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BY

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During the summer just past, a second expedition from Northwestern University has conducted further research into the life and customs of the Saramacca tribe of Bush-negroes, and of the town Negroes of Paramaribo. As has already been reported ¹⁾, the first expedition found material of significance for the understanding of certain general anthropological problems, and especially for the study of the New World Negro. On the basis of that summer's work, many problems posed themselves and invited further study. Thus, the extent to which survivals of traits of African culture are to be found in Suriname in spite of generations lacking all contact with the mother country; the relationship existing between Bush-negro customs and those of the Negroes of the coastal region, especially of Paramaribo; the degree to which the religious life and folk-lore of town and bush Negroes might reflect Africanisms in the light of varying contacts with European culture; the linguistic problem involved in "taki-taki" and in the "Saramacca tongo"; the role of the inner political and social organisation in the lives and culture of the Saramacca people; the presence or absence of the African secret society; the nature and significance of their music and art; — all these and other questions demanded investigation.

It was in order to gather further data on these points

¹⁾ M. J. Herskovits, „Preliminary Report of an Ethnological Expedition to Suriname, 1928." *De West-Indische Gids*, Vol. X (1928), pp. 385—390.

that Mrs. Herskovits and I sailed from New York on June 14th, 1929, for Paramaribo¹). Arrived there on July 4th, hasty preparations made possible our departure for the interior by the weekly train a few days later, and, as soon as the water permitted, we proceeded up the river from our base near Gansee. We count it fortunate that we were able to penetrate the Suriname to its head, and farther, into the Pikien Rio, as far as there are any Bush-negro villages. A period of ten days was spent at Asindopo Lantiwe, the seat of Granman Moana Jankoeso, the head of the Saramacca tribe, — a time that gave us many opportunities to observe not only the daily routine of a Bush-negro village, but also afforded unique chances of studying the political machinery of the people and the political ceremonialism. We were enabled, on our journeying up and down the Suriname, to visit many villages, and thus to satisfy ourselves as to the essential unity of the culture throughout the entire length of the Saramacca country. In order to compare this with the culture of the Djuka, or Auka Bush-negroes, the last days of our stay in the bush were spent visiting the Auka villages near Koffikamp, and observing the customs of these people in the light of our experience with the Saramacca tribe. After our return to Paramaribo, and before our departure for the United States on September 5th, we were able to make a collection of folk-lore from informants among the town natives, and were further enabled to study the religious life of the town Negroes. Finally, during the voyage to the United States via the eastern chain of the West Indian Islands, the numerous calls of our ship at the several islands made possible some comparisons of the Negro cultures of this region with those of Suriname, and especially enabled me to trace the Caribbean distribution of the game of *wari*, which, in at least three variants, we had found in the Suriname bush and in Paramaribo and Demerara.

¹) This trip, as was our first, was made possible through the generous support of Dr. Elsie Clews Parsons, to whom it is a pleasure to acknowledge our gratitude.

The results of this expedition will require extended consideration before they can be presented in any detail. At the same time, certain objectives which were attained, can be mentioned here in brief. We had been requested to obtain a collection of ethnological specimens by the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, and this was forwarded before our departure from Suriname. It includes not only examples of woodcarving, but drums and other religious objects, and material exemplifying the daily life of the Saramacca Bush-negroes, as well as Auka specimens collected during our stay at Koffikamp. It may be perhaps worth remarking the inclusion in the collection of an "obia bangi", — a carved stool, heavily covered with sacred white clay, on the seat of which are modelled a snake and a human image. The object of this stool, which is from a Kromanti obia house, is to warn of impending attack; the human figure, or the "watchman", transmitting the information magically to the snake, which, by turning red, informs the members of the Kromanti society that danger impends. Its significance is at once apparent when the literature of the Gold Coast, especially that dealing with the Ashanti, is consulted.

The principal object of this entire research, as was stated in my report of last year's expedition, has been to determine the African origins of the New World-Negro. Some advance toward the achievement of this was made during the past summer.

Both from information given us by the Bush-negroes themselves, and from only a cursory survey of objective data observed in their life, it is believed admissible to state that the region from which they came centers about Loango, Dahomey, Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Some of the clans, according to their traditions, represent definite African groupings, and are believed to derive from Ashanti, Loango (the Kadju clan), Nigeria (the Anagō clan), and Dahomey (the Kasitō clan). The religious life, when studied, yields further confirming evidence, as, for example, the name for the earth mother, "Asaase", which is that of Ashanti, or "Ale", which is Nigerian; or

the word for the sky (Gran Gadu) which is "Kediampo", an Ashanti name. Numerous other correspondences might be mentioned, but those given here are sufficient to make the point, and considerations of space and of the necessity for mature study forbid greater detail.

An attempt was made to investigate more fully the art of these people, and explanations of their design-symbolism were obtained. The styles of carving, as is well known, are distinctly different from those of the Auka people whose art has been analyzed so well by van Panhuys ¹⁾. Although it is difficult in the extreme to induce the Saramacca people to explain the meaning of their art, good fortune took us to informants who gave us the necessary clues. It can be stated that the element of sex symbolism is very prevalent in their carving — one might perhaps say that it is the dominant motif, animal figures, as such, being represented less often.

During our trip, we carried as part of our equipment a phonograph, with which we obtained recordings of a great deal of the music not only of the Bush-negroes, but also of those of the town. All kinds of songs were taken down; religious ones, such as are sung in Kromanti, Apuku, and Tone ceremonies; work songs, sung during the communal hauling of timber; Seketi, Awasa and Susa melodies, which are semi-ceremonial or merely sung for amusement; and Papa-singi, or those intoned for the dead, and the like. In addition, drum rhythms for the different "gadus" and as associated with the several kinds of songs, were obtained. In Paramaribo, also, various types were taken down. We were able to get numerous Winti songs; and we also recorded the "kot-singi" — songs used to interrupt the Anansi stories, — which our informants sang during the telling of these stories; as well as other kinds of songs, such as the kauna ones. The problem represented by the native Suriname music is of the first importance, and it is believed that when this music is analysed it

¹⁾ In numerous papers, the latest of which is: *Quelques-Ornements des Nègres des Bois de la Guyane Néerlandaise*. Atti del XXII Congresso Internaz. degli Americanisti, Roma, 1926, pp. 231—74.

should throw light on the processes of the formation and integration of those musical forms, of which the pure African song represents the one extreme and the wholly European type the other, and the perfect blend of which, perhaps, may be represented in the Spirituals of the North American Negro.

Further investigation into the social and political organization substantiated the results of the first year's work and brought much new information to light. During the period we lived as guests of Granman Jankoeso in his "krutu"-house, we attended many "krutus" or tribal councils and thus gained at first hand experiences in the light of which later happenings can be interpreted as to their political significance. We were able to establish the political importance of the "lō" or clan which, to my knowledge, has not been recognized for this tribe, although it is well known for the Auka. The allegiance which the individual owes to his maternal and paternal clans is a problem which, it seemed to us, was worth investigating, for during both years' work it has appeared very plainly that although descent is matrilineal, an individual does not by any means lose all adherence to or all sense of association with his father's clan. As a matter of fact, we were able to establish that the relationship with the paternal group, which is very important, is spiritual and semi-religious to a large degree, and in this respect follows the custom among the Ashanti of West Africa, and other West African peoples.

From the point of view of ethnographic field method, the advantage of being able to live in a native village is inestimable. The opportunity of witnessing the daily routine of the life of a people being studied is attained only when the ethnologist's presence has become sufficiently a matter of course to allow the natives to go about their tasks without becoming unduly disturbed by a stranger being about. After the first day or two in a Bush-negro village the novelty of the Bakra begins to wear off, and it is then that life may really be observed as it goes on in its usual tenor. Not only this, but with good fortune unusual

ceremonies may be met with as they could never be during a casual visit. This was fully the case during our stay in the bush. At the village of the Granman, we were able to study the religious phenomena to an extent altogether disproportionate to the actual time we spent there. Thus, by merely being about, much information concerning the esoteric aspects of the religious life, otherwise unobtainable, was secured through discussion, arising often as a matter of course in connection with current happenings. A striking instance of this is offered by the phenomenon of religious possession, which we were able to observe at close range and in many instances. Possessions by snake spirits and the river gods, by the Kromanti obia and the small Apuku or forest dwellers, we witnessed from beginning to end. At the village of A Kissi A Mau, in the Pikien Rio, we were favored by a friend, who, knowing the custodian of the enormous Agida drum (about eight feet tall) in one of the shrines, induced him to call the spirit of one snake deity, with the resulting immediate possession of several women whom this spirit took completely in charge.

More important, although less spectacular, was the obtaining of the names of deities. The vast significance of a name is familiar to most persons who have worked with primitive folk. Among the Bushnegroes this esoteric character attached to a name assumes enormous proportions. Thus, every individual has at least five names, none of which he is willing to reveal to strangers, and two or three of which he will tell no one. When it is realised that in the magical belief of these people, the name holds intimate association with the kra, or spirit, and therefore gives the person who knows an individual's name power to work wisi, or evil magic, over him, such hesitation is not strange. With the names of the gods this reluctance to pronounce the name is if possible stronger, for, as was explained to us again and again by Bush-negro friends who wished to answer our questions but dared not do so, if a god's name is mentioned, he will come, and, unless the person who "calls" him knows the proper ritual to be

Pokigron. Upper Suriname River.
Building a house.

A village Landing Beidotti, Upper Suriname River. Note the magic
guard of palm-fronds, which keeps evil out of the village.

Carved comb, clothes beater and food tray from the village of Akissi a man, Pikien Rio.

Religious objects collected from members of the Saramacca Tribe. Types of personal fetishes (aka tetei, kromanti obias, etc.), a village gadu, a rattle used in kromanti ceremonies and an Apinti drum.

gone through when he has arrived, evil will befall him. Yet to obtain these names was of the greatest importance to us, for it is in such terminology, as the few examples cited before go to show, that the purest Africanisms would be expected to be found. This proved to be the case and our most valuable clues to African origins, after the actual place-names maintained in the traditions of various villages and clans, are these names of gods and spirits.

Our contacts with the ceremonies having to do with death afford further illustration of the advantages of intimate association with natives in the field. Although full account of what may be termed the "crisis" ceremonies of life — birth, puberty, marriage, and death — were given us by Bush-negroes with whom we discussed them, it was only the last which we witnessed personally. At Lombe we saw the dancing which is carried on all night every night the body lies in the mourning-house, and which honors the ghost of the departed. The following day we witnessed the impressive, and, indeed, terrifying ceremony by means of which the spirit of the deceased, speaking through the corpse in its coffin carried on the heads of two of the grave-diggers, indicates how death came about, and who, magically, was responsible. At the village of Di ta Briki we saw the place near the path going up from the river, where a coffin had been but recently made, while at Baikutu the Bassia, a friend from the first year's expedition, showed us the two small coffins which contained the hair and nail-clippings of two members of the village who had died far away while working on the Marowynne River, and explained in detail the ceremonies in such instances and how they differ from those we had witnessed. Finally, at the Auka village of Baku Konde, in the Sara Kreek, we again found funeral ceremonies in progress, witnessed the carrying of the corpse to ascertain the cause of death, and were able to note such differences as mark this ceremony in contrast with the Saramacca one.

Work in Paramaribo was centered, in the main, in an attempt to obtain an adequate representation of the folk-

lore of the Negroes. Although work has already been done in this field, notably by Van Cappelle and the Penard brothers who have published some Anansi stories, and numerous other students who, from a very early period, have presented proverbs and riddles, it was felt that the opportunity to make a collection of appreciable size was not to be neglected. Working with two informants we were enabled not only to take down Anansi stories but also others which illustrate the processes of acculturation somewhat more vividly; for example, such typical European tales as the Frau Holle or Cinderella märchen, which, taken over by the Negroes, have been remoulded to suit their environment and unique experience. Proverbs recorded which will be useful for comparison with some of the older collections, were and an attempt was made to obtain riddles, which, it was felt, should be numerous in view of their popularity in the rest of the Caribbean region. Curiously enough, this does not seem to be the case in Suriname, and it was with difficulty that as many as one hundred were obtained, — a very small number when compared with the hundreds recorded from some of the West Indian Islands. All folklore material, it may be remarked, was taken down in taki-taki, and it is hoped that the translation of these data and their publication, when attained, will afford material not only for folklorists, but also for those interested in the study of languages.

A natural concomitant of this work was investigation into the religious beliefs of the town Negroes. That Africanisms exist to a large degree became apparent from Mrs. Herskovits' work in Paramaribo during our first trip and the comparison of these beliefs with the information obtained from the Bush-negroes, and with the available descriptions of the religious life of the aboriginal inhabitants of West Africa, was envisaged as one of our major problems. It was our good fortune to witness several of the town religious ceremonials, detailed descriptions of which, naturally, cannot be given here for lack of space. It may only be noted that we were able, on the day follow-

ing one of them, to record on the phonograph many of the songs we had heard sung the night preceding. It is our impression that in general organisation and conduct these ceremonies are perhaps nearer those to be witnessed in the bush than has generally been recognised.

It is a pleasure to record here our deep obligation to the many persons in Suriname who were of assistance to us. To His Excellency, Governor Rutgers, for his aid and sympathetic appreciation of the nature of our work, and particularly for his communications to Granman Jankoeso which so eased our relations with that personage, we acknowledge our grateful appreciation. Similarly, to the Hon. Frans J. L. van Haaren, Procureur-General of the Colony, and the Hon. J. H. Heslinger, its Government Secretary, we are deeply indebted for their many favors, both official and unofficial. To Mr. Alexander Wolff, factor of the Surinam Balata Company near Ganssee, we also wish to record our thanks. Without his constant advice, based on many years of sympathetic association with the Saramacca people, the measure of our achievement would have been less full, while the information he himself gave us out of his rich store of experience was most useful in furnishing insight and leads on which to base further inquiry. Our base for the trip into the interior was the Magasine of which he is the head, and nothing could be more unstinted than the manner in which we were invited to use it as best fitted our need. We also wish to thank the Moravian Brotherhood and particularly Mr. A. H. Krollis, missionary at Koffikamp, for having allowed us to utilise quarters at that village during our investigations in the nearby Djuka villages.

In the final analysis, however, our deepest gratitude must be reserved for the persons, both in the Bush and in Paramaribo, who acted formally as informants, or who, from friendship, gave us of their knowledge that we might learn of their civilisation. They are so many that they must be nameless here; nameless, that is, except one whose urbanity, strength, and vivid personality stand out so strongly in our remembrance. This is Moana Jankoe-

so, Granman of the Saramacca people. He made us welcome in his own house, made us comfortable, and, with an amazing degree of comprehension, helped us to learn of his people where it was in his power.

To all of those to whom we acknowledge gratitude, whether named or not, we may only say that it is in the scientific results of this research, and in the extent to which they may aid in pointing toward the greater understanding of the large problems of the interrelation of race and culture, that the highest expression of thanks for their assistance will be contained.