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DIVIDED LOYALTIES: LOCAL POLITICS AND THE PLAY OF
STATES AMONG THE ALUKU*

The scene is the northeastern coast of South America; the time, November 1986.¹ Civil war has broken out in eastern Suriname, and a flood of refugees streams into the French Guianese border town of Saint-Laurent, across the Maroni River from the Surinamese outpost Albina. Most of the refugees are Ndjuka Maroons whose villages have been attacked by Surinamese government forces.² Those who first greet them are Aluku Maroons, otherwise known as the Boni. It is the Aluku who mediate between the Ndjukas and local representatives of the French government. Aluku boatmen help organize the transportation of refugees across the river to safety, while Aluku *kapiten*, local headmen appointed by the French government to represent the larger Maroon community in Saint-Laurent, are consulted by the French sub-prefect and the mayor of the town for advice on the handling of the crisis. For all concerned, the mass exodus of Ndjukas is eerily reminiscent of the flight of the ancestors of the Aluku into French territory some two centuries earlier, when forced out of their haunts in the Cottica River region of Suriname by Dutch colonial troops.

Like the other five tribes of Guiana Maroons – the Ndjuka, Paramaka, Saramaka, Matawai, and Kwinti – the Aluku are descended from African slaves who centuries ago escaped from Surinamese plantations and fled into the unsettled forests of the interior, where they banded together to

**Editors' note:* The bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989 has been an occasion to bring the Aluku or Boni Maroons and their 18th-century liberation struggles in the limelight.

Throughout 1989, a series of symposia named *Sur les traces de Boni* ('In the wake of Boni') were held in Cayenne, French Guiana. The first four articles of this issue were written by participants in these symposia. For her role as a convenor and for her editorial help the Editors wish to express their gratitude to dr. Wilhelmina van Wetering.

MAP OF TRADITIONAL ALUKU TERRITORY SHOWING LOCATIONS OF VILLAGES AND CLANS MENTIONED

form new societies, and successfully resisted Dutch attempts to reconquer them. The Aluku, however, stand apart from the others in one important respect. While the Ndjuka and Saramaka made peace treaties with the Dutch in the 18th century, and the others later followed suit and declared their allegiance to the Dutch as well, the Aluku, as a group, never allied themselves with their former colonial masters. Instead, they clung to the French territory into which they had fled, making an uneasy peace with the Ndjukas living across the border along the Tapanahoni River, while seeking opportunities to treat with the French. It was not until 1860 that an agreement was finally concluded, and the Aluku became French subjects. In 1946, the colony of French Guiana became a French overseas department, and shortly after 1969, when the interior region where the Aluku live was integrated politically with the coast, the Aluku became French citizens – at least in theory.

There was one major obstacle to this idea of naturalization *en masse*. Rarely do colonial frontiers coincide with local ethnic boundaries, and the Aluku offer no exception to this dictum. One of the most important Aluku villages, called Kotika, happened to be located on the Dutch side of the river that separates French Guiana from Suriname. With a relatively large population, an especially weighty history, and a number of important traditional religious shrines and sacred spots, the village of Kotika could not be dismissed as an insignificant peripheral settlement. Nor were the inhabitants, strongly attached to their ancestral soil, willing to resettle across the river on the French side. They had, in fact, already come to terms with their anomalous situation, having long before taken the step of affiliating themselves, if only nominally, with the Dutch colonial government.

Today, Kotika remains a village apart. For the last few decades, it has been one of the theaters in which the drama of state penetration among the Aluku has most clearly been thrown into relief. This lone village has become the principal locus of political tensions stemming from the conflicting claims of two expanding states. By bringing into focus opposing allegiances and social schisms that are rooted in *both* traditional and colonial (as well as postcolonial) politics, the Aluku of Kotika provide us with a clear view, in capsule form, of the ways in which the state apparatus is becoming articulated with the traditional Aluku political system at the local level. Beyond this, the story of Kotika, this sole Surinamese enclave within an ethnic group otherwise defined as French, parallels at a more general level the story of the entire Aluku people, themselves ideologically isolated from their closely related Surinamese Maroon neighbors, the Ndjuka and the Paramaka, by their long-term association with the French.

In this sense, the divisiveness characterizing relations between Kotika and the other Aluku villages may serve as a metaphor for the political basis of Aluku ethnicity itself, when viewed in opposition to all the other Maroon groups. Let us proceed, then, with the story.

THE DISTANT PAST: ANATO'S REIGN AND THE HEYDAY OF KOTIKA

It was during the first half of the 18th century that the earliest ancestors of the Aluku escaped from coastal Surinamese plantations and established settlements in the forest. These first groups were over time joined by several others. Little is known of this early period, but by the 1760s, this group of rebels had come to pose a serious threat to the Cottica River region, their raids on the plantations taking a heavy toll and throwing the entire colony into panic.³ By this time, the Aluku consisted of a number of bands, joined together in a loosely organized federation. Over the ensuing decades, this federation was characterized by shifting alliances between a number of distinct groups, each under the leadership of its own headman; at various points, new bands joined the rebels, while others withdrew and struck out on their own.⁴ It was not until the end of the 18th century, after the Aluku had been subdued by the Dutch and their Ndjuka allies, that a number of these bands coalesced into a whole that contained most of the elements characterizing present-day Aluku social organization.

The foundation of Aluku social organization, the matrilineal clan known as the *lo*, began to evolve during the 18th century. Even though the founding members of a *lo* did not all originate from the same plantation, most clans became known by the name of a particular plantation (or plantation region) to which one or more of the leading original members of the band had belonged, or sometimes by the name of the plantation's owner.⁵ Early on, a principle of matrilineal descent was applied to these groupings, membership being passed on exclusively through females. Today the Aluku, with a population of between 1,500 and 2,000, are divided into six primary *lo*, and a number of smaller ones descended from more recent immigrants.⁶ These corporate clans, most of them localized in single villages, constitute the most important units of Aluku social organization. The Aluku individual receives his primary social identity from his *lo*; his loyalties, rights, and obligations are defined largely by his clan membership.⁷

Following the death of their leader Boni at the hands of the Ndjuka in 1793, the Aluku changed residence several times, establishing villages in a number of locations along the upper reaches of the Lawa River and its tributaries. Around 1815, the various clans traveled together to the

general area where the present-day Aluku villages are located. Eventually, all the clans came together to form a single large settlement called Pobiansi (from the French, "providence"), located on the Suriname side of the Lawa River, at a spot very near the present-day village of Kotika. For a number of years, the entire Aluku tribe lived at Pobiansi, which at the time was in fact made up of a cluster of adjoining hamlets, each inhabited by a different clan; one of the segments of Pobiansi was called Kotika, and it was inhabited by the clan called Yakobi. Sometime between 1866 and 1877, the Pobiansi cluster was renamed Kotika. Long before this, some of the clans had separated from Pobiansi and established new settlements on the French side of the river. But in spite of this, for most of the 19th century, Kotika remained the most important village and the residence of the paramount chief. As the century was drawing to a close, the remaining clans one by one split off from Kotika, fanning out along the French bank, where they established a succession of new villages. By the early 20th century, Kotika, now occupied by a single clan, the Yakobi clan, was the only remaining Aluku village on the Dutch side.⁸

The period when all Aluku lived in the vicinity of Kotika continues to be well remembered today. An important cemetery, where ancestors from all clans who died during this period are said to be buried, is located in the same general area as the village. This sacred ground serves as a reminder to all Aluku that, regardless of clan affiliation, they can claim ancestral ties to Kotika. As the oldest present-day Aluku village, and the only one to which almost all clans can trace their history, Kotika, then, has a special status.

Kotika has other historical claims to uniqueness as well, claims which continue to be invoked in the present. In order to understand how traditional political cleavages and state penetration have become interlinked, it is necessary to follow a particular historical thread through time. The story that concerns us begins in 1876 with the death of Gaanman Atjaba, the paramount chief of the Aluku. Atjaba, like several of his predecessors, belonged to the Dikan clan. According to traditional rules of succession, the office of *gaanman*, or paramount chief, had always to remain within the Dikan clan, the clan to which the great warrior and founding hero, Boni, had belonged. It is known that during the formative years of this society the chieftaincy in fact traveled in a somewhat irregular fashion, sometimes even being handed down from father to son. By the time of Atjaba's reign, however, well-established rules of succession, based on matrilineal principles, had been in effect for several generations. Ideally, the office would pass from the deceased chief to his sister's son, actual or classificatory, although alternative choices, such as a brother, cousin,

Gran-Man des Bonis

GAANMAN ANATO

(From Brunetti 1890: 158)

(Reproduction courtesy of the George Peabody
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or other fellow clansman, were acceptable, so long as the office remained within the matriclan. As in other Surinamese Maroon societies, the *gaanman* chose his desired successor from within this pool, but after his death, his wishes were subject to ratification or modification through a complicated process of divination in which the larger community played a part.⁹

As oral historians among the Aluku tell it, the timing of Atjaba's death was problematic. It so happened that at this critical juncture, the Dikan clan, whose numbers had diminished over the years, was lacking in eligible candidates.¹⁰ The only possible contender, an elder named Abaanga, was qualified in years and in knowledge, but his love of liquor and his frequent bouts of public drunkenness caused him to be passed over; the idea of such laxness in a paramount chief was unthinkable. It was necessary, thus, to find an alternative. A temporary compromise was found in the person of Anato, a respected elder of the Yakobi clan who was linked to the Dikan clan and the former *gaanman*'s own immediate family by ties of marriage. In an unprecedented move, the mantle of tribal authority was passed on from one clan to another, and Anato was installed as the new *gaanman*. Some present-day raconteurs are quick to point out that the Yakobi people simply "borrowed" the paramount chieftaincy from the Dikan clan, with the understanding that upon the death of Anato – since paramount chiefs reign for life – the office would be returned to its rightful owners. After all, they reason, no self-respecting clan would willingly forfeit its claims to ownership of this prestigious post permanently.¹¹

The reign of Gaanman Anato, from 1876 to 1891, coincided with the first great wave of the gold rush that was to transform the interior of the Guianas during the last quarter of the 19th century.¹² The massive influx of gold miners that poured into the Aluku territory during this period – numbering in the thousands – represented an advance guard of capitalist penetration in the region, but what they helped introduce among the Aluku was not a direct extension of state capitalism; for the majority of miners during this period operated in a highly individualistic, independent fashion, and were largely successful in escaping both French and Dutch control.¹³ They were less successful, however, in escaping the control of the Aluku, on whom they were dependent for transportation on the rivers, and to a lesser extent, for provisions. While the bonanza lasted, the Aluku boatmen charged exorbitant fees for their services. Gaanman Anato himself proved to be particularly adept at squeezing profits from the gold rush, enriching himself and his village by levying taxes on all gold extracted within his territory.¹⁴

The freewheeling nature of gold exploitation during this period resulted partly from the fact that the area in which the Aluku lived formed part

of a contested zone, to which both the French and the Dutch had laid claim. It was not until the late 1880s that a definitive border was decided upon. In 1891, the Lawa River was formally declared to be the boundary between French and Dutch territory, and as it happened, Anato's village of Kotika was on the Dutch side.¹⁵ In the years preceding this decision, it had become increasingly apparent what the outcome of the boundary dispute was likely to be, and Anato, in anticipation of the change, moved to cement his ties with the French.¹⁶ In 1887, he concluded an agreement with the French governor, which formally recognized the Alukus' right to intervene in gold production in the contested zone. During the last few years before his death, he sent a number of further communications to the governor, proclaiming his loyalty to the French. In a letter of 1889, for instance, Anato declared: "our most ardent desire is to *remain French*" (Hurault n.d.: 209, emphasis in original).¹⁷

In 1891, while the problem of state allegiance was coming to a head, Gaanman Anato died, and the question of succession had to be confronted once again. It was in this same year that the division of the traditional Aluku territory into separate French and Dutch domains was formalized. If anything, this new state of affairs must have weakened any claims the Yakobi people, whose village of Kotika now indisputably lay on Dutch soil, might have used to justify the retention of the paramount chieftaincy within their own clan. As present-day oral historians emphasize, once a clan has tasted the privileged status that goes along with this coveted office, quite naturally, it will be loath to relinquish it. It was thus with heavy heart, and only under the pressure of public opinion as expressed through divination, that the Yakobi people "returned" the paramount chieftaincy to its traditional owners, the people of the Dikan clan. It was shortly after 1891 that the new *gaanman* was installed; his name was Osii, and he was a respected elder of the Dikan clan. The status quo had been restored, and for the next seven decades the chieftaincy was to remain an exclusive Dikan possession. Following Gaanman Osii's death in 1915, the office passed to his brother Awensai. When Gaanman Awensai died in 1936, the chosen successor was Awensai's sister's son, a respected member of the Dikan clan named Difu. Gaanman Difu held the office until his death in 1967.¹⁸

The glory days of the Yakobi clan were over. After being deprived of the paramount chieftaincy in 1891, the elders of Kotika attempted to recoup their losses by courting the French colonial authorities and seeking official recognition of what they saw as their special status. This entailed an assertion of French allegiance on their part, even though their village was now located on Dutch territory, and a corresponding rejection of Dutch rule

(Hurault 1960:136-137). The Dutch, as they had in the 1860s, attempted once again to win the Aluku over to their side as soon as Anato's death raised the issue of succession. The Aluku apparently played both sides for a time, and a prominent Aluku *kapiten*, Apatu, even went so far as to meet with a Dutch official in 1891 to discuss the question of who was likely to be chosen as the next *gaanman*. Apatu requested a number of gifts and a Dutch flag from Paramaribo. The Dutch, for their part, hoped to persuade the Aluku to declare themselves Dutch subjects by offering to provide the new paramount chief with a salary equivalent to the one paid by the French.¹⁹

When some of the requested items arrived from Paramaribo, however, the Aluku ended up rejecting them. They elected instead to send a delegation, including the new paramount chief Osii, to Saint-Laurent, so as to reaffirm their loyalty to the French.²⁰ In 1892, the villagers of Kotika formally protested the idea of incorporation into the Dutch state by refusing to fly the Dutch flag, an incident which prompted the French governor to send them a message assuring them that France "still considers the Boni to be her perennial children, though they live on foreign soil" (Hurault n.d.: 218).²¹ In the same communication, the governor went on to invite the people of Kotika to resettle on the French side of the river, where all the other Aluku villages were already located. For a brief period of a decade or so, Kotika was partially abandoned, some of its inhabitants moving to temporary camps on the other side of the river (Hoogbergen 1985:388). The Yakobi clan, however, was not willing to abandon its ancestral terrain permanently, for doing so would have meant sacrificing the prestige that their special relationship with the oldest surviving Aluku village had lent them.

In 1902, the Yakobis, led by their headman Kapiten Bayo, turned back to Kotika and once again took up permanent residence on Dutch soil. The decision to remain in Kotika made necessary some sort of compromise with the Dutch colonial authorities. But the Dutch apparently remained suspicious of the residents of Kotika. For though Kapiten Bayo over the course of his lifetime made five voyages to the Surinamese capital of Paramaribo seeking an appointment as village headman, he was never granted official recognition by the colonial authorities (Hoogbergen 1985: 388).²² The Yakobi people nevertheless persisted in their avowals of allegiance to the Dutch, and eventually were rewarded with formally sanctioned posts for their village headmen, as well as a number of assistant headmen (*basia*). The paid positions created by the Dutch colonial government after 1949 continued to be honored by the Surinamese government following independence in 1975.²³ On the eve of the civil war

that erupted in Suriname in 1986, the Yakobi clan of Kotika boasted two salaried village headmen, or *kapiten*, as well as several official *basia*; and a special new position of an unprecedented sort, called *hoofdkapitein*, had just recently been instituted by the Surinamese government, a matter to which we will return in a moment.²⁴ Kotika, the oldest surviving Aluku village, had become irrevocably *Doisi*, a word in the Aluku language originally meaning "Dutch," but which has continued to be used after independence to refer to things Surinamese. The alliance had not been without its political and economic benefits. But the cleavage between Kotika and the Yakobi clan on the one hand, and all the other Aluku villages and clans on the other, had been greatly widened in the process.²⁵ And it was among the latter group, the French-affiliated majority, that the office of paramount chief was still to be found, though it was now held by yet another clan, known as Kawina. To understand how the chieftaincy passed from its traditional Dikan owners to the Kawina clan, it is necessary to go back to where we left off and pick up the thread once again.

KEY TO ALUKU CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN TEXT

ARAMOUNT CHIEFS (*GAANMAN*)

	<i>Died</i>	<i>Clan</i>
ATJABA	1876	DIKAN (YAKOBI?)
ANATO	1891	YAKOBI
OSII	1915	DIKAN
AWENSAI	1936	DIKAN
DIFU	1967	DIKAN
TOLINGA	-	KAWINA

CONTENDERS

	<i>Active During</i>	<i>Clan</i>
MANTO (TOTI)	1970s	YAKOBI
PEETI	1980s	YAKOBI

OTHERS

	<i>Active During</i>	
TUTU (Difu's 1st Choice)	1950s-60s	YAKOBI

THE RECENT PAST: MANTO'S ATTEMPT

During the decades following Gaanman Anato's death in 1891, the gold rush began to taper off, going into a rapid decline in the 1930s. Never again was the traditional Aluku territory, now divided between two European colonial powers, to experience a surge of economic activity comparable to the one that had swelled the coffers of Gaanman Anato and his village of Kotika during the late 19th century. For most of the 20th century, when paramount chiefs from the Dikan clan once again reigned, the interior of French Guiana and Suriname remained relatively quiet. The center of economic gravity began to shift back to the coastal region, and the Aluku were for the most part ignored by those at the center of power. In 1930, French Guiana was divided into two separate administrative sections. The Inini territory, the interior section in which the Aluku lived, was administered indirectly, leaving the local populations more or less free to govern themselves as they saw fit, with a minimum of interference from outside. Thus, the change of status occurring in 1946, when French Guiana was incorporated into the French republic as an overseas department, had relatively little effect on the Aluku. During the 1960s, however, the political machinery of the coastal society began to push to have the Inini territory integrated politically with the coast, for the populations of the interior represented valuable potential votes.

In 1967, while the first hints of major political change were in the air, Gaanman Difu died. As had happened once before, there was no heir apparent. The Dikan clan, always small, had failed to maintain an adequate number of childbearing women and by 1967 had for all intents and purposes vanished, leaving not a single eligible male. This conjunction of watershed events in the 1960s bore an uncanny resemblance to the set of circumstances surrounding the temporary transfer of the paramount chieftaincy from the Dikan clan to the Yakobi clan back in 1876. Once again, the outside world was knocking at the Alukus' doors, and a time of great potential opportunity seemed to be at hand; and once again, the paramount chieftaincy was up for grabs.

Contenders for the office of paramount chief were quick to appear. For months on end, palavers were held, and traditional techniques of divination were employed to address the ambiguities resulting from the imminent extinction of the Dikan clan. The neighboring Ndjuka had their own Dikan clan, historically related to the Aluku clan of the same name, and representatives from the Dikan village of Benanu arrived in Aluku, hoping to be recognized as the only possible legitimate successors to

Gaanman Difu.²⁶ But being Ndjukas, traditional enemies of the Aluku, these emissaries stood little chance of swaying public opinion in their favor.²⁷

Eventually, two serious contenders came to the fore. One was a man named Tolinga, a member of the Kawina clan who had previously worked as a boatman for a number of French expeditions into the interior, and who was known for the friendly ties he had cultivated with French government officials. Tolinga had been named after a French adventurer and entrepreneur, Tollinge, who during the 1850s had helped the Aluku establish friendly relations with the French and had been instrumental in smoothing the way for the 1860 treaty recognizing the Aluku as French subjects. Tolinga's very name, thus, came to stand for a position advocating increasing French influence in the Aluku territory.²⁸

The Yakobi people of Kotika were of a different mind. They saw the opening created by Gaanman Difu's death as an opportunity to recapture their past glory. The candidate they favored was a member of the Yakobi clan named Manto (also known as Toti), whose paternal grandfather, Samalobi, was an influential Dikan elder who had once come very close to being named paramount chief himself. It was widely rumored among the Aluku that Gaanman Difu's choice for his successor was originally to have been a Yakobi man named Tutu, had the latter outlived him. But Tutu's premature death in 1963 suddenly changed the scenario.²⁹ When Difu followed Tutu to the grave but a few years later, there was little consensus on the question of who was to take his place. In the intervening period, too little time had passed for public opinion to have gelled. The Yakobi people, though, having already decided that the paramount chieftaincy had been intended for one of their own, whether Tutu or someone else, were not about to let it pass to another clan. They quickly took the position that Manto was Gaanman Difu's obvious second choice, after Tutu. They pointed out that Manto, like Tutu, had worked closely with Difu, and they claimed that he had received specialized religious instruction from the former *gaanman* before his death.³⁰

Not long after Difu's death, the Kotika people sent a delegation to Paramaribo. The delegation met with Johan Pengel, the leader of the NPS (*Nationale Partij Suriname*), and requested that Manto be recognized as paramount chief of the Aluku. The delegation was given encouragement, but no action was taken (*Dagblad De West*, August 17, 1972). Back at home, Manto's supporters relied on the weight of precedent. They argued that theirs was the only clan other than the Dikan clan ever to have shouldered the heavy responsibilities that go with the paramount chieftaincy, and it was only because of the Dikan elders' high regard for them that the office had been passed on to their fellow clansman Anato nearly

a century earlier.³¹ In their view, Manto was clearly the rightful heir to an office which, after all, had already been in their possession once before.³² The Ndjuka Dikan visitors from Benanu, once they realized that they themselves had no chance, threw their support behind Manto, adding additional weight to the arguments of the Yakobi people.

Into this turbulent picture stepped the French authorities. Early on, while the dispute was still being negotiated, the Aluku happened to receive a number of visits from important French officials, including a *conseiller général* from Cayenne with whom Tolinga was personally acquainted. Only vaguely aware of the political dynamics behind the dispute, the French representatives, after a bit of intriguing with both factions, sided with Tolinga's supporters. The conflict was still unresolved when a candidate running for the French National Assembly paid a campaign visit to the Aluku, who were soon to be enfranchised. Before a large crowd, the politician, with the help of an interpreter, extolled the virtues of French citizenship and regaled his audience with promises of a new era of prosperity and greater cooperation between the French and the Aluku. Before long, the great majority of the Aluku – all the clans living on the French side – had rallied behind Tolinga. When the French government finally gave its official stamp of approval, and the assembled Aluku clans, minus the Yakobis, performed the traditional rituals formalizing Tolinga's installation as paramount chief, no one was surprised.³³

The people of Kotika, not to be outdone, had earlier decided on a strategy of their own. Before Tolinga had been formally inaugurated, they moved to preempt the office by performing their own version of the traditional ceremonies and installing Manto, their own candidate, as paramount chief.³⁴ Lo and behold, the Aluku, for the first time in their history, had two *gaanman*!³⁵ The French, of course, were unwilling to grant Manto even the slightest sign of recognition; after all, he was, as far as they were concerned, a ward of the Dutch state, living on Dutch soil. Nor was the promised official recognition from Paramaribo forthcoming; when Pengel's government fell in 1969, the idea of a Surinamese Aluku *gaanman* apparently fell with it.

The Kotika people, however, were not ready to abandon their cause. In August 1972, Manto paid a visit to the office of Districtsbestuur en Decentralisatie in Paramaribo, hoping to persuade the authorities to grant him what had earlier been promised. The most the government was willing to offer, however, was a position called *hoofdkapitein*, mid-way between *gaanman* and village chief (*kapiten*) in rank. Manto and his followers rejected the offer as being beneath the dignity of someone who had already been installed as *gaanman* according to Aluku custom (*Dagblad De West*, August

8, 1972).³⁶ Not long after this, the hopes of the Kotika people were raised once again when Olton van Genderen, one of the leaders of the NSP, declared he would be able to fulfill the old promise to name Manto paramount chief if his party were to win the upcoming 1973 elections (*Dagblad De West*, October 3, 1974). The voters of Kotika were no doubt expected to keep this in mind as they cast their ballots.³⁷ In 1974, after the elections, van Genderen invited Manto to Paramaribo and assured him that he would soon be made paramount chief, probably as early as September of that year (*Dagblad De West*, February 16, May 30, and October 3, 1974). But for reasons that are not entirely clear, Manto's official installation on the coast never took place. According to a number of Alukus from villages on the French side, the authorities in Paramaribo, once they had achieved their political ends, reneged once again on their promise. Not only did they point out that a small tribe such as the Aluku was not entitled to two paramount chiefs when all the other Maroon groups each had only one, but they hastened to remind the Kotika upstarts that the Aluku as a group had always been allies of the French.³⁸ Lacking a government salary, Manto, the Kotika *gaanman*, was reduced to making boats and cassava presses and selling them for a living, a humiliating fate for a paramount chief. For the other Aluku clans, the *gaanman* of Kotika had become little more than a joke.³⁹

Gaanman Tolinga, meanwhile, was helping to usher in a new epoch along the French side of the river. In 1969, the Inini territory was integrated with the coast, and shortly thereafter, a number of French *communes* were created in the interior. Tolinga was appointed the first mayor of the new *commune* of Grand-Santi-Papaïchton, which had been implanted on the traditional Aluku territory, and presided over the distribution of a plethora of administrative funds. Before long, the Aluku *commune* was swimming in money, dispensed from Paris.⁴⁰ Through all the changes, the paramount chieftaincy had successfully been transferred from the Dikan to the Kawina clan. The problem of legitimacy had been solved by the dredging up of an obscure oral tradition which held that the Dikan and Kawina people were in fact relatives; they were known by different names, it was asserted, only because their ancestors had been separated and placed on different plantations in the distant past. This oral tradition was invoked from time to time to give ideological support to current political realities.⁴¹ In the meantime, the two sides of the river had grown farther apart than ever, and for some years, the people of Kotika and those of the other clans, as the Aluku phrase it, "refused to greet one another."

THE MORE RECENT PAST: PEETI'S AMBITIONS

At the time of my arrival among the Aluku in 1983, the people of Kotika and the residents of the other Aluku villages were once again on speaking terms. On the surface at least, relations between the two sides of the river were cordial, mutual bonds of kinship and marriage between Kotika and the other villages having gradually helped to palliate the tensions between them. The Yakobi people had eventually come to acknowledge Tolinga, if somewhat begrudgingly, as their paramount chief – or so it seemed. In fact, they had had little choice in the matter, for Tolinga had early gained control of the Tata Odun oracle, the supreme tribal oracle of the Aluku.⁴² Few of the essential rituals in Aluku life, from ceremonies legitimating new spirit mediums to funeral rites, could be performed without consultation of this oracle, and Tolinga, as paramount chief, held the key to such consultations. If the Yakobi people were properly to bury their dead, or if they were to succeed in warding off the *kunu*, or avenging spirits, that afflict all Aluku clans, then their only option was to come to terms with Gaanman Tolinga.⁴³

It was while attending a ceremony held for the purpose of placating one such *kunu*, an avenging spirit currently attacking the Yakobi clan, that I caught my first glimpse of the village of Kotika early in 1984. The propitiatory rites had been duly approved by Gaanman Tolinga, and a large crowd comprised of members of various different clans, including the Kawina clan, had descended upon the village to offer support. The spirit of cooperation between clans left a strong impression. Yet, it was immediately evident that Kotika was a village apart. Surinamese flags had been posted at the main clearing in the center of the village, where the ceremony was held. The official assembly hall, bearing a sign in Sranan, the coastal language of Suriname, and the schoolhouse, where classes were taught in Dutch, contrasted with the French gendarmerie, school, and clinic located at the center of Tolinga's village of Pompidouville (Papai Siton) on the other side of the river.⁴⁴ Kotika also possessed a small air field, and was linked to the Surinamese capital of Paramaribo by regular flights.

Over the next two years, it became ever more apparent that relations between Kotika and the other Aluku villages were somewhat strained. In Komontibo, where I was based, and the neighboring village of Papai Siton, I began to hear whisperings of complaint about the Yakobi people. The people of Kotika, so went the most common charge against them, were "spoiling the river" (i.e. acting so as to create disunity in the traditional Aluku territory, the "Aluku River" [*Aluku Liba*], as the region is known

in local parlance). They were not conducting themselves as Alukus should. One day, a mixed party of people from the Kawina and Dipelu clans went downstream to drug a certain portion of the river for fish. On the advice of a couple of Kotika people, whose village was located downstream and who thus knew the area better than they did, they spent the day working at a particular spot. When they returned to Komontibo with a meager catch, they accused the Yakobi people of having purposely misled them to a place where the water was too deep for the amount of poison they had, so as to keep the really good spot for themselves. On another occasion, the Yakobi people took a decision, without consulting the other clans, to excise a certain standard portion of the traditional death rites from all funeral ceremonies taking place in Kotika. All such decisions are properly made only in the context of public meetings in which all clans are represented, and this breach of etiquette drew strong criticism from all the other villages. There were several other such incidents during my stay, and they usually led to the same refrain: "the Kotika people are spoiling the river."⁴⁵

This recurring accusation took on new meaning when placed in the larger context of interethnic relations in the Lawa River area. For the same charge was simultaneously being leveled against the neighboring Ndjukas of the Tapanahoni River in Suriname. Since the introduction of French *communes* in the Aluku territory in the early 1970s, the region had received increasing numbers of Ndjuka visitors, attracted by the artificial economy that had been created by the sudden influx of French administrative funds. River transportation between the French *commune* of Maripasoula and the coastal town of Saint-Laurent, once the province of the Aluku, had come to be monopolized by Ndjuka boatmen. During a series of Aluku council meetings I attended in various villages over a period of two years, I was witness to mounting tension. The Aluku had not forgotten how the Ndjuka, in league with the Dutch, had subjugated their ancestors during the first half of the 19th century. Speeches were made, pointing out that the Ndjuka were once again trying to dominate the Aluku, this time by invading their territory and siphoning off its wealth. On more than one occasion, the possibility of banning all Ndjukas from Aluku territory was discussed. The Ndjuka were "spoiling the river," and the Alukus of Kotika were their henchmen. For in declaring themselves Surinamese, the Yakobi people were identifying themselves with the Ndjuka as much as with the Paramaribo government. Hadn't the Kotika people intermarried with Ndjukas more than had any other Aluku clan? Perhaps, it was insinuated, they wanted to become Ndjukas themselves. And their village headmen, with their Surinamese uniforms, were known to put on

the same airs as Ndjuka dignitaries. One of them even spoke the Ndjuka dialect, rather than Aluku, having been raised in the village of his Ndjuka father.

Behind this tension, as I was to discover, lay the same thread running back to 1876, when the first Yakobi paramount chief, Anato, took office. Let us pick up this thread one final time. After the death of Manto, the would-be paramount chief from Kotika, which occurred around 1980, representatives of the Yakobi clan again approached the Paramaribo government, still hoping to be awarded their own paramount chieftaincy within the fledgling independent Republic of Suriname.⁴⁶ The Paramaribo government responded, as it had in the days of Manto, with a compromise; the Aluku of Kotika would not be allowed a full-fledged *gaanman*, but instead would have a special position created for them, that of *ede-kapiten* (in Dutch, *hoofdkapitein*, meaning “head captain”).⁴⁷ This office would be mid-way between village headman and paramount chief, and it would have a larger salary and greater prestige than the position of plain *kapiten*.⁴⁸

This new turn of events allowed the tradition of Gaanman Anato and his latter-day analogue, Manto, to be revived by a Yakobi man named Peeti, who was selected to serve as the first *hoofdkapitein*. When I first arrived among the Aluku, the chosen occupant of the new position, now known as “Kapiten Peeti,” had only recently returned from his inauguration in Paramaribo.⁴⁹ Within a short time, Kapiten Peeti was being treated by the Surinamese government as an important dignitary, receiving invitations, along with his two village headman, to all official functions and meetings in Paramaribo to which the paramount chiefs of all the other Maroon groups were invited. Upon returning to Aluku from one such official visit in 1986, Peeti took it upon himself to call a large meeting, to which he invited headmen from all the other clans, so that he could report the proceedings to his fellow Aluku. The meeting took place on the relatively neutral ground of Agoode (Boniville), the village belonging to the Dikan clan and the traditional residence of the Aluku *gaanman*; for Kapiten Peeti refused to hold any conferences in the Kawina village of Papai Siton, the current residence of the paramount chief. Gaanman Tolinga was conspicuously absent. In the following weeks, the headmen and elders of various clans exchanged opinions; the consensus was that, once again, as in the days of Anato, and more recently, Manto, the Yakobi people were trying to maneuver their way into having their own *gaanman*. The accusations went further: the Yakobis were collaborating with the Paramaribo government in its attempts to bring the Aluku under Surinamese control. The plan, rumor had it, was to place the Kotika *ofru-kapiten* (*hoofdkapitein*) under the command of the Ndjuka paramount chief,

Gaanman Gazon, thus bringing at least a portion of the Aluku population once again under Ndjuka rule.⁵⁰ Here was one more proof, observers noted, of what people had been saying all along: "the Kotika people are spoiling the river."

Thus ends the historical thread we have been following, a thread that runs through and stitches together more than a century of interpenetrating colonial, postcolonial, and local-level politics. The breach between Kotika and the other villages is now accepted as a fact of life, and the divisive play of states among the Aluku has been integrated with local mythology. It all goes back, I was told by oral historians, to the great founding hero, Tata Aluku, from whom the entire tribe took its name.⁵¹ Tata Aluku was a founding member of the Yakobi clan, the Kotika clan, and he was distinguished from all other ancestors by his special role of protector. It was Tata Aluku, the story goes, who was charged with the responsibility of hiding women, children, and invalids at a special sanctuary whenever the ancestors were threatened by attack during the 18th-century struggles against the Dutch colonial regime; the founding heroes of the other clans, on the other hand, were all mere warriors. The Yakobi people have always argued during public gatherings of the clans that theirs deserves special recognition, because of the unique, crucial role played by their ancestor Tata Aluku. The other clans, of course, are quick to retort that great warriors are at least as important as passive protectors. But the Yakobi people of Kotika, the descendants of Tata Aluku, remain unmoved by such arguments. As an elder from the Dipelu clan, speaking for all the other clans, once explained to me, "this is why we and the Yakobi people will never be able to get along."⁵²

In late 1986, the military government of Suriname went to war with the Maroons, and the village of Kotika, like the rest of the interior, was cut off from the coastal region. It remains to be seen how the Alukus of Kotika, still clinging to their sacred ancestral village on Surinamese soil, will respond to the crisis in the long run. But the split between the two sides of the river has, if anything, widened since the outbreak of war. By 1989, Kapiten Peeti was not only acting as *ofru-kapiten* of Kotika, but was now publicly and explicitly challenging Gaanman Tolinga, asserting outright that he himself, as Anato's rightful heir, was the only one with a legitimate claim on the Aluku paramount chieftaincy.⁵³ Nearly a century has passed since Gaanman Anato's death in 1891, but the thwarted ambitions of those fellow Yakobis who had hoped at the time to follow in their leader's footsteps continue to make themselves felt to this day. In a society saturated with a sense of history, there is nothing extraordinary about such persisting claims.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The story of Kotika reminds us once again that there are always two sides to the process of political, as well as economic, penetration into foreign domains. Needless to say, those on the receiving end of such transactions never remain mere passive witnesses. One cannot understand what the gradual incorporation of peoples such as the Aluku into larger politics actually entails without having some grounding in the local cultural and political frame of reference from which their responses derive meaning. In the Aluku case, the play of expanding states has repeatedly dovetailed with what may be called, for want of a better terms, vernacular political culture.

This history of interpenetrating political systems sheds light as well on the larger picture of interethnic relations in French Guiana. Kotika, the odd man out, is emblematic of the powerful role sometimes played by political alignments in the process of defining ethnic identities and interethnic relations. For Kotika (a small Surinamese island surrounded by a French sea) is to the other Aluku villages as the entire Aluku tribe (a French-affiliated enclave enveloped by a Surinamese ocean) is to its much more populous Surinamese Maroon neighbors. Though contacts between them are increasing, and in spite of the fact that they speak very close, mutually-intelligible dialects of a single language, and possess very similar, historically-related cultures, the Aluku and their Maroon neighbors, the Ndjuka and Paramaka, show evidence of growing ever farther apart. Memories of past enmity cannot alone account for this. One is reminded of the situation described by John Cole and Eric Wolf in their study (1974) of Tyrolean ethnicity in the Alpine villages of Tret and St. Felix; in this study, the authors show how cultural differences between these two villages, even though they share a single ecological niche, have gained heightened significance because of a long history of political separation brought about by shifting national boundaries. Something akin to this seems to be occurring among the French-affiliated Aluku, their Surinamese Ndjuka neighbors, and the village of Kotika, caught in the middle.

It is important to keep in mind, as a final thought, that divided loyalties are not new to the Aluku or their Maroon neighbors. Political schisms, opposing alignments, and clan and lineage fission have characterized these societies since their inception. What is so interesting about the case described here, though, is that these processes, in becoming articulated with political forces emanating from distant centers of state power, have contributed to a heightened and newly politicized sense of ethnic identity among the Aluku. The village of Kotika, by going its own way politically and serving

as a foil, has paradoxically enhanced ethnic solidarity at one level while creating divisiveness at another. In so doing, it has shown that the ambitions of even one remote little enclave may have a bearing on the play of states.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Wim Hoogbergen and Richard Price for a number of comments and suggestions which helped in the preparation of this paper. A special debt is owed to Wim Hoogbergen and Ben Scholtens, each of whom provided me with a good deal of information from various unpublished or unobtainable written sources; their generous sharing of information made possible a better understanding of the events at Kotika than I could have achieved relying on oral accounts alone. The field research on which this study is based (carried out between 1983 and 1987) was generously supported by the Fulbright-Hays program, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, and the (U.S.) National Science Foundation.
2. For background on the civil war in Suriname, providing a Maroon perspective, see Polimé and Thoden van Velzen (1988) and Thoden van Velzen (1988).
3. See Stedman (1988) for a dramatic eyewitness account of this turbulent period.
4. This early period of Aluku history is described in great detail in Hoogbergen (1984), Hoogbergen (1985), and De Beet (1984). See also De Groot (1975).
5. See Hoogbergen (1985:413-416).
6. This population estimate is based on an extrapolation from genealogical and census data I collected in several Aluku villages between 1984 and 1986. Recent official estimates, based on government censuses, are extremely unreliable, owing to the high mobility of the Aluku population and the lack of rigorously controlled census-taking procedures in the Aluku area to date.
7. If this description sounds strange to students of other Suriname Maroon societies, it is because the Aluku differ from these other societies in certain respects. Unlike the *lo* of other Maroon societies such as the Ndjuka and Saramaka, the Aluku *lo* is not further divided into named, corporate lineages known as *bee* (see Köbben 1967, Price 1975). Among the Aluku, the terms *lo* and *bee* are used interchangeably to refer to the corporate clans mentioned above, although the former term is the most common one. (The term *bee* is also sometimes loosely used to refer to matrilineal descendants of a common ancestress who have no corporate identity as such, or even to the children of one mother.) In keeping with the literature on Suriname Maroons, I translate the word *lo* with the English word "clan," although among the Aluku the *lo* corresponds in several respects with the corporate lineages called *bee* in other Maroon societies. This difference has caused a good deal of confusion in previous treatments of Aluku social organization. It is a question I will take up in detail in later writings.

8. This brief sketch of the history of Pobiansi and Kotika is based on a combination of written sources and oral traditions I collected among the Aluku between 1983 and 1987. Hoogbergen (1985:373) cites archival documents indicating that the Aluku were living near the present-day village of Kotika by the 1820s. Ronmy (1861:785), who visited the Aluku in 1860, mentions Pobiansi, then the village of the *gaanman*, as well as Kotika and a number of other settlements. Vidal (1862:644), who visited Pobiansi in 1861, mentions that there were three other small villages situated alongside it. According to Hurault (1965:14), "the Boni [Aluku] villages remained at the same location from 1815 to 1895, grouped around the present-day site of Kotika" (my translation). Hoogbergen (1985:424) writes: "In the period from circa 1815 to 1890 the Aluku lived in one village, named Aluku or Kotika. In this village the various clans lived in separate sections (*pisi*). The combined French-Dutch mission that visited the Aluku in 1860 names the *pisi*: Kotika, Asisi, Lapé and Kormotibo" (my translation). (In fact, some of the clans had split off from Pobiansi and formed villages on the French side long before 1890.) By the time Crevaux (1879:716) visited the Aluku in 1877, Pobiansi had been replaced by "Kotika" as the residence of the *gaanman*. Brunetti (1890:159), who paid a visit to the Aluku *gaanman* in 1886, writes of the "quatre villages qui forment le groupe de Cottica" ("four villages forming the Kotika group"). A year or so later, when Coudreau (1888:458; 1893:46) visited the area, Kotika was still the residence of the *gaanman*, and he noted that it had two adjoining "faubourgs," called "La Paix" and "Séeye." It is common knowledge among present-day Aluku elders that the entire tribe once "lived together at Kotika," each clan having its own *pisi* – its own little village section(s) within the cluster. The names of several of these hamlets are remembered and continue to be invoked in public discourse today: Lape, Seei, Boon Mila Konde, Tutu, Pobiansi, Moi Uman Kiiki, Meenso, Yao Kiiki. The southernmost section (*pisi*) of the present-day village of Kotika has retained the name "Lape," although it is no longer inhabited by people of the Lape clan. The Lape people now live in the village of Loka on the French side; the section of Kotika today called Lape has long been occupied by members of the Yakobi clan.

9. According to custom, the *gaanman* is supposed to reveal his choice of successor to only one or two confidants. After his death, it is the responsibility of these individuals to make his wishes public. As can be imagined, this often leaves the way open for a good deal of maneuvering by competitors, all of whom may be able to bring forward individuals claiming to have been taken into the deceased *gaanman*'s confidence.

10. According to Hurault (1969:70), *Gaanman* Atjaba belonged to the Yakobi clan, and it was to him that the office of *gaanman* was first passed by the Dikan clan, in 1870; when he died in 1876, according to this version, the office was kept within the Yakobi clan and passed on to Anato. Hoogbergen (1985:419), apparently following Hurault, seems to agree on this point. At least one Yakobi oral historian with whom I spoke supported this version as well. If this version is accurate, then the events described here in fact occurred around 1870 rather than 1876, and the deceased Dikan *gaanman* was Atjaba's predecessor Adan, rather than Atjaba himself. According to oral traditions I collected from elders of a number of different clans, however, Atjaba and Abaanga both belonged to the Dikan clan, and Anato, *Gaanman* Atjaba's successor, was the first and only Yakobi *gaanman*. Until definitive archival evidence to the contrary is located, I see no reason to reject this version, given by a wide range of present-day Aluku elders.

11. This account of the transfer of the paramount chieftaincy from the Dikan to the Yakobi clan is based primarily on oral traditions collected among the Aluku in 1985-6.

12. Jules Brunetti, a Catholic missionary who briefly visited the village of Kotika in 1886, has left us with a fairly lengthy, if superficial, description of Anato and his village (Brunetti 1890). Coudreau (1893) also devotes some space to a discussion of Anato.
13. See Petot (1986:102-143).
14. For detailed information on the high fees charged by Maroon boatmen in the Lawa-Maroni basin during this period, see De Beet and Thoden van Velzen (1977:126). These authors estimate that between 1900 and 1910, the Maroon boat crews plying the Lawa and its tributaries, including the Aluku boatmen, had a collective income of 600,000 florins per year. Coudreau (1893:49) asserts that Gaanman Anato laid claim to 15-20% of the gold extracted within his territory during the 1880s, and estimates that by April 1888, Anato had acquired the equivalent of more than 100,000 francs in this manner.
15. This momentous decision, which was to have such a profound impact on the future of the Aluku, was handed down by the ruler of a country the Aluku did not even know existed, and who was probably equally ignorant of the Aluku territory. It was Tsar Alexander III who arbitrated in the border dispute.
16. It is interesting to note that previous to this time there was a fairly long history of competition between the Dutch and French for the loyalties of the Aluku. Even as the original treaty of 1860 was being negotiated, the Dutch were trying to woo the Aluku over to their side, so as to supplement the available labor force in their colony (De Groot 1977:77-81). The French, however, were from the first much more successful in winning them over, partly because the Aluku retained bitter memories – which, indeed, they continue to invoke even today – of the cruel treatment their ancestors received from their former Dutch masters. As Hoogbergen (1985:388) rightly states: “the chasm between the Aluku and the Dutch has never been closed” (“de kloof tussen Boni’s en Nederlanders is nooit gedicht”).
17. “Notre désir le plus ardent est de *rester français*...”
18. The dates of succession are taken from Hurault (1961:70) and Hoogbergen (1985:419). The kinship relationships are from oral tradition.
19. I am indebted to Wim Hoogbergen for generously sharing with me fragments of a number of contemporary Dutch archival documents (which he himself located) describing these transactions between Paramaribo and the Aluku following the death of Gaanman Anato.
20. In a letter dating from circa 1892, reprinted in Laporte (1983 [1915]:180-181) under the heading “Une Pétition d’un Grand-Man des Bonis,” the new paramount chief and several cosignatories (including the Yakobi *kapiten*, Bayo) tell of a recent visit to Kotika by a Dutch official. This official asked the Aluku to recognize Dutch sovereignty and to post the Dutch flag in their villages. If they refused, the official asserted, the people of Kotika would have to leave their village and go to the French side. The letter goes on to request that a stretch of land be set aside on the French side for the Alukus of Kotika.
21. “...la France ‘considère toujours les Bonis comme ses anciens enfants, quoique habitant sur une terre étrangère’...”

22. Ben Scholtens (pers. comm., June 29, 1989) informs me that archival documents show that Bayo was one of the main instigators of the great Ndjuka-Aluku boat strike of the early 1920s; as early as 1918 he had already begun to stop traffic on the Maroni, apparently in part because of the Suriname government's continuing refusal to inaugurate him as "kapitein." Bayo continues to be remembered by the present-day Aluku for his role in creating a *kunu* (avenging spirit) that still afflicts the Yakobi clan. He is said to have participated in the murder of a Creole gold prospector whose *yooka* (ghost) has since come back to haunt Bayo's matriclan.

23. Before Surinamese independence, Kotika had only one government-paid *kapiten* and two *basia*. The latter two were first given official recognition and government salaries in 1956. I am grateful to Ben Scholtens (pers. comm., June 19, 1989) for providing this information.

24. The second of the two paid *kapiten* positions in Kotika was created in 1975.

25. It is difficult to tell whether a comment made by Hurault about relations between Kotika and the other villages reflects an actual period of normalization during Gaanman Difu's reign or merely wishful thinking on the part of Hurault's informant(s): "this separation had no repercussions on the social life of the tribe, the people of Kotika continuing today to be subject to the authority of the grand man [*gaanman*] in the same way as the inhabitants of the other villages" ("cette séparation n'eut aucune répercussion sur la vie sociale de la tribu, les gens de Kotika continuant de nos jours à être soumis à l'autorité du grand man au même titre que les habitants des autres villages") (Hurault 1960:137). This characterization, in any case, hardly applies to the present situation. As we shall see, the persisting divisions and tensions between Kotika and all the other Aluku villages continue to play an important part in political and social life.

26. In the past a certain amount of intermarriage had occurred between members of the Aluku and Ndjuka Dikan clans (for instance, Gaanman Osii, who reigned 1891-1915, had a Ndjuka wife from the Dikan clan). There remain today in Aluku a few descendants of these marriages who, though Aluku in every other respect, are still identified with the Ndjuka Dikan clan rather than the Aluku one. The latter clan, the "true" Aluku Dikan *lo*, is said to have died out, Gaanman Difu having been the last surviving member.

27. See Hoogbergen (1985:419-420) on historical connections between the Aluku and Ndjuka Dikan clans. The account of the Dikan visitors from Benanu presented here is based on information provided by a number of Aluku elders who were present during the proceedings.

28. Interestingly, Sibour (1861:121), writing in the mid-19th century, notes that Tollinge (in some sources spelled "Tollenge" or "Tollenche") was called "Tonika" by the Maroons, indicating a pronunciation rather similar to today's "Tolinga." For further information on Tollenge's relationship with the Aluku and other Maroons, see Ronmy (1861) and Vidal (1862). See also De Groot (1977:68-81) for additional background on Tollinge.

29. Though a member of the Yakobi clan, Tutu resided for much of his life in Agoode (Boniville), Gaanman Difu's village. He also lived for many years in Saint-Laurent, where he served as a special *kapiten* whose job it was to represent those Aluku visiting or residing in the coastal area. (This special position was recognized by both the French and the Aluku

themselves.) Tutu is buried in the Saint-Laurent cemetery, where his grave marker bears a plaque which reads: "Ci-Gît Toutou, Adjoint au Grand Man, Capitaine des Bonis, Dcd le 24-9-63."

30. This account of the connection between Gaanman Difu's alleged selection of Tutu on the one hand, and the claims of Manto's supporters on the other, is based on Welles (1972), as well as the oral accounts of a number of Alukus from both Kotika and other villages.

31. By the 1970s, the position taken by the Kotika people – that Anato's precedent gave them a special right to the paramount chieftaincy – seems to have crystallized into the notion that there had always existed a customary pattern of exchange between the Dikan and Yakobi clans (Welles 1972). The idea, as explained to me by a number of Kotika people, is that the two clans were traditionally supposed to take turns, passing the office back and forth every few generations; now that the Dikan clan is extinct, this would mean, if the "rule" is to be followed, that the office would have to stay within the Yakobi clan forevermore.

32. The overlapping social ties created by the complexities of Aluku social organization and patterns of residence meant that segments of certain other clans also had reason to sympathize with Manto's supporters. For example, there is a section (*pisi*) of the village of Kotika today known as Komu Ondo. The residents of this section ("Komu Ondo sama"), though now closely identified with the Yakobi clan, are said to be descended from a woman of the Awaa Baka clan of Asisi, who settled in Kotika several generations ago and stayed to raise children there. Some people claim that Manto, though widely believed to be Yakobi, was in fact descended from "Komu Ondo sama," which helps to explain why a few Awaa Baka people were also to be found among his supporters.

33. There is evidence that the French occasionally intervened in the choice of paramount chiefs even during the period of indirect rule before the 1960s. Hurault (1961:71), for example, states that after the death of Gaanman Awensai in 1936, the first choice as his successor was an elder named Samalobi, but the French administration, believing Samalobi to be too old, exerted its influence in favor of Difu, the candidate who was eventually chosen. For a more recent discussion of French intervention in local political affairs among the Aluku, see Givens (1984:79-96). Price (1975:136-137) briefly discusses interference by Dutch colonial officials in Saramaka *gaamá* successions, as well as the factionalism and intrigue that have traditionally characterized the transmission of the Saramaka paramount chieftaincy. For a more detailed account of Saramaka *gaamá* succession, showing that the transfer of power in this society has often involved the same sorts of factors described in the present paper (rivalry between a number of clans, the temporary "lending" of the office by one clan to another, power plays and ideological justifications, intervention by the Dutch colonial government, and so forth), see Price (1989) (especially chapters 4 and 6, and note 1 of chapter 8, which contains a chart illustrating the passage of the office between clans over several generations). Hoeree and Hoogbergen (1984) present a detailed case study of interference by the Dutch colonial government in Saramaka *gaamá* succession. Thoden van Velzen (1966) deals in great detail with politics, including political succession, among the Ndjuka; and Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering (1988:307-315) provide an especially clear description of intervention by coastal politicians in the local affairs of the Ndjuka, during Gaanman Gazon's installation in the 1960s, shortly after Ndjukas gained the right to vote in national elections. De Groot (1969) also deals at length with calculated attempts by Dutch

authorities to meddle in Ndjuka social and political life. For a discussion of succession among the Matawai, see Anonymous (1916); and for a general overview of succession among various Maroon groups, see Wong (1938:327-348).

34. As part of the traditional ceremonies performed to install a new Aluku paramount chief, a special headman known as the *fisikali* – an office which is intermediate between that of paramount chief and village headman, and which has traditionally remained within the Dipelu clan – must “weti a gaanman” (coat the new paramount chief with *pemba doti*, white kaolin powder). According to custom, only the *fisikali* can carry out this ritual, which is essential to the legitimacy of a new *gaanman*. (A similar intermediate position called *fisikali* once existed among the Ndjuka, but has apparently disappeared [Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering 1988:426]; among the Aluku, the position of *fisikali* remains important to this day.) The *fisikali* at the time of the dispute chose to perform the ritual for Tolinga, and the Yakobi people, lacking the support of the Dipelu clan, were forced to “weti” Manto by themselves. This violation of propriety only added to the opprobrium felt by the other clans toward Manto and the Yakobi people for their attempt to usurp the paramount chieftaincy. (A few persons, either belonging to the Yakobi clan or with close ties to Kotika, denied in conversations with me that the Yakobi people had gone so far as to “weti” Manto on their own; but many others, affiliated with other clans, agreed with the version presented above.) Welles (1972) reports that Manto was formally installed as *gaanman* by the people of Kotika in February 1968, “with great ceremony.”

35. This theme of “two *gaanman*” has become incorporated into a parable I often heard repeated in the context of public meetings among the Aluku. As the story goes, God decided to “test” three of the Maroon tribes, the Saramaka, Ndjuka, and the Aluku, by presenting them with challenging situations. All three failed the “tests,” responding by making major “mistakes” that continue to haunt them to this day. The mistake of the Saramaka was in letting the dam be built which flooded a large part of their territory in the 1960s; the Ndjukas’ mistake was in letting the prophet Akalali burn their sacred shrines at Santi Goon; and the mistake of the Aluku was the fiasco of installing two *gaanman* at the same time.

36. The government’s offer, as Ben Scholtens (pers. comm., June 29, 1989) points out, was made even less appealing by the stipulation that the Aluku *hoofdkapitein* position would have to be placed under the authority of the Ndjuka *gaanman*. The mere thought of coming once again under Ndjuka rule was guaranteed to cause an instant negative reaction among the Aluku.

37. It was probably more than mere coincidence that the outcome of these elections hinged on the Maroon vote (Dew 1978: 171).

38. In a personal communication (June 29, 1989), Ben Scholtens reveals that a notice put out by the Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Distriktsbestuur in 1981 “refers to the issue of Manto and states that he was not recognized as granman because there are too few people living in Cottica [i.e. Kotika] and also because it would create a precedent in regard to the position of another small Bushnegro tribe, viz. the Coppename Kwinti.” The notice goes on to recommend that the number of *gaanman* recognized by the Suriname government not be increased from the four already existing. This recommendation was officially endorsed by the Alibux cabinet in a government declaration of May 1983.

39. This account of the dispute over the paramount chieftaincy following Gaanman Difu's death is based primarily on the memories of a number of Aluku witnesses who themselves participated in the events, as well as a number of Surinamese newspaper reports kindly made available to me by Wim Hoogbergen (from *Dagblad De West*, 1971-74). Robert Vignon, French Guiana's first prefect, and later a *conseiller général* – indeed, the same *conseiller général* who visited the Aluku during this period of transition – provides his own account of the events following Difu's death in his recently published memoirs (Vignon 1985: 227-232). His account includes a sketchy but revealing discussion of the dispute between Kotika and the other villages, with some background on the French intervention, in which he himself participated. (The title of Vignon's book, *Gran Man Baka* – an approximate rendering of the Aluku expression “gaanman fu bakaa,” meaning “leader of the coastal people/Europeans” – is itself a reference to Vignon's long-term relations with the Aluku as colonial administrator and representative of the coastal society.) Although it is evident from his book that Vignon understood almost nothing of what was behind the dispute, the information he provides is nonetheless useful. It allows us to fill in the Aluku oral accounts with certain details, and serves to corroborate other details.

40. For discussions of the repeal of the “statut de l'Inini” and the subsequent creation of French communes in the interior, see Hurault (1972:300-337) and Hurault (1985). During the early years, the annual budget of the new commune of Grand-Santi-Papaïchton was no less than 36 million old francs (Hurault 1972:303). For a discussion of some of the effects felt in the 1980s, see Bilby (1987).

41. Some elders from clans other than Kawina deny this tradition of kinship between the Dikan and Kawina clans, averring that the first they ever heard of it was when Tolinga became *gaanman*, and insinuating that the story might have been invented by the Kawina people after the fact to support their claims to the office. Another way in which Kawina people seek to legitimize their claims to the paramount chieftaincy is by asserting that a previous chief, Gaanman Gongo, belonged to the Kawina clan, thus setting a precedent for the current situation. Both Hurault (1961: 71) and Hoogbergen (1985: 419) place Gaanman Gongo (who reigned from c. 1810 to 1840) in the Dikan clan, not the Kawina clan. Hoogbergen (pers. comm., April, 1989), however, has indicated to me that he was following Hurault when he placed Gaanman Gongo in the Dikan clan, and he doubts whether there exist any contemporary written records documenting what clan Gongo actually belonged to. In any case, recent major ethnographies (e.g., Price 1983, Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering 1988) make abundantly clear that this kind of manipulation of oral traditions in line with the interests of particular clans and lineages is a regular feature of social life in Surinamese Maroon societies. It should therefore come as no surprise that the various Aluku clans possess different and competing versions of certain oral historical traditions. Hoogbergen (1985: 438-439) provides one more such example from the Aluku, an earlier published version of an oral tradition asserting that two early important leaders, Boni and Aluku, originated from the same plantation, but that Boni was the first to escape. As Hoogbergen points out, since Boni is a Dikan ancestor, his ostensible earlier escape would serve to support the claims of the Dikan clan on the paramount chieftaincy. But as Hoogbergen goes on to note, Boni and Aluku, according to this particular version, had *wanted* to run away from the plantation *together*, although it did not happen this way; he thus surmises, very astutely, that this would seem to indicate that the anonymous source of the oral tradition was a member of the Yakobi clan, the clan to which Aluku belonged. Indeed, this oral tradition, by emphasizing both that Boni and Aluku were from the same plantation and

that they had *wanted* to run away at the same time, seems perfectly tailored to offer ideological support to the claims on the paramount chieftaincy that the Yakobi people have tried to assert ever since Anato's reign in the late 19th century.

42. For background on Tata Odun, see Hurault (1961: 195-198).

43. For background on *kunu*, see Price (1973), which focuses on the relationship between avenging spirits and lineage structure among the Saramaka Maroons, and Thoden van Velzen (1966), which does the same for the Ndjuka. Avenging spirits operate in very similar ways among the Aluku, Ndjuka, and Saramaka. Hurault (1961: 221-235) includes a problematic discussion of *kunu* among the Aluku.

44. Gaanman Tolinga visited Paris in 1971, where he was received by French president Georges Pompidou. It was shortly after this voyage that he founded a new Aluku village which he christened Pompidouville. The residents of the old Kawina village of Papai Siton (in French, "Papaïchton") followed Tolinga to Pompidouville. The name of the abandoned older village, however, continues to be applied at times to the new one, and has been retained as well in the name of the commune known as Grand-Santi-Papaïchton. On arriving at the village of Pompidouville, the first thing one sees is a large sign reading: "CAPITALE DES BONIS, POMPIDOU, PAPAI-CHTON." Interestingly, during Gaanman Anato's time, it was Kotika that was regarded by the Aluku as "*la capitale des Bonis*" (Brunetti 1890: 156).

45. More serious rumors also began to circulate during my stay. One of them, which was heard in only the most guarded, private contexts, held that certain Yakobi people were trying to get rid of Gaanman Tolinga, by means either of poison or sorcery. Interestingly, Vignon (1985: 232) was told during one of his visits to the Aluku that the son of Gaanman Awensai (a former paramount chief) – this son, it so happens, being Gaanman Tolinga's wife's brother – was poisoned by "le clan de Cottica" (i.e. the Yakobi clan of Kotika).

46. According to some versions, it was in fact the Paramaribo government that approached the Kotika people, offering them a special new position, in the hope that, as in the days of Manto, they might further their own political goals in the region.

47. The Aluku themselves refer to this position as *ofru-kapiten*, or *ofu-kapiten*.

48. The Dutch colonial government had several times before used this strategy to good effect among the Ndjuka, appointing individuals whose position they wished to strengthen to the same sort of intermediary post, between village headman and paramount chief in rank, thereby increasing their own influence among the Ndjuka. This intermediary position was called *ede kabiten* by the Ndjuka. Two prominent occupants of this office among the Ndjukaa were Kanapé, high priest of the Gaan Gadu oracle during the first half of the 20th century, and Akalali, the religious leader who transformed Ndjuka society during the 1970s (Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering 1988: 237; 346).

49. It was on October 1, 1983, that Peeti was inaugurated as *hoofdkapitein*.

50. In fact, before naming Peeti *hoofdkapitein*, the Paramaribo government had removed the earlier stipulation that would have placed this position under the Ndjuka *gaanman's*

authority. But suspicions remained high that the government was planning eventually to reverse itself and make Peeti subordinate to the Ndjuka *gaanman*.

51. *Aluku* is the name used by the Aluku to refer to themselves, when speaking their own language; it is also the term used by all the other Maroon groups to refer to the Aluku. Outsiders, however, and particularly the French, most often use the name *Boni* to refer to the Aluku (and until recently, the Aluku themselves, when speaking French or Creole, would refer to themselves as *Boni*).

52. Archival documents from the 18th century support these present-day oral traditions in several respects, indicating that the rebel leader named Aluku was born on a plantation in the Cottica River area called Groot-Marseille, the owner of which was named Jacobie, from whom the Yakobi clan took their name. This would seem strongly to support the claim that Tata Aluku was a founding member of the Yakobi *lo*. Furthermore, these archival documents indeed characterize Aluku unambiguously as a protector of women and children, who hid them away during times of crisis. See Hoogbergen (1985: 72-78; 405-406; 423).

53. In April 1989, Kapitein Peeti took it upon himself to inform several members of a visiting delegation from Cayenne, including the author, that the office of *gaanman* properly belongs to the Yakobi clan, to which it should have passed after Difu's death. Manto, he claimed, had been Gaanman Difu's chosen successor and the true paramount chief of the Aluku; but the paramount chieftaincy had unjustly been wrested from the Kotika people. According to Peeti, the treaty with the whites had actually been made by Anato, the Yakobi *gaanman*. Peeti claimed to be in possession of the original "pampila" (piece of paper) on which Anato's treaty was written, which he said had been passed on to him by Manto before his death, who had himself received it from Gaanman Difu. This was offered as proof that he, Peeti, had been chosen by Manto to succeed him as *gaanman*. Moreover, the Paramaribo government, he claimed, had already recognized him as the Aluku *gaanman*. (The official position of the Suriname government, however, is that Peeti is *hoofdkapitein*, not *granman*.) Peeti even went so far as to attend a formal meeting in Papai Siton between the visiting delegation and Gaanman Tolinga, where he raised this issue and invited the visitors to come to Kotika and see Anato's "pampila." This face-to-face confrontation took place at a time when hostilities between the Surinamese government and the Maroon rebels led by Ronnie Brunswijk remained unresolved, leaving the village of Kotika in a vulnerable position. The village was still cut off from the coast, and government services, including the salaries of village headmen, were still not reaching the interior. That Peeti would choose to continue pressing his claim at such an inopportune moment, when relations between the interior and Paramaribo were at an all-time low, indicates that the ongoing political dispute over the Aluku paramount chieftaincy has at least as much to do with the local history of clan rivalry as with the machinations of politicians in Paramaribo or Cayenne.

54. The Aluku, like the Saramaka (Price 1983) and other Suriname Maroons, are acutely conscious of living in time, and memories of the past, whether distant or more recent, continue to carry great importance and to inform political decision-making at all levels of their society. Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering (1988) do an excellent job of illuminating the historical continuity lying behind the many shifts in Ndjuka religious life, tracing a number of interconnecting threads over a period of nearly a century.

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