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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a group of about 400 Maroons fought a series of protracted guerilla wars against the Dutch in Eastern Suriname.¹ These wars have been called 'The Boni-Maroon Wars', after Boni the principal rebel leader. In 1776-77 Boni and his allies fled to French Guiana, from where they resumed their battle against the planters in 1789. This marked the beginning of the second Boni-Maroon War. For the Boni, this second war came to a tragic end with the cruel death of both Boni and Kormantin Kodjo in 1793; another important headman, Aluku, had died the year before. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the surviving Maroons, about 100 in total, settled on the Lawa River in the surroundings of the 'Abattis Cottica' under the leadership of Boni's son Agosu. This region is still inhabited by their descendants.²

Several Maroons have gained fame in Suriname's history owing to their battles in the eighteenth century. John Gabriel Stedman (1796) already mentioned the names of Boni, Baron and Jolicoeur. The government's clerk Charles Brouwn, who published an obscure article on the Boni-Maroon Wars in the same year 1796, added other names including that of Aluku. The descendants of the Maroons who fought the Dutch two centuries ago, nowadays prefer to be called 'Aluku', as they claim they are all Aluku's descendants. The colonial authorities have long called them the 'Boni-Maroons'. It is only since the past few years that it has become more and more common, even in official documents, to refer to them as the 'Aluku-Maroons'.

Who was this Aluku, who must have been so important that the present Maroons prefer to trace their origins back to him?

In the autumn of 1961, the Surinamese newspaper *De West* published a series of articles on the early history of the Aluku-Maroons. The author was the Moravian brother Axwijk, who used the pseudonym 'Ajax', i.e. the god of war. Brother Axwijk, a Creole from the coastal zone, worked as a missionary-teacher among the Aluku and the Ndjuka-Maroons in the interior of Suriname from 1937 until 1960. During the 1950s he was a schoolteacher at Stoelman's Island. Axwijk must have gathered the information for his article among the Ndjuka and the Aluku-Maroons. Unfortunately, Axwijk's reconstruction of the early Aluku history is not very reliable. Without mentioning his sources, he made a compilation of the various stories he heard. Hence, we do not know *when* and *where* these stories were told. Other works on the oral tradition of the Maroons in Suriname (Pakosie 1972, De Groot 1982, Price 1983, Thoden van Velzen & Van Wetering 1988) make clear that the accounts with respect to a certain episode are always biased by the role played by a specific matriclan in a particular event. In other words, we must know when and by whom a story was told to be able to interpret it correctly. In Axwijk's case, it is not even clear whether the stories were told by the Ndjuka or by the Aluku-Maroons. Moreover, Axwijk probably added certain aspects to the story, thus exaggerating the events. Thus, some military operations are said to have cost the lives of hundreds of people, whereas the real number of victims could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Unreliable as Axwijk may be as a source, his story on the early Boni contains a number of interesting remarks. Besides, he is the only person who recorded the oral tradition with respect to Aluku. It is therefore definitely worth our while to analyze Axwijk's series of articles as published in 1961 and compare these to the oral tradition concerning the Aluku-Maroons as presented by others (Pakosie 1972, De Groot 1982a and Thoden van Velzen 1988). In addition, due to my research in the General State Archives in The Hague it is possible to compare the oral tradition with archival records. The present article intends to give a systematic outline of our present information on Aluku. Axwijk's version will serve as a starting-point. The other records introduced are not only meant to explain and correct Axwijk's account, but also – and in particular – to paint a picture of Aluku.

ALUKU ACCORDING TO AXWIJK

According to Axwijk, the history of the Aluku-Maroons begins on a nameless plantation in Suriname, where Boni and Aluku were both slaves belonging to the same callous master. One day, they decided to escape

the cruel slave system and start a new life in freedom in the almost inaccessible forests and swamps of Suriname.

When the day of their flight came closer, Boni began to doubt whether it was wise to flee together. A joint escape would mean that he would have to share the leadership with Aluku once they arrived in the jungle. This idea did not appeal to Boni at all. The difference in age between the two men was small and both of them had magic powers, although Aluku was slightly more powerful than Boni in this respect. In fact it was obvious that, if they fled together, Aluku would be the rightful leader. That was why Boni decided to leave the plantation without Aluku. He knew that Aluku would catch up with him later, but then he would be the first to have pitched camp and made a fire. According to the Maroon rules, he would thus be entitled to the leadership (Ajax 1961).

The first paragraphs of Axwijk's story focus on the central theme of the early history of the Boni: who was the first *gaanman* (paramount chief) and who was the most important leader in those early days: Boni or Aluku? Axwijk's spokesman was very clear on this: as for knowledge and authority Aluku was the natural leader, yet Boni became the first *gaanman* through guile.

One day, Boni fled alone. As a result, the plantation manager ordered to watch the slaves more closely. This made it all the more difficult for Aluku to follow Boni. Nevertheless, he went ahead with his plans and some time after Boni's flight Aluku escaped also. Boni covered up his escape-route so well that no ordinary mortal would be able to trace him, but thanks to his luku-obia, i.e. the magic power that enabled him to perceive the invisible, Aluku could easily follow Boni's track. He soon reached the place where Boni had pitched camp. Boni gave the newly-arrived a warm welcome and apologized for his sudden departure, while suggesting that they stay together in the house that he had built and prepare their meals on the fire that he had made. But Aluku was reluctant to accept the offer. He did not trust Boni and said that he would only stay for one night, as he intended to continue his journey the following morning. Boni did his utmost to persuade Aluku, but without success. Aluku left the following morning. He built a house of his own some hundred meters away from Boni's house. He wanted to live independently, so that his descendants could never blame him for the fact that he owed Boni gratitude for his hospitality. He wanted to prevent anyone from ever saying that Aluku had to accept Boni's fire to prepare a meal or to warm his cold body (Ajax 1961).

The message in the second passage of Axwijk's story is clear. As Boni had been the first to find a hiding-place in the jungle, he had become the leader of the two. But as Aluku refused to join Boni, the natural leader of the two retained his freedom and became the headman of his own group. Consequently, Aluku's descendants do not owe any respect to the descendants of Boni. The present Aluku-Maroons stress the fact

that the group as a whole descends from Boni and Aluku. The number of people who claim descent from Boni, however, is relatively small and is restricted to the Dikan-lo, a group that has almost died out. All other matrilineal groups are said to be descending from Aluku. I will return to this later.

Boni and Aluku continued to live at a considerable distance from each other. After some time, they were no longer alone, as they had gathered a small community around them. The people who had joined Boni, however, were to be pitied for their leader appeared to be as heartless as any slave owner. It did not take long before Boni's allies started to decrease significantly in number. These poor and helpless people were even worse off than the slaves on the plantations. Nobody was sure of his life. One day, when Boni cut off someone's ear after some minor offence, Aluku intervened. He also assumed power over Boni's group, which Boni accepted. This was the beginning of a time of peace and quiet for everyone. The time of prosperity lasted until Aluku's death. That was when Boni took over the lead again and built a settlement near Saroua, not far away from the Apoma Falls on the Marowijne River (Ajax 1961).

This is the last reference to Aluku in Axwijk's story. Boni could once again act as a tyrant. As an offering to his gods, he killed a young boy each month. This only came to an end when one of the prospective victims, called Agosu,³ trapped Boni and killed him. Agosu then assumed power over the Maroons.

Axwijk's story contains three main elements. First he tries to answer the question of how the Aluku-Maroon tribe was formed. One day, two slaves from the same plantation escaped. These two people competed for power over the group of Maroons who had gathered around them. The second outstanding element in Axwijk's story is Boni's cruelty. Does this reflect an oral tradition generally referring to atrocities committed by the early Maroon leaders? The third element that I would like to discuss with respect to Axwijk's story is the formation of the clans among the Aluku-Maroons. Axwijk simplified this matter by stating that any Aluku-Maroon who was not a direct descendant of Boni's could not be but one of Aluku's. The genesis of this Maroon tribe, however, was far more complex. Before discussing these three matters in detail, I will first describe the information about Aluku as presented in books and archives.

THE INFORMATION ABOUT ALUKU IN BOOKS AND ARCHIVES

As opposed to Boni, whose name is frequently mentioned in the archives, Aluku is only five times referred to in archival records: in 1769, 1776, 1782, 1790 and 1792. In the archives, the man who is known as Aluku in the oral tradition, is either referred to as 'Aluku' or as 'Askaan van Marceille' (Askaan from the plantation Marceille). It will soon become clear that these names refer to the same person. Also, the works published in the eighteenth and nineteenth century rarely refer to Aluku. As we saw, John Gabriel Stedman's book (1796) on the Boni-Maroon Wars does not even make mention of Aluku at all.

John Gabriel Stedman (1744-1797) arrived in Suriname in 1773. He was an officer under Colonel Fourgeoud, the commander of an army of about 1500 mercenary soldiers who fought the Boni-Maroons in the Cottica area from 1773 until 1777. During his stay of over four years in Suriname, Stedman kept a diary, which he later used as a starting-point for what was to become the most famous book on Suriname. It was published in 1796 by Johnson of London under the title *Narrative of a five years' expedition against the revolted Negroes in Surinam* and became an instant success.⁴ An important part of Stedman's work describes the war against the Boni-Maroons during the period 1773-1777. According to Stedman, the Boni-Maroons were led by Baron, Boni and Jolicoeur (in this order). Although Stedman never mentioned Aluku's name in his work, during his stay in Suriname the Court of Policy in Paramaribo was aware of the fact that the 'rebels' in the Cottica area had two leaders, Boni and Aluku. The archives contain two important reports (from 1769 and 1776) which make this clear.

It was on 30 January 1769 that a group of Maroons attacked the plantation Rustlust, situated on the northern bank of the Cottica River. Both *burghers* and soldiers set off in pursuit of the raiders. They found an abandoned Maroon-village of 30 houses, where they left a small garrison behind. On 20 February some soldiers discovered a path which led east-southeast. As they proceeded on this path the following day, they found large provision grounds laid out by the Maroons. The fields were planted with tayers [xanthosoma], plantains, manioc and peanuts. The soldiers also found a grey-haired old man sitting near a hut. He was accompanied by a woman and a child. The old man declared that his name was Asikan. He appeared to be the chief of a group of about 400 Maroons. He told the soldiers that he had lived in the Cottica area for more than 50 years. Hardly had he arrived in Suriname when he escaped from his plantation and settled in this marshland. Through the years a small tribe had gathered around him. As the Maroon leader was old and dying, he had already transferred his power to the former slave Askaan of the plantation Marceille, and to Boni, a *Bosch Creool* [bush creole], whose mother was a slave who had fled from the plantation of Barbakoeba.⁵

If, by 1769, it was generally known in Paramaribo that the Maroons in the Cottica region were led by Askaan (from Marceille) and the *Bosch Creool* Boni, why then was Stedman writing about the triumvirate Baron, Boni and Jolicoeur? In 1773, when Stedman arrived in the colony, both Baron and Jolicoeur belonged to the group of Maroons around Aluku and Boni, but they were not leaders at all. Jolicoeur was even a fairly recent Maroon. He had been a slave on the plantation Fauquemberg. On New Year's Day 1772 he had fled from his plantation together with eight other people. The runaways managed to reach Buku, which was the most important Maroon village of the Cottica region in those days. Five months later, on 28 May 1772, the Maroons attacked the plantation Nieuw-Roosenbeek, which lay next to the plantation Fauquemberg. They were instigated and helped by the slaves who had escaped on that particular New Year's Day. They caught the manager of Fauquemberg and Nieuw-Roosenbeek – a man called Schültz – and decided to shoot him. According to Stedman, Schültz appealed to Jolicoeur, whom he had recognized among the raiders. He begged for mercy, but Jolicoeur did not feel sorry for his former master who had raped his mother and tortured his father. On the contrary, he took an axe and killed him. The Maroons who were questioned about this murder after their arrest in 1773 and 1776, told a somewhat different story. They declared that Schültz had been shot by Boni because he refused to tell him where the gunpowder stock was hidden (Hoogbergen 1985b: 85). Jolicoeur was killed in 1773 or 1774. There is no reason to believe that he was a Maroon-leader during his relatively short stay with this tribe.

Baron's role was more important. He was one of Boni's subchiefs for some time. Baron had been the slave of a planter called Dahlberg. The exact date of Baron's flight to the Maroons is not known, but his name appears in the archives after the attack on Rustlust, together with the names of Boni and Askaan. Baron took part in this attack, in which he was injured. The sources further reveal that Baron frequently clashed with Boni, as he found it difficult to submit himself to the authority of the latter. Owing to these conflicts, Baron and his companions usually stayed at some distance from the villages in which Aluku and Boni resided. The two groups only joined forces while on plundering expeditions. An attack in the Patamacca area in July 1774 proved fatal to Baron, who was shot by slaves (Hoogbergen 1985b: 82-3). Thus, both Baron and Jolicoeur had been killed before John Gabriel Stedman left Suriname in 1777. This shows that the Scottish captain was not familiar with all the details with respect to his enemies, which is, of course, not surprising.

Nor did Stedman have a clear idea of the internal structure of the Maroon

community in the Cottica area. Some people played a more important role here than Baron and Jolicoeur did. First of all there was, of course, Askaan from Marceille. Other sources have revealed that Askaan was called 'Aluku' by the Maroons, which means 'seer' ('luku' = to look). As mentioned before, Askaan (Aluku) apparently held such an important position that his descendants nowadays prefer to call themselves Aluku-Maroons. But even Kormantin Kodjo, Puja (from the plantation La Paix), Sambokwasi and Basa (from the plantation Clemensburg) appeared to have been more important in this early Maroon society than Baron and Jolicoeur.⁶ Even the position of Boni himself has never been properly assessed by Stedman. This is largely due to the fact that Stedman actually does not tell us more than what he experienced himself or what he had got from hearsay. Apparently he never read any of the reports drawn up by the commanders of the army, nor did he hear any of the testimonies of the captive Maroons. Especially the testimony given in 1776 by someone called Jonas of 's-Haagenbosch provides ample information on the life of the Maroons in the Cottica area during the period under discussion.⁷ It is this testimony that constitutes the second reference to Aluku.

When Jonas was a little boy, he was abducted from the plantation 's-Haagenbosch by the Boni-Maroons, who attacked this small plantation in February 1771. For five years he lived in the village of Boni, who was very fond of him and designated him his *futuboy* (helper). Boni took the boy with him on his wanderings across the savannah and had him looking after his wife whenever he went out fishing.

As far as Aluku is concerned, Jonas only reported that Askaan was an old man. He called him Boni's 'stepfather'. Aluku and Boni had split tasks between them. Boni was the leader of the men who waged the guerilla-war against the Dutch, whereas Aluku was responsible for the women and children. This division of tasks is illustrated by Jona's report concerning the attack on the plantation Groot-Marceille on 4 May 1774. There was a special link between this plantation and some of the Boni-Maroons. Many slaves who had joined the Boni – among whom the chiefs Aluku and Suku – came from Marceille. One of the present matrilineal clans of the Aluku, i.e. the Yakubi-lo, has been named after Jacobij, the owner of Marceille from 1731 until 1742.⁸

Nevertheless, solidarity was hard to find on the evening of 4 May. The slaves grabbed their guns and started to shoot at the invaders. They shouted at the Maroons that ransacking their plantation would not be a simple task. After a quarter of an hour the Maroons realized that they would never win the battle and retreated. They took advantage of the confusion to abduct twelve slaves. Their journey home first led

to the North up to the coastline of the Atlantic Ocean and then went on eastwards. After several days the Maroons arrived at their villages, which had been abandoned. According to Jonas from 's-Haagenbosch, Aluku had brought the women and children to a place of refuge. The Maroons decided not to bring back the women and children immediately, as they first wanted to see whether they had indeed misled their pursuers.⁹

The third archival reference concerning Aluku dates from 1782. It was in this year that the authorities in Paramaribo interrogated a runaway slave who had regularly visited the villages of the Boni-Maroons, and who now resided on the Sparouine River in French Guiana. The man told that all the Boni-Maroons lived together in one village, spread over four quarters. One of those quarters was controlled by 'Boni, his father Aluku and his son Agosu'.¹⁰ In 1790, during the second Boni-Maroon War, the soldier Von Sidow compiled a list of all Boni-Maroon chiefs. Askaan was on top of Von Sidow's list. He was said to be *Bonnie's vader* (father).¹¹

The importance of Aluku is also clearly illustrated by the names of several Maroon villages. In the archives the village Kosay, an important settlement in the Cottica area which had been discovered by a patrol in 1768, is also referred to as *Luka*. The village built by the Boni-Maroons in 1777 on French territory along the Sparouine River is called *Gadogron* or *Aluku*. The conglomeration of Boni-villages near the Lamaké Falls, where the Boni-Maroons lived from circa 1785 to 1790, is designated *Arokoe* in the archives. The area on the Lawa River, south of the Abattis Cottica Falls, where the Maroons resided in the nineteenth century, is once again referred to as *Aluku* in the archives. In fact, most documents refer to the people as the 'Boni-Maroons', whereas their living-area is called 'Aluku'.

The fifth and last reference to Aluku dates from 1792. Late February 1792 a Dutch military patrol went on an expedition to the Lawa River in search of the new Boni-villages. The patrol discovered a small village on an island in the Lawa River, where they captured some Maroons. The captives told the soldiers that there were more villages nearby and that a lot of Boni-Maroons had gathered 'to throw water on Askaan's death, the father of Boni'.¹² 'To throw water on someone's death', i.e. 'towee wataa' in the Maroons' language, is a religious custom which is still in use among the Maroons in Suriname.¹³ It forms part of the funeral rites. When someone dies, the Maroons make libations to facilitate the dead person's transition to the next world.

The archives do not mention any conflicts between Boni and Aluku such as are suggested by Axwijk's version of the oral tradition. The impression created by the records is rather one of a harmonious diarchy in which Aluku looked after the women and children. He probably figured

as a kind of peace chief dealing with internal matters, whereas Boni occupied himself with warfare. It requires a really thorough examination of the archives to obtain a clear picture of Aluku. Perhaps due to his particular role, the Dutch were hardly aware of his existence. The history of the Boni-Maroons as represented by the archives focuses on the Boni-Maroon Wars (1768-1777 and 1789-1793). The soldiers' reports rarely contain any information on the internal structure of Boni-Maroon society.

THE GENESIS OF THE BONI-MAROONS ACCORDING TO THE ARCHIVES

The oral tradition as presented by Axwijk suggests that the struggle between Boni and Aluku culminated before the Boni-Maroons settled in French Guiana, for it was only after Aluku's death that the Boni settled in 'Saroua near the Apoma Falls' on the Marowijne River' (Ajax 1961). The Apoma Falls are situated somewhat North of the region of Ingi Pule Seton, where the Boni-Maroons lived from May 1790 till August 1791 (Hoogbergen 1985b: 293-324). From circa 1770 till 1792, one of Boni's *kabiten* (chiefs),¹⁴ Koki, resided in the vicinity of these falls on the Saluakreek. The notion that Aluku died before Boni settled in the Saroua region contradicts the archives on two points. In the first place, Aluku was still alive when the Boni-Maroons resided in the region of Ingi Pule Seton and secondly, Boni himself never lived on the Saluakreek.

It is of little use to compare Axwijk's oral tradition with the archival reconstruction of the early history of the Boni-tribe. Axwijk's story remains silent on the first Boni-Maroon War (1768-77). Further, Axwijk refers to the Boni-Maroons entering into contact with the Ndjuka. This contact almost immediately resulted in a war between the Ndjuka and the Boni-Maroons. Thanks to the archives we know that this war lasted from 1792 until 1793 and ended with Boni's death (De Groot 1980, Hoogbergen 1985b: 241-47 and 325-59). Axwijk's references to Aluku are of little value to us. We are eagerly waiting better information provided by the oral tradition. For the time being, the story of Aluku and the genesis of the Boni-Maroon tribe have to be based primarily on archival data. The preceding paragraph already sketched the broad outlines of this story. The details are as follows.

The classic works on the history of Suriname (Hartsinck 1770 and Nassy 1788) do not make mention of any Maroons in the Cottica region. From the archival references of 1769 we have learned that the first Boni-Maroons settled in the Cottica area in 1712. Their chief Asikan-Silvester, who was taken prisoner in 1769, declared upon his arrest that he had fled to the jungle when the French invaded Suriname. That is about the only

information available with respect to the origins of the Boni-tribe. In the days of Governor Karel E.H. de Cheusses (1728-1734) a number of military expeditions were mounted against the Maroons in the Cottica region.¹⁵ Ten years later, in 1744, the archives refer to a patrol in the Cottica area again. A village was found behind the plantation Vriesenburg, which was inhabited by 25 Maroons.¹⁶ Early in January 1746, a captive Maroon showed a patrol the way to a large Maroon settlement situated between the Cottica and Marowijne Rivers. The patrol captured thirteen people, among whom a brother and a sister of Boni.¹⁷ It is not known whether Boni himself, who was about fifteen years old by then, was absent when the patrol invaded his village or whether he managed to escape. The information from 1746, however, makes clear that a 'Boni family' had been formed in the village. In 1776 Jonas of 's-Haagenbosch, whose account generally is very reliable, told that Boni had been born in the forest and that his mother had been a slave from the plantation Barbakoeba, belonging to the planter De Mey. By 1776 Boni's mother and his biological father had already died. As mentioned before, Jonas also declared that Askaan of Marceille (Aluku) was Boni's stepfather. It therefore becomes very likely that Aluku played an important part in Boni's upbringing and that he must have belonged to the group of Maroons in the Cottica area long before 1744. As opposed to Boni, Aluku was not born among the Maroons but on a plantation (the plantation Marceille), or perhaps in Africa.

Until 1760, the patrols were not a serious threat to the Cottica-Maroons. The planters mostly directed their actions against larger groups of Maroons (the Ndjuka and Saramaka), who lived south of the plantation area. Peace treaties signed in 1760 (with the Ndjuka) and in 1762 (with the Saramaka), however, put an end to these wars. From then on, the colonial troops turned all their attention towards the non-pacified Maroons living west (the Kwinti or Kofimaka) and east (the Boni-Maroons) of the plantation area.

In February 1762, a patrol discovered a Maroon settlement near the Cassipera Creek. At the patrol's arrival, the village – called *Mopegron* in the archival records – was found deserted. In their great haste, the Maroons had left large quantities of food behind (Hoogbergen 1985b: 87-9). Mopegron was only a relatively small village. Six years later, three larger villages were discovered. One of these villages was called *Kosay* (or *Luku*) and consisted of 32 houses, some of which were very large. There was also a smithy in the village. The patrol further found brass lamps, iron utensils, more than 200 water pots, pipes, hammocks and almost 700 chickens.¹⁸

The seizure and destruction of what must have been the three most

important villages was a turning-point in the relationship between these Maroons and the planters. It was clear that a well-organized society had been set up in the Cottica area. Such a viable Maroon settlement near the plantations could well lead to massive slave desertions, as it offered the slaves a way of living in freedom. From the discovery of *Kosay* onwards, the planters started continually to hunt the Maroons in the Cottica area. The Maroons, for their part, started to launch regular attacks on the plantations. This marked the beginning of the Boni-Maroon Wars, which lasted from 1768 till 1777 and from 1789 till 1793. (For detailed accounts, see De Groot (1975), De Beet (1984) and Hoogbergen (1984, 1985b, 1988, 1989 and 1990). In 1772, the Boni-Maroons even managed to withstand a months-long siege which had been laid by the planters to their village *Buku*. In order to reinforce the colonial troops, a separate army corps of 300 members was formed from among the slave population, the *Redimusu* (Black Rangers). In addition, about 1500 European mercenary soldiers were recruited under the leadership of Colonel Louis Henry Fourgeoud. While all these military did not succeed in beating the Boni-Maroons, their continued persecution led the Boni to move to French Guiana in 1776-77. In 1789 they resumed their battle against the Surinamese planters. One year later the Dutch seized their villages on the Marowijne River. In 1791-92 the Boni were driven further south towards the region of the Ndjuka-Maroons. Due to a clever policy of the Dutch, the pacified Ndjuka finally sided with the planters against their natural allies, the Boni. Early in 1792 Aluku died. The Boni-Maroons had already settled on the lower Lawa River by then. Half a year later, Boni's son Agosu attacked the Ndjuka village Animaw. In February 1793, a counterexpedition of the Ndjuka discovered the new villages of the Boni on the Marouine River, a tributary of the Lawa River. Boni was killed and beheaded by the Ndjuka. Agosu, however, managed to escape.

BONI'S CRUELTY

As we saw, Axwijk's story highlights Boni's cruelty, whereas the archives do not refer to this. In effect, they rather point in the opposite direction. In the archives Boni is represented as a sensible leader who was a real master in settling internal disputes, mainly by allowing people to act as they thought fit. Whoever dissociated himself from Boni's authority, was free to leave and settle somewhere else or stay in the group and suit himself. There was no obligation to join military expeditions to the plantation area, whereas, on the other hand, some attacks on plantations were launched without Boni's consent.

Where do these stories about Boni's cruelty come from? Maybe the storyteller needed them to enhance Aluku's image introducing a polarization of hero and villain. The archives allow, however, for a different conclusion. A group of Maroons led by a certain Kwami lived in the Patamacca area, independently from Boni and Aluku. In 1770 a group of 22 Maroons left Boni and Aluku to join Kwami. In May 1773, a patrol under the leadership of lieutenant Lepper discovered Kwami's village. Most Maroons had been able to escape in time. One year later Colonel L.H. Fourgeoud seized *Kwaamikondre*, but the village had once again been abandoned. Subsequently, the Maroons of Kwami fled to Boni and Aluku. After some time they built a new village in the area between the Patamacca and Peninica Creeks under the leadership of Kwami. His Maroon group, however, fell apart shortly afterwards because of serious disputes. Kwami launched accusations of witchcraft at all his fellow-Maroons. Within a short period, he ordered 28 of his fellow-villagers killed. Only eight people survived. The survivors called on Boni, with whose help they managed to kill Kwami. The few remaining people then joined Boni and Aluku (Hoogbergen 1985b: 128-30).

In oral tradition, discussions and stories about the origins of a Maroon tribe always appear to be centered around three major epics. These are: life in Africa, the period of slavery in Suriname, and the escape from the plantations. Axwijk's account deals with the third period: *lowéten* (the runaway time). This episode features tales of the great *lowéten* figures, but the stories also tell us of deprivation, danger, and hardship. In the history of another Maroon tribe – the Paramaka – we find in oral history the same dichotomy between the wise founding father and the evil ancestor as in Axwijk's story. In Paramaka history the hero-warrior is Boni (our Boni), whereas Hendrick Amawie personifies the evil ancestor, who used his magic power to make trouble and even kill other Maroons (Lenoir 1973: 66-73). In oral history a structural principle may be discerned which clusters around a restricted number of dramatis personae the events of a large period, and which attributes to them the characters of many people. Thus, the cruel picture of Boni in Axwijk's story may find its origins in the attribution of various events from the early history of the tribe, such as Kwami's killings, to Boni himself. Contrary to Axwijk's assumption, the tribe had more than two founders. From time to time, the tribe was enlarged by groups of Maroons who had been living independently for a considerable time, such as the Maroons under the leadership of Sam-bokwasi, Kormantin Kodjo, Basa of Clemensburg, Koki and Kwami. The names of these persons have not survived in the oral tradition, yet their feats are still narrated, attributed to others.

In fact, the oral tradition according to Axwijk actually refers to two people called Boni. Axwijk relates how Boni was killed by the young Agosu, whom he later calls Agosu-Boni (or Boni II) in his story. Agosu-Boni had a son who remained unnamed and is plainly referred to as 'Agosu's son'. He invaded the important Ndjuka-village Puketi. If one replaces Axwijk's first Boni by Kwami, Agosu-Boni by Boni and 'Agosu's son' by Agosu, the story comes much closer to the archival version as far as the characters are concerned: the archives refer to Kwami being killed by Boni, to Boni as the sympathetic leader and to Agosu as the reckless warrior who launched an ill-considered attack on Animbaw, the main residence of the Ndjuka.

Pakosie (1972: 3-13) presents a version of oral history current among the Ndjuka. He mentions two men called Boni: Boni Amusu and his foster son Boni Okilifu.¹⁹ Boni Amusu was the clever guerilla-leader who started the war against the Dutch, whereas Okilifu was the man who fought the Ndjuka. He attacked Animbaw, the main settlement of the Ndjuka, and was killed and beheaded by this tribe. Pakosie does not mention Aluku and Agosu. Boni Amusu is the personification of the heroic achievements of Asikan-Silvester, Aluku and Boni, whereas the 'evil' aspect of the feats of Boni and Agosu are partly attributed to Boni Okilifu.

MATRILINEAL ORGANIZATION

The most important structural principle in the social organization of the Maroons is matrilinearity. Matrilineage is called *bee* (womb) among the Maroons. The expression 'people of one bee' refers to relatives who are genealogically related and whose origins can be clearly traced back to one ancestress. Among the larger Maroon tribes, a number of *bee* coalesce into one matriclan. According to the oral tradition, each matriclan is formed by a particular group of runaway slaves from a particular plantation or group of plantations, after which they have been named. These matriclans are called *lo*, a very old word derived from the English word 'row'. In the English-based Creole of Suriname it meant: group, gang.

The Aluku do not make a distinction between *lo* and *bee*. The clan is not composed of a number of matrilineages. Each *bee* is a *lo* at the same time. According to Hurault (1961: 19), the Aluku consist of seven *lo* and some smaller matrigroups. The latter are potential clans, although they are still small in number because, according to the oral tradition, the ancestresses only joined the Aluku about a century ago. Some of these lineages are called *bakabuchi* by Hurault, which is the term used by the

pacified Maroons for the non-pacified runaways who fled later and wandered around the forests in small groups.

Already during the Maroon Wars the term *lo* was used by the groups who considered themselves a unity. In those days, the word must have had another meaning than 'group of matrilineal kin', because most members of the *lo* were not related to one another. Rather, the group was held together either by its common tribal origins, which could be traced back to Africa, or by the plantation from which the slaves had fled.

A striking aspect of the early history – until circa 1820 – of the Boni-Maroons is the continuous relocation of this developing society. The Boni-Maroons were forced to relocate every other year because of the armies which chased them. This meant that they had to build up adequate foodstocks in time. In retrospect, it is really astounding that the tribe managed to survive in such a hostile environment. Another striking feature of those early days was that women were largely outnumbered by men.²⁰ Often, the sole objective of the marauding expeditions to the plantations was the abduction of women. The men in the Maroon villages took good care of their women. In times of war, the women used to stay behind in the villages. Whenever the Maroon settlements were in danger, the women and children moved to safer places. As mentioned before, Aluku was responsible for this operation. The men used to stay behind to wage war. Whenever they went marauding the plantations, they would leave their village, sometimes for months, while loitering behind the plantations to steal goods or to keep in contact with the slaves. The men did not feel obliged to stay with one and the same group. Whenever one could not get along with the group's other members, one joined another group or broke away. The more fixed abode of the women as compared to the men presumably resulted in the formation of a matrilocal system.

The history of the Boni-Maroons begins somewhere in Africa. During the period of slavery, the Dutch transported about 325,000 slaves from West-Africa to Suriname. Johannes Postma (1970-72, 1975) has analyzed the role of the Dutch in the slave trade. He made clear that in the course of the eighteenth century, there was a shift in the regions from where the Dutch imported their slaves. Before 1725, half of the Surinamese slave contingent came from the Slave Coast (Nigeria and Cameroon). Afterwards – and this is of interest to us, as most of the Boni-Maroons only arrived in Suriname after 1725 – the supply area gradually moved to the North. In the period 1736-1795, almost fifty percent of the slaves came from the regions of Sierra Leone and Senegambia. These slaves were called *Gangu* in Suriname. A quarter of the slaves came from the Gold Coast (Ghana), i.e. the so-called *Kormantins*, and another quarter came from Loangu-Angola. The latter were called *Loangu* in Suriname.

In the early history of the Boni, the Maroons frequently managed to organize according to their ethnic origins. The archives contain various examples of this. When the Ndjuka-Maroons declared war upon the Tesis-Maroons²¹ in 1771, they heard that one of the Tesis-villages was inhabited by *Gangu*.²² Another example: in February 1772, a number of slaves deserted from the plantation Lustrijk. After several days, the fugitives encountered *Komantins*, who belonged to the Maroons of Kormantin Kodjo.²³ The latter refused to help the runaways, as they were convinced that shortly before the slaves from Lustrijk had shown a patrol the way to their village. But the runaways from Lustrijk argued that it had been *Loangu*²⁴ who had shown the soldiers the way. In July 1773 the runaway Sander van Hooyland declared that Kormantin Kodjo's village was inhabited by *Kormantins* and *Gangu* only.²⁵ As for Boni, who was a Bush Creole, a captive Maroon declared in 1791 that Boni did not trust the *Luangu*.²⁶

The archives do not contain any information on the ethnic background of Aluku. It is not known whether Aluku was born in Africa or whether he was a *Creole*, i.e. born in Suriname. It is rather likely, however, that Aluku had not been born among the Maroons. For he was never referred to as a *Bosch Creool* (Bush Creole), which was the common term used for the Maroons who were not born on plantations but in the forest (*het bosch*).

The history of the Boni-Maroon Wars makes clear that the Boni were recruited from many different plantations. The slaves usually fled in small groups. It only rarely happened that a large number of slaves from one and the same plantation joined the group of Maroons. If so, this was mostly due to an attack. The raids that resulted in the most massive escapes were the ones on Nieuw-Roosenbeek, Poelwijk and La Paix in 1772, on Du Perou, De Suynigheid and Nouvel-Espérance in August 1773, on Killenstein Nova in 1775, and on Clarenbeek and four plantations in the upper Suriname region in 1789. Table 1 lists the attacks that yielded the largest number of new Maroons during the Boni-Maroon Wars.

The slaves in Suriname used the name of their plantation or their owner as a family name, a custom which was maintained by the Maroons. Of all seven *lo* known by the Boni at present, only two clannames refer to these plantations attacked. The origin of the name 'Lapé-lo' can be traced back to the plantation La Paix, and the 'Dipelu-lo' refers to the plantation Du Perou. However, this does not prove that the slaves from these plantations generally stayed together as a separate group, for it was not the number of slaves in general that determined the naming, but the number of women, because the children were named after their mother's plantation. In 1772, 30 women and six children were abducted from La Paix. A large

TABLE 1: RAIDS ON PLANTATIONS AND THE NUMBER OF SLAVES ABDUCTED

Year	Plantation attacked	Number of slaves abducted
1765	Jukemombo	17
1766	Rietwijk	55
1770	Mon Désir	16
1771	Capoerica	12
1772	La Paix	15
	Lustrijk	19
	Nieuw-Roosenbeek	50
	Poelwijk	70
	La Paix	58
	Mon Désir and Clemensburg	23
1773	De Suynigheid, Du Perou and Nouvel-Espérance	52
1774	De Verwagting	12
1775	Killenstein Nova	33
1776	Bergendaal	16
1789	Clarenbeek	33
	Four plantations in the Upper Suriname area	100

number of them returned to their plantation after the seizure of Buku some months later, yet the origins of the Lapé-lo can easily be traced back to the eighteenth century. Archival documents make clear that from 1777 onwards, there was a Boni-village which was inhabited by people who mainly came from the plantation La Paix.

As for the origins of the Dipelu-lo, one may assume that the attacks on the plantations Du Perou, De Suynigheid and Nouvel-Espérance resulted in many women fleeing to the Boni-Maroons. Owing to the matrilineal nomenclature, the Dipelu-group quickly increased in number. Unfortunately, this assumption cannot be verified, as there is no information available on the proportion of male and female slaves who were abducted in 1773.

As for the other clans, tracing their origins is even more difficult, if not impossible.²⁷ Especially the origins of the Dikan-lo and the Yakubi-lo leave us with many unanswered questions. A report dated September 1771 makes mention of a large number of women from the plantations Lunenburg, Rustlust and Mon Désir (Hoogbergen 1985b: 146-48) among the inhabitants of Buku. Yet none of these names are found among the present clan-names of the Boni.

According to oral tradition, the *gaanman* of the Aluku are recruited from the Dikan-lo. Apparently this also applied to Boni and Agosu. The Ndjuka-Maroons incorporate a clan with the same name, which forms an important *lo* within this tribe. In 1790, the Dikan clan-chief Kwamina Adjubi was related to both Boni's family and to Kormantin Kodjo's. In the archives, he even is called Boni's 'father-in-law'.²⁸ This explains how the Ndjuka-Dikan women ended up with the Boni-Maroons. Assuming that these women gave birth to female children, it also explains the name Dikan-lo within the Boni-clan. When, in 1967, the Aluku Dikan-lo could not provide a successor for Difu, the Ndjuka Dikan-lo put forward various people who qualified for the position of *gaanman* of the Aluku.²⁹

Kenneth M. Bilby (NWIG, this issue) analyzes the difficulties with respect to the succession of *gaanman* Difu, who died in 1967. The *gaanman* of the Aluku Maroons traditionally belong to the Dikan-clan. According to oral tradition, this was the clan of the important guerillaleader and *gaanman* Boni. The Dikan-clan gradually decreased in number. Twice in the nineteenth century there was no successor available within this matrigroup to succeed the *gaanman*. On both occasions the Yakubi-lo had to provide a paramount chief (Atiaba 1870-76 and Anato 1876-1891). With the appointment of Osji in 1891 the function of *gaanman* returned to the Dikan-lo. But when Difu died, there was once again no male successor available, and again the Yakubi-clan claimed to provide the paramount chief again, in the person of *kabiten* (headman) Manto. Since the last century, however, the Yakubi-lo has lost much of its prestige within the Aluku-community as a whole. As pointed out by Bilby, this may be largely attributed to the fact that this matrigroup moved to Dutch territory by the end of the nineteenth century, whereas the other matriclans remained living on French territory. As the Aluku-Maroons were divided among themselves with regard to the succession of Difu, the French could put forward their protégé, Tolinga of the Kawina-lo, the mayor of Papaïstou. Tolinga was finally recognized as the new *gaanman* by all clans, with the exception of the Yakubi, and his inauguration was ritually confirmed (Bilby 1990).

Is there any reason to believe that the Yakubi-clan has a historical right to the leadership, because Aluku came from the Yakubi-lo? As mentioned before, various clans allege to descend from Aluku. According to the genealogies which Hurault (1961) attached to his study on the Aluku-Maroons, *gaanman* Aluku is the ancestor of the Ndju-lo. When reckoning backwards in time via these genealogies, we end up somewhere in the middle of last century. The link to the Maroon society of the eighteenth century is missing. There are no historical facts which sustain the assumption that Aluku is the ancestor of the Ndju-lo. The present Maroons generally

hold the opinion that all of them – with the exception of the Dikan-lo – descend from Aluku.

Archival sources suggest that Aluku and Boni lived together in the same village. If Aluku was Boni's stepfather, it is probable that Boni's mother also had children by Aluku. In that case Aluku can be considered a 'relative' of the Boni-clan. On account of the matrilineal principle, children belonged to their mother's matrigroup. Considering the fact that the important headmen had more than one spouse, their offspring belonged to different matri-groups. It is known, for example, that Boni had at least nine wives. It is therefore very questionable to regard a man as the one and only founder of a specific matriclan.

Aluku came from the plantation Marceille, which was called *Yakubi* by the slaves. There is no information available on Aluku's mother. It is very unlikely, that Aluku and his mother fled to the Maroons together (this rarely happened), although it is not altogether impossible. In the days of marronage, the Boni-Maroons used to keep the slaves from one and the same plantation together and send them to the forest to work the provision grounds collectively. If such a group was too small, it was added to another group of slaves. This way of living together primarily applied to the women. The men were much more mobile, as they traded with plantation slaves, and went out fishing, hunting and marauding the plantations. Boni and Aluku appointed a *kabiten* for each group. Many of these *kabiten* were already in charge of a certain group before they joined Boni. Some of these headmen were: Kormantin Kodjo, Suku of Marceille, Askaan of Ephrata and Koki of Klein. Groups under the leadership of a specific *kabiten* did not have a fixed residence. There are several archival references to the Maroons of Kormantin Kodjo, for example, who joined Aluku and Boni and to the Tesisi-Maroons who moved to the village of Kormantin Kodjo.

EPILOGUE

I have tried to present information – both from oral tradition and from the archives – currently available with respect to the person of Aluku. So far the output has been rather poor. We may hope that in future the oral tradition will yield more information. There seems to be a task here for the Aluku organization 'Mi Wani Sabi', one of whose goals is to record the oral tradition from the Aluku-Maroons. Perhaps the documents of the plantation Marceille contain more information.³⁰

We further do not have adequate information on the history of the

Yakubi-clan. The question whether the Yakubi-lo descended from Aluku remains unanswered. It is clear, that much of the history of Boni-Maroon society still remains to be written.

NOTES

1.a. For a more elaborate report on these Boni-Maroon Wars, see Hoogbergen 1985b, which also includes an extensive bibliography. In 1990 an adapted English version of this book will be published by E.J. Brill Publishers (Leiden, The Netherlands) under the title of *The Boni-Maroon Wars in Suriname*.

1.b. I would like to thank Marilyn Suy, Harry Hoetink and Ineke van Wetering for the critical remarks with respect to this text.

2. About a hundred Aluku-Maroons presently live along the banks of the middle Marowijne River. They are the descendants of the village chief Apatou, who settled in this region around 1880 together with his family.

3. In Axwijk's story, Agosu is just a boy from Boni's village. The archives also mention Agosu's name, but then it refers to Boni's own son.

4. It has only recently become clear that the 'Narrative' which was published in 1796 is considerably different from the original manuscript that was handed over for publication by the author in February 1791. The original text has been reedited by Richard and Sally Price and published by the Johns Hopkins University Press in 1988.

5.a. Bush creole: a negro who was not born on a plantation but in the forest. Elsewhere in the archives Asikan is referred to as Sylvester.

5.b. Algemeen Rijksarchief 's-Gravenhage (General State Archives, The Hague, abbreviated ARA), Archives of the *Sociëteit van Suriname* (Society of Suriname, abbreviated SvS), inventory number 161, Minutes of the *Hof van Politie* (Court of Policy): 3, 8 and 24 February 1769.

6. For further information on other important Maroon leaders, see my dissertation on the Boni-Maroons (Hoogbergen 1985a).

7. Part of Jonas's testimony had already been published in an article by Charles Brouwn in 1796. Chris de Beet reproduced this article together with most of Jonas's other testimonies in his publication on the first Boni-Maroon War (De Beet 1984: 52-55 and 204-230).

8. 'Yakubi' is the name used by the slaves in Suriname for the plantation Groot-Marceille in the Cottica area, which had been the property of the planter Marcellus Jacobij. In 1716 this large plantation had been brought into cultivation by Gerrit van Egten under the name of 'Eghthenveen'. When Marcellus Jacobij acquired the plantation in 1731, he changed the name into 'Marceille'. When he and his wife died in 1742, the plantation passed to their

sons who lived in The Netherlands. Their property in Suriname was controlled by administrators.

9. ARA – SvS 353, folio 370 and 399. Letters to Amsterdam, 1774.
10. ARA – *Oud-archief Suriname*, Court of Criminal Justice 1784, inventory number 840, folio 183.
11. ARA – SvS 396, folio 65. Letters to Amsterdam, 1791.
12. ARA – SvS 398, folio 26. Letters to Amsterdam, 1792.
13. Private communication H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen.
14. The Maroon Koki came from the plantation of Auka, situated on the upper Suriname River. Koki and his companions already lived in French Guiana before the Boni-Maroons settled there. Boni himself never lived on the Saluakreek (Hoogbergen 1985b: 235-240 and 332).
15. ARA – SvS 353, folio 209. Letter from Governor Jean Nepveu to the Directors in Amsterdam, 2 July 1774.
16. ARA – SvS 136, Minutes Court of Policy: 18 January, 14 and 16 March 1744.
17. A report dating from 1776 refers to a brother and sister of Boni being caught. See also De Beet 1984: 229. Further information on this expedition: ARA – SvS 138, Minutes Court of Policy: 18 January 1746 and SvS 200, folio 219-220. Journal of Governor Johan Jacob Mauricius, 1746.
18. ARA – SvS 160, Minutes Court of Policy, 2 May 1768 and Hoogbergen 1985b: 91-5.
19. André Pakosie, a Ndjuka-Maroon by birth, wrote the story on Boni's death at the age of seventeen, when he was at highschool in Paramaribo. The story is mainly based on his father's testimony.
20. The ratio between the sexes within the slave population had always been out of balance, for the men outnumbered the women by far. In addition, the women did not run away in such large numbers as men did.
21. In the 1760s the Tesisi-Maroons lived in the area between the upper Commewijne and Marowijne Rivers. Around 1770 they joined the group of Boni and Aluku (Hoogbergen 1985b: 105-35).
22. ARA – SvS 163, Minutes Court of Policy: 22 November 1771.
23. The Maroons of Kormantin Kodjo had already settled in the region between the Suriname and Commewijne Rivers before 1755. Early 1773 they joined the Maroons of Aluku and Boni in the Cottica area, following the example of the Tesisi-Maroons some years before (Hoogbergen 1985b: 170-82).

24. ARA – *Oud-archief Suriname*, Court of Criminal Justice 1773, inventory number 824.
25. ARA – *Oud-archief Suriname*, Court of Criminal Justice 1774, inventory number 826, folio 56.
26. ARA – *Oud-archief Suriname*, Court of Criminal Justice 1791, inventory number 854, minutes of 20 August 1791.
27. For a more extensive report on this subject, see Hoogbergen 1985b: 416-26.
28. ARA – SvS 184, Minutes Court of Policy: 19 August 1790. See also Hoogbergen 1984: 89.
29. Private communication Kenneth Bilby.
30. These archives can be found in 'the De Mey van Streefkerk Papers' of The James Ford Bell Library (University of Minnesota). Most of the documents in this collection are dated between 1742 and 1830; only fifteen documents are from an earlier period: 1717 to 1742 (Postma 1986).

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