The importance of Suriname for the study of the origins of the Negro population of the area comprising the northern portion of South America (not including Brazil), the islands of the West Indies, and of the United States, has long been recognised. This is particularly true of the Bush-Negroes, who, of all the descendants of the original slaves, have alone maintained a civilisation of their own in which the influence of the original African cultures from which they came is immediately apparent. But the importance of the Suriname Negroes, both in the Bush and in contact with the White population for the study of cultural processes in general has not been so clearly understood.

In the Bush Negroes we have a people, who, attaining their freedom before the influence of European civilisation could blot out their African customs, and favored by an environment sufficiently similar to that they knew in Africa to be of material assistance to them in their struggle for independance, constitute the best material available on which to base conclusions as to the tribal origins of the whole Negro population of the New World. The urban Negroes, on the other hand, — those who have been in contact with the White civilisation as introduced in Suriname by the European element, — offer the possibility of gathering information which is to be regarded in the nature of control data; material against which the facts of the civilisation of the Bush Negroes may be projected so as to afford a measuring-rod to show the extent
to which elements of European culture have been adopted by the Negroes in the course of their historic association with Whites.

It was in order to gather material for studies of this nature that a research expedition, the preliminary results of which I wish to present here, was undertaken during the summer of 1928. The personnel of this expedition was Morton C. Kahn, representing the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and Cornell University Medical College, and Mrs. Herskovits and myself, representing Northwestern University and the Columbia University Research Council in the Social Sciences 1), and the purposes of each of us was so arranged as to be integrated in such a way as to attack the problems mentioned above in the most efficient manner in the limited time at our disposal, and to obtain data and survey the field so as to afford the basis for future research along the same lines.

Mrs. Herskovits, working with the town Negroes of Paramaribo, gathered information of a nature which would, first, be available for comparative purposes with that gathered from the Bush-Negroes, and from other West Indian and North American Negro populations, and, second, which would be expected to show the manner in which the Negroes who remained in contact with the Whites were conditioned in their customary behavior by the European culture. Since the material culture of the people of Paramaribo is, of necessity, essentially European, her data are principally folk-loristic and religious in nature. Although some Anansi-tori were collected by her, the major portion of her material deals with those customs, traditions, and beliefs which tend to throw light both on the elements of African background retained by them, and also reflect the differences between these and similar beliefs held by the Bush-Negroes.

That the Negroes of the town and in the bush have

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1) The research of Dr. Kahn was made representing the Myron I. Granger expedition of the American Museum of Natural History, and that of Mrs. Herskovits and myself on a grant from Dr. E. C. Parsons to Columbia University, New York City.