POPULAR BELIEFS PERTAINING TO CERTAIN PLACES IN SURINAM

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The fame of Guiana as a land of strange and wonderful things began with its discovery, when sailors and explorers, returning to Europe, spread amazing tales of extraordinary beings and marvelous places encountered in the New World. Rumors of Eldorado, Amazons, headless men, and terrible monsters staggered the belief of those at home, and, bewitched by a promise of wealth or adventure, lured thousands to horrible death in the tropic fastnesses. But as these fanciful beliefs relative to Guiana as a whole gradually lost credence in the world outside, as if to compensate for this stupid neglect there sprang up on every side within its own borders numerous place superstitions of a different sort, multiplying rapidly and thriving with astonishing vigor, until there is now scarcely a spot in this historic region that has not at one time or another enjoyed the reputation of being the abode of a supernatural being.

Countless are these super-mortals, each with its own peculiar attributes, each with its own sphere of action. Some are malicious, some beneficent, some neutral and indifferent. Not a few have roaming dispositions, appearing almost anywhere; while others find comfort and satisfaction in remaining in one place, becoming strongly attached to it and resenting interference of any sort. They may select as a home or as headquarters a spot on the seashore, a river or a creek especially its mouth, a waterfall, a rock in the rapids, some place in the forest or in the ground, a road, a crossroad or street corner, a ditch or
canal, particularly a floodgate, a bridge or culvert, well, tank, barrel, cemetery, certain plantations, estates, houses, gardens, trees; in fact, any place or object that may be to their liking.

The haunts of these mysterious beings are known as tanpê 1). A tanpê may be simultaneously or successively tenanted by different presences. The latter take offence at the slightest provocation, and woe to the person who annoys one, or by a thoughtless act incurs its displeasure; unless, of course, he be amply protected by koti 2) or amulet. Thus beware of drawing water after six in the evening or of laying a piece of soap on the edge of a well; do not forget yourself so far as to mention a forbidden name or to answer to the call of your own late at night; do not open a parasol after dark, or throw dirty water out at night; do not lie in a doorway, or sleep naked, never walk backwards, and do not allow anyone to step over your body or over your food; take care not to leave your walking stick outside when calling on a friend, lest you make known your presence to a passing spook; and do not fail to give these unearthly beings the attention they demand or by propitiatory offerings to seek atonement for your transgression.

One cannot be too careful at these haunted places. For just as a certain food may be the trefoe 3) of an individual, so a particular act may be the trefoe of a tanpê. The performance of such an act, even in perfect innocence, is sure to kindle the wrath of its ghostly occupant. Should a person be so unfortunate as to fall into the water at a tanpê, he must take special precaution when rescued to call his kra 4). Thus if the unlucky one happened to be named "Kwakoe", he must call out, "Kwakoe, man, kongówe; joe

1) The spelling of native words is in accordance with Dutch phonetics.
2) An inoculation supposed to counteract evil influences.
3) "Trefoe" is something akin to "taboo." See article "Trefe" in the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indiën*, p. 685; also L. C. van Panhuys *About the "Trefe" superstition in the Colony of Surinam*, Janus, 1924, pp. 357—368.