hand, you can shake it. For all other matters (e.g. taking pictures, use of toilet) ask the contact person in the village to prevent inappropriate situations.



## 5 REFERENCES

---

- Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) (2010). Support to the traditional authority structure of Indigenous peoples and Maroons in Suriname. Report written as part of the “Support for the sustainable development of the interior -collective rights” project. Final Report, December 2010. Paramaribo, Suriname.
- Bent, M. van der (2016). “It’s two things mixed together!” A Baptist missionary nurse and her symbiotic relationship with Ndyuka medicine. Master’s thesis. Uppsala University. Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology. Uppsala, Sweden.
- Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) (2006). Best Practices in Intercultural Health. Produced by: O’Neill, J., Bartlett, J. and Mignone, J. June 2006. URL: <http://www.iadb.org/wmsfiles/products/publications/documents/1484415.pdf>
- Jap-A-Joe, Harold (2015). The “Marriage Rebellion” Within The Moravian Church in Suriname. *Academic Journal of Suriname* 6: 520-530
- Groot, S. de (1974). *Surinaamse Granmans in Afrika : vier groot-opperhoofden bezoeken het land van hun voorouders*. Utrecht :Spectrum
- Hartsinck, Jan Jacob (1770). *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America*. Gerrit Tielenburg, Amsterdam.
- Hoogbergen, W. (1990). The History of the Suriname Maroons. In *Resistance and Rebellion in Suriname. Old and New*, edited by G. Brana-Shute. Williamsburg, VI: The College of William and Mary
- Jabini, F. S. (2012) *Christianity in Suriname: An Overview of its History, Theologians and Sources*. [viewed 20 August 2017]. Available from: <https://books.google.sr/books?id=coguDgAAQBAJ&lpg=PR4&dq=franklin%20jabini&hl=nl&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q=franklin%20jabini&f=false>
- Köbben, A.J.F. (1979). Unity and Disunity. Cottica Djuka Society as a Kinship System. In: *Maroon Societies. Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (R. Price, Ed.), John Hopkins University Press, London: 320-369.
- Price, R. (2013). *Research Note: The Maroon Population Explosion: Suriname and Guyane*. *New West Indian Guide* 87 (2013) 323-327
- Price, R. (1990). *Alabi’s World*. John Hopkins University Press. Baltimore and London
- Thoden van Velzen, H.U.E and W. van Wetering (1988). *The Great Father and the Danger: Religious Cults, Material Forces, and Collective Fantasies in the World of the Surinamese Maroons*. Caribbean series / Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. Leiden, The Netherlands: KITLV Press
- UNESCO (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris, November 3, 2003.

## ANNEX 1. FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

### Kawina community

Date	Person	Function / job	Topic discussed
July 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Henk Noordzee</li> <li>▪ Leo Noordzee</li> </ul>	Older men	Oral history, recent Kawina history and land use, tangible heritage sites,
July 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Frans Nijda</li> <li>▪ Hendrik Akoloi Noordzee</li> </ul>	<i>Kapiteins</i> of resp. Pennenica and Java	Oral history, recent Kawina history and land use, tangible heritage sites, sacred sites and taboos.
July 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ricardo Misiedjan (Toto)</li> </ul>	Gold miner	History of the Kawina and of the Sabajo area; culturally significant places and rules
August 6 (IGSR Kawina meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Imelda Nijda</li> <li>▪ Olivia Hardley</li> <li>▪ Maevis Kenti</li> <li>▪ Paulina Misiedjan</li> <li>▪ Anie Misiedjan</li> </ul>	Kawina women	Relation with traditional villages, relation with other Kawina in Paramaribo, cultural customs and practices in Paramaribo.
August 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alfra Nijda</li> <li>▪ Sadira Aloekoe</li> <li>▪ Boniviera Needa</li> <li>▪ Elly Nijda</li> <li>▪ Joel Amani</li> <li>▪ Valesca Sacco</li> </ul>	Kawina youth	Relation with traditional villages, relation with other Kawina in Paramaribo, cultural customs and practices in Paramaribo.

### Afobaka communities

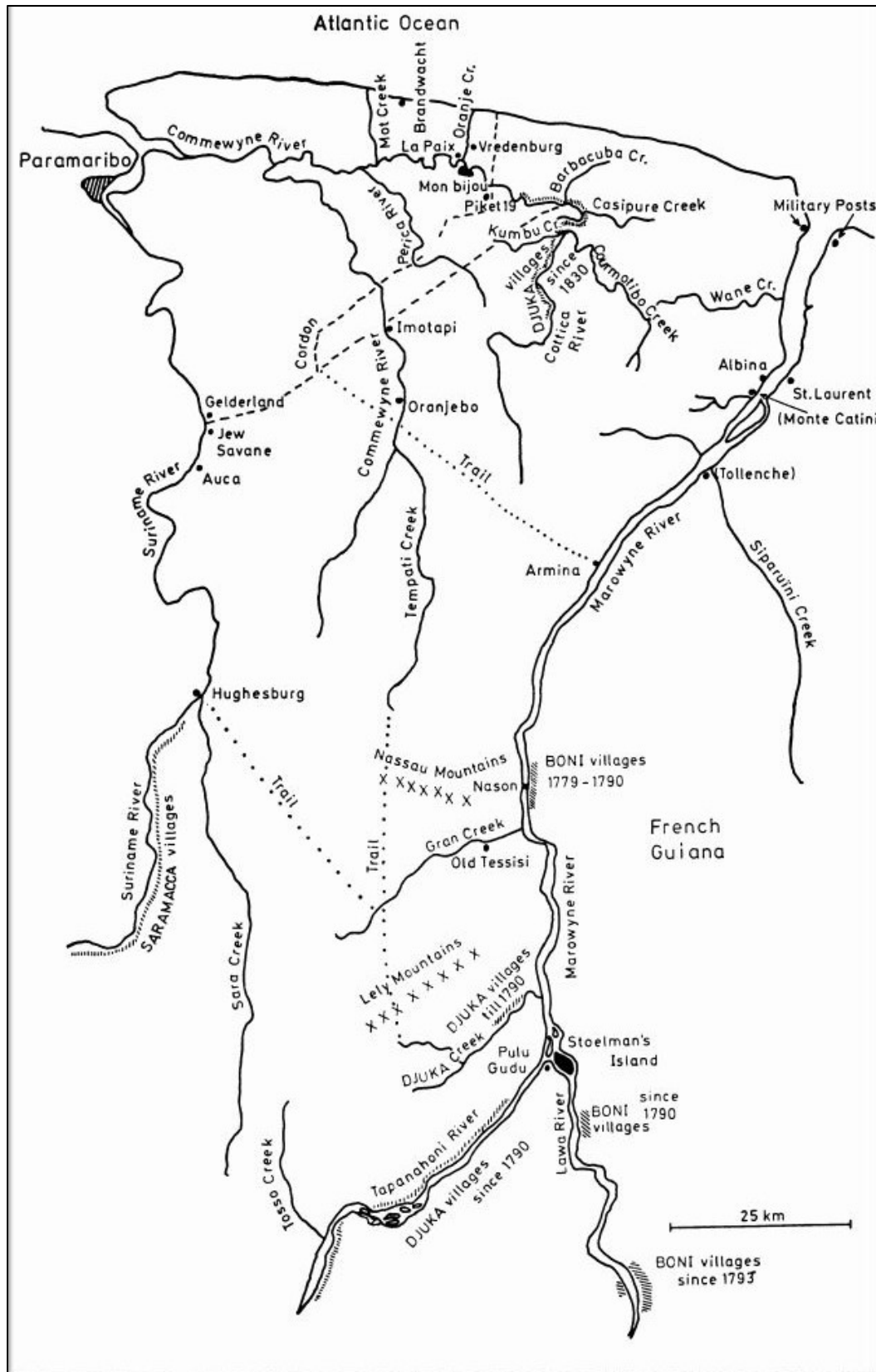
Village	Group	Names
Balingsoela	Women	Nora Pobosi 51 Basja Cornelli Ola >60 Nita Pansa 54 Basja Sita Pansa 40 Gerda Pansa >60
	Men	Sedney Pansa >60 René Pansa 50 Aleke Malinsi >60 Willem Pansa >60 Landveld >60 Mauwi Fiance 44 Robby Pansa > 60 Kap Stanley Venlo 60 Glenn Pansa >60
	Youth	Martella Tooy 18 MULO Roxanne Pansa 19 LBO Eliane Tooy 16 MULO Sifanio Mavi 16 MULO Troelie Asente 18 MULO Varesca Finfin 17 MULO Rajid Takoer 18 LBO

		Olimbe Pansa 14 MULO Mowanda Bofoe 15 MULO Josette Takor 15 MULO
Tapoeripa	Women	Norma Aseri >60 Vanselia Baabo >60 Thelma Jonas >60 Anita Pansa >60 Francis Daalen >60 Naiwini Amoki >60 Gusta Baabo >60
	Men	Albert Dalen > 60 Kapitein Kentie > 60 Alfred Alida >60 Humphry Finisie 50 Flawdice Pansa 50 Delisie Kentie >60 Dirk Kentie 38 Eric Kwasi 55 George Jonas (hunter) 60 Gorden Losia (hunter) 36
	Youth	Rocaiso Wachter 3 LBO Valeria Kentie 3 Mulo Angwesie Baabo 3 Mulo Morifa Aleki 2 LBO Rodela Alida 4 LBO Nirole Jonas 4 Mulo
Compagniekreek	Men	Arnold Badna Pina Kiné Sandrina Emanuel T. Bisoina Hendrik Kanti Kapitein Zeegelaar Winston Kentie Samuel Boobe
	Women	Alice Abisoina Etelina Sandrina Norma Kenti Manalia Zeegenaar Samè Samadoe
	Youth	Gaetano Pina, 19 Gilbert Kenti, 19 Flotanti Umbreto, 19 Ileisia Pina, 16 Xavienne Pina, 19 Bisaia Adipi, 16 Two are at MULO; four at LBO
Boslanti	Women	Magda Doebe Esther Alida

		Latoya Doebe Amoydo Kamei Gerda Doebe
	Men	Wesdy Doebe Jacob Losia Bonny Wailer Doebe Kapitein Waisi Losia Itu Losia Steven Doebe Marius Pina Bali Losia
	Youth	Rachelle Sandrina, 19 – no school Migueba, 17 – no school Gabrielle Doebe, 17 – 1e MULO Donevan Doebe, 17 – 3e technische school Jairo Doebe, 18 – 2e LBO Densel Adelaar – 4e LBO
Asigron	Women	Sina Maabo > 60 Ayayso >60 Olga Paansa > 60 Nita Sinei, 39 Bandé Paansa >60 Tolia Haabo, 59 Ria Menig, 59 Esther Maabo, 50 Ando Paansa > 60 Merlyn Maabo, 39
	Men	Kapitein Aloeboetoe, 62 Eddie Koesé >70 Musé Maabo > 70 Bertus Maabo, 67 Egbert Sinei, 66 Rodney Maabo, 48 Johan Diko, 47 Johan Sinei >60
	Youth	Biorga Klassie – 24 Miguella – 17 Cheneia – 21 Cindwella – 18 Justin – 17 Arsinio – 17 All go to school – mostly LBO
Drepada	Women	Nonny Landveld Lucia Kentie Hilda Landveld Gayoni Vola Nelja Landveld

	Men	Hugo Menig (interim kapitein) Purcy Landveld Kwasiba Winston Andy Vola Marcus Vola
	Youth	Alicia Vola, 15 Amenua Kwasiba, 15 Cherily, 17 Withney Landvld, 23 (Natin Mijnbouw) Mowensa Kwasiba, 19 Janet Kwasiba, 14 Kajente Landveld, 15 Nyota Landveld, 19 Most go to MULO

ANNEX 2. HISTORICAL MAP OF EAST SURINAME WITH MAROON FLEEING ROUTES AND HISTORIC LOCATIONS OF RELEVANCE





**LEGEND (map previous page)**

Location of Maroon Groups:

- Ndyuka: on Djuka Creek and the Tapanahoni and Cottica.
- Boni: on the Marowijne and Lawa Rivers.
- Saamaka: on the Suriname River.

Trails:

- - - Military Cordon (completed 1776).

Military Posts: Gelderland, Hughesburg, Imotapi, Oranjebo, Piket 19 and Brandwacht; and, on the Marowijne (Dutch side): Prins Willem Frederik (at the river mouth) and Armina.

..... From the Cordon to Armina - military trail, used by Black Chasseur mutineers in 1805.

From Hughesburg and Tempati Creek to Ndjuka Creek - used by Maroons and the peace negotiators (1758-1760 and after).

Source: Silvia de Groot, 1977. Pp x.