The great number of Portuguese words in the language of the Saramacca tribe of Bush-Negroes has been noticed by all those who have studied the speech of these people. As one penetrates deeper and deeper into the interior of the Suriname bush, along the upper Suriname River to the region where the Saramacca people live, the language of the coast, "taki-taki", or "Negro-English", as it is called, becomes less and less spoken, and the dialect heard takes on a character peculiar to itself. This dialect, as is well known, is not understood by the people of the coastal region. This is due to the fact that in spite of the basic similarity in structure and historical development of the two dialects, the speech of the interior contains not only many Portuguese terms not found in the coastal speech, but, what is more, a great number of African words, something that has not been as generally realised.

The question of the provenience of these Portuguese words has, in the main, been accepted as solved when it was said that they were introduced by Jewish refugees who, driven from Brazil in the middle of the seventeenth century, settled in Suriname and brought with them their Negro slaves. These slaves, it is held, took with them the Portuguese expressions they had learned from their Jewish masters when they fled to the bush with other insurgents among the Negroes, and incorporated these expressions in the language which later became the "Saramacca tongo". So strongly has this hypothesis been accept-
ed that we find, as the unofficial designation of the Saramacca speech, the term „Djoe-tongo”.

I

Perhaps the most exhaustive analysis of the language of the Saramacca tribe of Bush-Negroes is that of Schuchardt 4). To indicate his recognition of the importance of the Portuguese elements in Saramacca tongo, and to make clear the prevailing theory of the manner of their incorporation among the Saramacca Negroes, the following may be quoted from the preface to his dictionary 4):

„Neben der englischen Sprache, aber erst einige Zeit später setzte sich hier eine andere Sprache fest: die portugiesische. Es siedelten sich portugiesische Juden an, die aus Brasilien und Cayenne geflüchtet waren; sie erhielten 1659 einen Freibrief von der Westindischen Compagnie. Der Hauptreichtum dieser neuen Ankömmlinge scheint in Sklaven bestanden zu haben, woraus wir mit Sicherheit auf das Dasein eines Negro-portugiesisch schliessen dürfen.”

Another example of the prominence given this hypothesis of the provenience of Portuguese in the Saramacca language is to be seen in the discussion of language in van Panhuys’ article „Boschnegers”, in the Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië, from which I quote the following (p. 159):

„Het gebruik van Portugeesche woorden bijvoorbeeld, bijzonder sterk bij de Saramaccaners, voert terug tot de tijden, dat de voorvaderen van die Boschnegers slaven waren op de plantages van de uit Brazilië verdreven, Portugeesche Joden. In het artikel „Iets over de Neger-engelsche taal”, in het tijdschrift West-Indië, 1855, I, 286—295, is door Wulfschlaegel medegedeeld, dat de genoemde stam zich in de 18de eeuw van het neger-Portugeesch, Jodentaal of Djoe-tongo bediente, en worden door de Hernhutters vervaardigde handschriften in die taal vermeld.”


5) p. XV.
These citations give only two of numerous expressions of the same opinion.

During two field-trips to the Saramacca Bush-Negroes the distinct character of the language of the Saramacca people as one not understandable to those who live in the coastal region, and the presence not only of Portuguese but African elements, were deeply impressed upon me. I shall adduce below a small portion of the available evidence as to the presence of these elements in the Saramacca language. There are, nevertheless, certain logical difficulties in accepting the current explanation of the presence of the Portuguese words in the Saramacca language and, it should be here indicated, speculation concerning these difficulties have not been absent from the writings of the authorities I have quoted.

The problem, in the main, centers about these questions: First, does our historical knowledge justify the assumption that a majority of the Negro slaves who later became Saramacca Bush-Negroes ran away from Jewish plantations, — an inescapable assumption because of the fact that the Portuguese elements in the Saramacca speech are as numerous as they are found to be, and are present in so much greater number than words derived from other European tongues? Conversely, may we not ask next whether there should not be more appreciable Dutch and English elements in Saramacca tongo to represent the influence which masters of these latter nationalities exerted on their slaves, an influence which we cannot assume to have been less than that which the Jewish masters exerted on their slaves?

Schuchardt, like myself, finds himself puzzled to account for the amount of Portuguese he finds in Saramacca tongo. After quoting a letter from J. Kersten to the effect that „Alle Buschneger, sowohl an der oberen Sara-makka, als auch an der oberen Suriname, Commewijne und Cottika, sprechen ziemlich dasselbe Negerportugie-

1) The Northwestern University Expeditions to Dutch Guiana for the Study of the Negro, in 1928 and 1929.
sisch’ 1), he goes on to state the problem somewhat as I have put it above:

„Dann müssten wir annehmen dass einst das ‚Negerportugiesische’ bei allen Sklaven der Kolonie geherrscht habe, und dagegen sprechen wiederum die Proben von 1718, oder dass die Mehrzahl aller Flüchtlinge von Sklaven der portugiesischen Juden gebildet wurde.“

Panhuys also recognises the difficulty that is inherent in the current explanation of the provenience of the Portuguese elements, and offers an alternative hypothesis, which, as we shall see, is substantiated in part, at least, by the evidence to be given below 2):

„Enkele Portugeesche woorden kunnen in het Boschnegernegergensche zijn gekomen door de zeemans- en slaventaal, die als een soort van lingua general op de Goud- en Slavenkust schijnt te zijn gebezigd; in het geschiedkundig overzicht is er de aandacht op gevestigd, dat soms juist zoogenaamde zoutwaternegers, d. i. pas van Afrika aangekomen, de kern van een wegloopersbende vormden. Het verkeer tusschen Sar-maccaners en andere stammen kan bij de laatsten tot over-neming van enkele Portugeesche woorden aanleiding hebben gegeven.“

II

Quite aside from the difficulties that arise from the logic of presupposing the Brazilian Portuguese-speaking Jews to have been the only source of the Portuguese words in Saramacca speech 3), contradictions also arise from the data in hand which make the current hypothesis even less persuasive. Let us consider from this point of view, two words which can definitely be assigned to Jewish influen-

3) The contradiction between Kersten’s statement, quoted above, as to the extent to which „Negro-Portuguese” is spoken, and van Panhuys’, is something that cannot be taken up here. It was my impression, however, that the speech of the Auka tribe of Bush-Negroes is much more like taki-taki than that of the Saramacca people.
ces, "trefu", and "kasiri", both found in the taki-taki of the Negroes of the coastal region of Suriname. The first of these words is applied to a personal food taboo, which, if violated, is thought to bring on skin-diseases which culminate in leprosy. This word represents an excellent example of the telescoping of African and Jewish influences. The word itself comes from the Hebrew, and enough of the idea contained in it is Jewish to have made it congenial to apply this Jewish term to a concept, typically West African, of the punishment of the violation of a food-taboo with the scourge of diseases of the skin 1). Yet, although this concept flourishes among the Saramacca people, almost in its pure African form, the word "trefu" is not applied to it in the interior. It is quite true that the Saramacca Negroes know the word "trefu", and may use it when speaking to a person from the coast, for all Saramacca men know taki-taki, but among themselves the term used is "tchina", and tchina is not Portuguese, or Hebrew, but African 2).

The instance of the word "kasiri", used by the coastal Negroes in the sense of "ceremonially to cleanse", gives

1) Cp. Bosman's comment, which comes in connection with his comments on the possibility of converting the Gold-Coast natives to Christianity, p. 129, 2nd English edition, London, 1721: "..... each Person here is forbidden the eating of one sort of Flesh or other; one eats no Mutton, another no Goats-Flesh, Beef, Swines-Flesh, Wild-Fowl, Cocks with white Feathers, etc. This Restraint is not laid upon them for a limited time, but for their whole Lives; And ..... if you ask the Negroes why they do this, they will readily tell you, because their Ancestors did so from the beginning of the World, and it hath been handed down from one Age to another by Tradition. The Son never eats what the Father is restrained from, as the Daughter herein follows the Mother's Example; and this Rule is so strictly observed amongst them, that 'this impossible to persuade them to the contrary'. The tendency to stress the Jewish rather than the African aspects of the "trefu" is quite common, the latest example being Dr. P. H. J. Lampe's otherwise extremely careful and detailed report "Het Surinaamsche Treefgeloof", De West-Indische Gids, vol. X (1928), p. 545—568.

2) E. Peschuel-Loesche, in his "Volkskunde von Luango" (Stuttgart, 1907), gives several pages to the significance of "tchina" among the Loango people, and defines the word as follows (p. 456): "Tchina, ... bedeutet hauptsächlich Verbot, Verbotenes, das Verboten, manchmal auch Gebot, also im ganzen etwa Verordnung, Regel, Vorschrift, Unverletzlichkeit; es bedeutet gleichfalls Erlass, Gesetz...".
us another clear example of Jewish influence, the derivation here being from the Hebrew word „kasher“. Yet we do not find this word among the Saramacca people, though they have the identical concept (as of „washing the soul“ or „washing an obia“).

The Jewish influence among the Bush-Negroes is also often argued from other evidence. Thus, the „Djoe-lo“, a clan name among the Auka tribe, was mentioned to me as deriving from those slaves who ran away from plantations owned by Jews, and a similar explanation was given for the „Nasi-lo“ among the Saramacca people. A third example of this type, which set in motion my own speculations as to the correctness of the etymological explanations of the two preceding terms, has to do with the „Dombi-lo“ of the latter tribe. This, it was explained to me by my informants, came from the fact that the members of this clan were descended from the run-away slaves owned by a Jewish family by the name of Levi. The Leviites, it was recalled to me, were priests in Biblical times, and therefore the name „Dombi“ was to be understood as deriving from the older English term of „Dominie“. This explanation is of importance as demonstrating a type of reasoning on the basis of which the accepted hypothesis of Jewish influence in the formation of the Saramacca language has been built up. What then, we ask, may actually be the origin of the clan-name „Dombi“? The answer, I conclude, is to be found in Speith’s study of the Ewe-speaking peoples of Togo-land, West-Africa, where we read ¹) that „Die Domeer stammen aus Sê, einer Stadt in Krôbê“. The correspondence between the two names becomes more convincing through the fact that the principal clan-village of the people of the Dombi clan (the name, as pronounced by the Saramacca people, is really „Domii“) is situated on the upper Suriname River and is named S’ei ²).

²) The name of this village is spelled „Slee“ on the official „Overzichtskaart van Suriname“, edition of 1927.
III

The question, thus, poses itself clearly. What is the origin of the numerous words of Portuguese derivation which are found in the interior of Suriname, in the speech of the inhabitants of the remote villages of the deep bush? Why is this Portuguese influence not manifested more fully in taki-taki? Can we accept the assumption of the overwhelming influence of the slaves who escaped from Jewish plantations in the making of the new language?

To demonstrate the extent to which Portuguese actually is found in Saramacca tongo, I may at this point give a few of the native words which I myself collected, and which can be directly traced to Portuguese sources. Some of these have been noted in Schuchardt’s dictionary to which I have already referred, and where this is the case, I have written (S) after the meaning of the word. Furthermore, in some instances, Schuchardt has recognised and given the Portuguese derivation of the word, and in these cases I have written (SP) after the meaning ²).

  aki, here (SP); P., aqui
  aguya, needle (SP); P., agulha
  bari, cry (SP); P., berar
  bwono, good; P., bom (plur., boa)
  buka, tongue (SP); P., boca
  dai, to give; P., dar
  didia, day; P., do dia (the day)
  faka, knife (SP); P., faca
  felu, iron (SP); P., ferro
  folo, flower; P., flor

¹) The Saramacca words here, as later, are spelled phonetically, the vowels having the continental (Italian) equivalents when unaccompanied by diacritical marks. „o“ has the value of „aw“ in English „awe“; „ê“ is a close „o“, as in French „eau“, a hook (q) under a letter represents nasalisation. Although tone is present in Saramacca speech, I have omitted tonal markings as irrelevant to this discussion. Where other sources are quoted, as for African words later in my discussion, I have adapted the phonetic systems of the various authors I quote so as to reconcile their usage to the system I utilise. The relationship between the Portuguese and Saramacca words in this table will be more apparent if the phonetics of Portuguese are kept in mind in reading the table.
Thus it is apparent, even from a cursory survey such as this, that the Portuguese contribution to Saramacca ton- 
go is appreciable, though the question of where the Por-
tuguese was obtained remains to be solved. Before pro-
Posing an alternate hypothesis to the one generally ac-
1) These words may also be of recent derivation from the French.
cepted, it is necessary to turn to at least one African source of origin of the Saramacca people. In this instance, it is to the Ewe-speaking peoples of the West Coast of Africa that we shall look. These folk, who include the Dahomeans, occupied an important position in the political and social alignment of the West African kingdoms. Dahomey, Popo, Ardra, Whydah, all these were Ewe-speaking, and in the early days of the slave-trade these kingdoms of Ewe-speaking peoples occupied a wider territory than even the considerable section they now inhabit. At present they are found in the southern portion of the French possession of Dahomey and the mandated territories of Togoland, and are bordered on the east by the Yoruban peoples of Nigeria, and on the west by the tribes of the Gold Coast, notably the Ashanti. The Yoruba, Ashanti, and Ewe-speaking peoples constitute the principal sources of the Saramacca tribe; indeed, my researches indicate that this same territory was the focal point of the slave-trade to the entire New World 1).

Some of the linguistic correspondences between Saramacca tongo and Ewe follow. I have drawn on three sources for my Ewe words, Westermann's Ewe-English Dictionary 2) (indicated in the following list by D), the same author's Ewe Grammar 3) (indicated by G) and Delafosse's Manual 4) (indicated by M). The original Ewe word is first given in the following table, and after it is the Saramacca word which corresponds to the one in Ewe. The source indicated is the one in which the Ewe word given was first found by me, for many of the words are given both by Westermann and Delafosse.

1) This conclusion, the evidence for which obviously cannot be presented here, is, I believe, amply demonstrated by the correspondences and traditions obtained from the Saramacca tribe on the second field-trip. It is, furthermore, in accord with the conclusions as to the sources of the Bush-Negroes arrived at by Lindblom, Delafosse, Westermann, and others who have given the matter their consideration.
2) D. Westermann, „Evefiala, or Ewe-English Dictionary“. Berlin, Dietrich Reimer, 1928.
3) D. Westermann, „Grammatik der Ewe-Sprache“. Berlin, Dietrich Reimer, 1907.
ablewọ, old woman (D); Sar., abrewa, old woman
adawọla, bell (D); Sar., adwila, gong
adj, seeds used in a game (D); Sar., adj, seeds used in a game
dada, mother (D); Sar., „Kromanti tongo“, dada, mother
dọ, to appear (G); Sar., dọ (doro), to arrive, to come, to appear
dosu, the first child born after twins (D); Sar., dosu, the first
child born after twins
dzọ, fire (D); Sar., zo, fire
jfia, just now, in this moment, immediately (D); Sar., jfia,
    jfia, hurry, promptly, now
fụfụ, yam (D); Sar., fụfụ, yam
gq, great, old (D); Sar., g’q, old, great, as in g’q sembe, elder,
    g’qamq, chief
agama, chameleon (D); Sar., agamq, chameleon
gogo, anus (M); Sar., gogo, buttocks
guduto, one who inherits (M); Sar., gudu, treasure, wealth
hła, clan (D); Sar., hla, clan
hohovi, twins (M); Sar., hohobi, twins
kakalika, cockroach (D); Sar., kakalaka, cockroach
kũnku, something deadly (D); Săr., kũnku, a supernatural
    vengeance for misdeeds that may kill
kesi, monkey (D); Sar., kesesi, monkey
akpaka, a large, flat calabash (D); Sar., apaka, a calabash in
    which belongings are kept
kpete, vulture (D); Sar., opete, vulture
lą, a fool (D); Sar., lau, foolish
legbà, idol, figure representing a diety (D); Sar., leba, spirit
    of the cross-roads
lolo, parable (D); Sar., odo, proverb
logozo, tortoise (M); Sar., logozo, tortoise
lokọ, the odum tree (D); Sar., lokọ, a sacred bush tree
lolo, to be delerious (M); Sar., lolo, type of behavior under
    spirit possession. (Note: „lolo“ as used in Paramaribo, may
    be derived from English „roll“)
mq, able (D); Sar., mq, able
mz, trap (D); Sar., mz, one type of trap used by Saramacca
    tribe
tati, pestle (D); Sar., tati, pestle
togbi, ancestor (G); Sar., togbọ, great-grandmother
trọ, to change (D); Sar., trọ, to change
v3, python (D); Sar., v3adig, a snake sacred to the Saramacca
    people
It can thus be seen that whatever other component elements may have gone into the creation of Saramacca tongo, both Portuguese and Ewe have made contributions to it to a degree that must be taken into consideration in any attempt to trace the Saramacca speech to its origins. This being the case, the question must be posed whether, on the basis of our knowledge of the historic contacts which the Ewe-speaking peoples had with Europeans in West-Africa, the Ewe-speaking slaves who were brought to Guiana may not have carried some Portuguese with them in the form of loan-words added to their aboriginal language in Africa itself.

IV

The necessity of taking into account such an explanation of some of the Portuguese found in the speech of the Saramacca people develops in part from a consideration of the discussion by Westermann and Delafosse of the presence of foreign words in Ewe as it is spoken at the present time. The former gives 1) a list of twenty-one words in present-day Ewe that are derived from Portuguese, and the latter 2) one of twenty-four, thirty-two of the combined list being duplicates. One of these words is especially striking, for it is exactly the same as one given above in the list of Saramacca tongo derivatives from Portuguese; *hamisa*, a shirt. The phonetic shifts indicated in the several words I quote here as examples, are quite of the type that occurs in Saramacca tongo.

*ahising*, Christian, from *P. christão*
*caluto*, cigarette, from *P. charuto*
*kejo*, cheese, from *P. queijo*
*kpadle*, missionary, from *P. padre*
*seda*, silk, from *P. seda*
*tavo*, table, from *P. tavoa*

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1) Grammatik, p. 34.
We must still meet the question, how did these Portuguese derivatives which, in both Westermann's and Delafosse's lists of foreign words in Ewe number more than those from any other language ¹), come into the speech of the Dahomeans and their neighbors who speak Ewe?

This, I believe, is to be explained through a consideration of the history of the region, which, as a center of the slave-trade, brought the Ewe as well as the people of the neighboring regions in close contact with the Portuguese, whom we know to have been extremely active in the early slave-trade. The clearest exposition of this point is that of Delafosse ²), and I quote his comment in full:

"Parmi toutes les langues européennes, le portugais est celle qui a fourni le plus de mots au dahoméen. Les Portugais en effet n'ont pas seulement abordé au Dahomé, ils y ont fondé une ville, Ajuda ³), et y ont fait souche. De plus, beaucoup des Dahoméens, ammenés comme esclaves au Brésil, sont revenus, une fois affranchis, se mêler dans leur pays d'origine avec ses métis portugais qu'ils appelaient orgueilleusement leurs compatriotes: ils devinrent bientôt riches et enfluents, et propagèrent le portugais, la langue des blancs. Pendant la guerre, c'est le portugais qui servait de langue diplomatique; le roi Béhanzin le parle, dit-on, assez bien. Actuellement encore, les Dahoméens appellent la langue portugaise aju-dagbé, la langue de Ouida.

¹) Westermann's list suggests the possibility that some of the English derivatives both in Saramacca tongo and taki-taki may also have been brought from Africa as part of the aboriginal speech of Ewe-speaking slaves, in the same manner as the Ewe may have been brought.

²) op. cit., pp. 135—6.

³) At this point, Delafosse appends a footnote that I also give in full: "Ce nom doit se prononcer 'Ajouda'. Il signifie en portugais, 'aide, assistance'. Ce mot a été transformé en Juda par les anciens navigateurs français (ce qui a donné lieu à quelques fantaisies sérieuses sur les Juifs au Dahomé et les Dahoméens de race sémite). Les Anglais en ont fait Whydah; j'écris Ouida, qui est la prononciation adoptée aujourd'hui en France; les indigènes prononcent 'Adjouda' ou 'Agouda'. Le nom indigène est Glekwé." M. Delafosse's comments on the pronunciation of the name of this city from which so many slaves were sent to the New World brings to mind the Djuka clan called the "Djoe-lo", and one wonders whether this, rather than the fact that the clan ancestors ran away from plantations owned by Jews, might not conceivably be the derivation of the term.
This statement, it seems to me, throws a new light on the problem of the provenience of Portuguese in Saramacca tongo. In the light of it, I believe that the question posed throughout this discussion can now be answered. As to the first, it does not seem likely that the Jewish slave-owners of early Suriname lost so many slaves that these were able to impose the Portuguese learned from their Jewish masters on their fellow refugees. With regard to the second question that was asked, the comparative absence of Dutch and English in Saramacca tongo becomes clear when it appears that the slaves had not the same opportunity to learn these languages in Africa as they had to learn Portugues.

What we have, therefore, in this phenomenon, is an additional bit of evidence pointing to the impressive number of African elements in the civilisation of the Suriname Bush-Negroes, a civilisation which, in point of fact, has retained its basic African outlines and has persisted almost unchanged in the New World experiences of these people.

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