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# Uneasy Neighbors: Maroons and Indians in Suriname [1]

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a history of relations between Saramaka Maroons and Amerindians in Suriname, which ran the gamut from limited friendship and solidarity to bitter enmity. During the seventeenth century, as African plantation slaves fled into the forest, individual Indians served as occasional advisors and spouses for Saramakas. During the decades of war between the nascent Saramaka people and the colonial government, Indians served the Government as the most effective of jungle scouts and bounty hunters against Saramakas. By the time of the 1762 peace, one Saramaka village included about a dozen Akurio Indians as well as several Arawak captives and another included the famous “Tufinga” group. The paper ends with consideration of the anti-Maroon role of Indians during the Suriname Civil War (1986-1992) and the current land-rights struggle in which Indians and Maroons are at last cooperating.

Cet essai présente l'histoire des rapports entre les Marrons Saramaka et les Amérindiens au Suriname, où il s'agissait parfois d'amitié ou de solidarité, parfois d'inimitié acharnée. Pendant le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les Amérindiens partageaient souvent leurs connaissances de la forêt avec les esclaves qui se sont échappés, et dans certains cas devenaient leurs épouses. Au temps de la guerre entre les premiers Saramaka et les colons, les Amérindiens utilisaient leurs connaissances de la forêt au service du gouvernement, servant de scouts pour trouver les campements des marrons. Souvent c'était des Amérindiens qui les capturaient, tuaient ou les ramenaient à la côte. Au moment de la paix en 1762, il y avait un village Saramaka qui comprenait environ 12 Indiens Akurio et plusieurs Indiens Arawak capturés ; un autre hébergeait les fameux Indiens « Tufinga ». L'essai se termine avec une discussion du rôle des Amérindiens qui luttèrent contre les Marrons au cours de la guerre civile au Suriname (1986-1992) et la lutte pour les droits territoriaux dans laquelle les Amérindiens et les Saramaka se sont enfin devenus solidaires.

Throughout the colonial Americas, enslaved Africans who escaped to the wilderness encountered the Indians whose land it was[2]. In some cases, such encounters led to genetic and social mixing that produced whole new societies and cultures (as in the case of the Garifuna of Belize/Guatemala/Honduras, the Black Seminoles of the USA, or many *mocambos* in Brazil), in others to the effective policing of the territory by Indians who largely prevented the formation of Maroon communities (as in British Guiana), and in still others to the broad retreat of the Indians farther into the forests. Given such diversity of historical processes and outcomes, it may be revealing to focus on a particular case about which relatively much is known.

The Saramaka Maroons of Suriname (today some 55,000 people) are the descendants of enslaved Africans who escaped from coastal plantations to the

forest in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, fought a fierce guerrilla war against the colonists for many decades, and in 1762 forced the Dutch crown to make a lasting peace treaty with them—granting them their liberty and territory forever. This paper attempts to pull together what is known about relations between Saramakas and Indians[3]. Because my own relevant previous writings, and those of other scholars, are extremely scattered (and are often in footnotes), it has sometimes been hard to see the forest for the trees. This exercise permits me to foreground a significant yet neglected topic and reveals larger patterns, such as the fundamental role played by the state, from the earliest years of the colony to the most recent events in the Republic, in “cultivating ethnic difference ... a [deliberate] atomization of related struggles,” as John Collins has argued for Latin America more generally (Collins 2003).

## **BACKGROUND**

Relations between Saramakas and Amerindians ran the gamut from limited friendship and solidarity to bitter enmity[4]. The traditional historical narrative, as exemplified in a recent study that carefully combs relevant Dutch archives (Dragenstein 2002), might be summarized thus: in 1677, ten years after the Dutch took over from the British as owners of the colony of Suriname, the two main groups of indigenous peoples—Arawaks and Caribs—formed an alliance to try to drive them out. The next year marked the beginning of what has become known as the “Indian War” (1678-1686), with considerable initial success on the part of the allies, including burning white folks’ plantations and liberating a number of their African slaves (some of whom joined the Indians). Before long, however, the alliance unraveled, with most of the Arawaks deciding to join the colonists. By 1680, planters and Arawaks, along with newly imported troops from Europe, were making progress against the Carib resistors—even some Caribs had begun to come over to the planter side. In 1686, the planters, from a position of strength, concluded a treaty with the colony’s Indians, after which these latter posed little threat and accepted their new political status as enemies to the planters’ runaway slaves. For the next two centuries, Indians frequently served the whites as scouts in anti-Maroon expeditions or as independent bounty hunters of Maroons. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the most redoubtable of these anti-Maroon forces was a group known as the Karboegers of Coppename, a group of mixed-race Indians and Africans (runaway slaves) who were said to look African but spoke Carib[5].

In what follows, my main sources are Saramaka historians with whom I’ve had the pleasure to work over the past forty-three years. Their testimonies are supplemented, whenever possible, by materials from the archives, but in general the oral data are considerably richer than the written. The oral histories, as I have explained at considerable length elsewhere, are the results of historiographical processes of selection, silencing, preservation, and transmission in social contexts

that are highly charged politically and spiritually—as are, of course, the written testimonies (see, especially, Price 1983a, 1990, and 2008).

## INDIANS AS WIVES AND HELPMEEETS

After initially making acquaintance with Indians as fellow plantation slaves, some early Saramakas sought them out in the forest, and it was a group of Indians who initially harbored the early nucleus of the Matjáú clan. During that early period, individual Indians served as occasional advisors and spouses for Saramakas.

In the First-Time stories told, amidst much secrecy, by Saramaka Maroon men today, various traces of their ancestors' initial relations with Indians remain. The stories testify that Indians harbored some groups of runaways and that captured Indian women frequently served as wives to runaway men, though they assimilated quickly into nascent Saramaka society.

Saramaka historians of the Matjáú clan are well aware that Indians and Africans had served as plantation slaves together[6]. In 1976, a member of the Saramaka Matjáú clan told me how one of his runaway slave ancestors (about whom a good deal is known) first found refuge in the forest with Indians, an event I can date to the early 1690s (Price 1983a:45)[7].

When Lánu went into the forest, he ran this way and that, calling out to his wife, trying to find her.... He kept calling out and calling out until he got deep into the forest. Finally the *apúku* [forest spirit] named Wám̃ba called out in reply. And Wám̃ba came into Lánu's head and brought him directly to where some Indians lived. These Indians welcomed him, took care of him, and gave him food. And he lived with them there.

Protected by their gods and *óbias* (magical powers), as well as by these friendly Indians, and joined from time to time by new runaways, Lánu, his brother Ayakô and their sister Sééi, and the others who called themselves “Matjáú-people” (in planter jargon, “Machado-slaves”) made their gardens in an area at the very fringe of the plantation world, near a stream still called Matjáú Creek today. Until they moved south several years later, they remained in close contact with the Indians on whose lands they lived.

I have heard several stories about the capture of Indian women, who became the wives of early Saramaka men. In 2003, a member of the Lángu clan described his own ancestors' theft of Indian women, which took place shortly after 1712[8]. Tooy told me:

They were living at Saafugoon [Societeitsgrond, near present-day Fort Nieuw-Amsterdam]. There was a shortage of women there, so the men went to find wives at the Indian village across the river at Blauwgrond. They went to Chief Pama and his wife Ma Libo. Kwadjaní and the others asked the *íngis* [Indians] for women. Then Ma Libo laughed [a high-pitched stereotypic Indian laugh] in

their faces, saying, *Adúmakúku án sa kó ku kangwéla!* [Tooy explains that in esoteric language, *Kangwéla* means black person, *Dúmakúku* means Indian—“Indian women are not for black people.”] The men said, “Is that so?” And then they added [speaking an esoteric language of their own]: *Fu kêke mulêle kóti kwanzambí, u sa yéi fuámbe* [“That may be so, momma, but by the time the stars have shown and the sun comes up once more, we’ll see if what you say is true!”—*mulêle* is an esoteric word for stars, *kwanzambí* for Venus.] And they left. Later they came back and caught as many Indian women as they could—the rest had fled into the forest.

“And that’s why,” concludes Tooy, “among Saramakas today you’ll hardly find any clans that don’t have Indian ‘mothers.’ And it’s how my ancestors incurred the wrath of the Indians.”

A related early eighteenth-century story, perhaps involving one of the Indian women taken on this raid at Blauwgrond, contains a string of events that continues to have repercussions on Saramakas of the Lángu clan today. The background: Kaási, a great Lángu leader during the wars, had two wives, one African (Amímbe) and one Indian (Talí). His Indian brother-in-law, Piyái—his wife’s younger brother—was his trusted companion, with whom he shared important supernatural lore[9]. Maroons who had an Indian personal ritual specialist were apparently not rare. The famous late-eighteenth-century rebel leader of the Aluku Maroons, Boni Okilifu, had his own special Indian *óbiama*, Djaki Atoomboti[10]. In 2003, a Lángu descendant described to me what happened[11]:

Tatá Kaási [the earliest of the great First-Time Lángu leaders], his brother-in-law Piyái, and Tatá Amúsu went off through the forest to bring back Olíko, because Piyái wanted her as a wife. Kaási had two wives, Amímbe and an *íngi* [Indian] woman named Talí—Piyái was her brother. Ma Olíko, she was an *íngi*. Her name is really “sweet” and they say she was quite a looker! These men—night was their day. They’d walk through the forest at night! They waited for her near the creek at the *íngi* village, where she would come down to wash; then they would take her away. They hid there. Then two young girls arrived. Kaási took Olíko with his *óbia*. She was carrying a gourd to get water—still a little kid. They brought her back to their village to raise her. After a while, Piyái told Kaási she was big enough to be given to him in marriage. Kaási said no, she wasn’t big enough yet. That’s what brought the avenging spirit! One day they saw that Olíko was pregnant. Well, who do you think had knocked her up? Of course it was Kaási! Piyái didn’t say much and didn’t ask for reparations. He simply took his sister and the better part of Kaási’s *óbias* and walked off into the forest, never to be seen again. The children of Kaási and Olíko are the Píkí Kaapátu sub-clan of Lángu. Piyái became the great avenging spirit for the Gaán Kaapátu sub-clan, the children of Kaási and Amímbe[12].

What seems most striking about these cases of captured Indian women becoming the wives of early Saramaka men is their rapid conceptual assimilation,

the fact that their children were considered fully Saramaka. If, as Saramakas sometimes say today with only slight exaggeration, “you’ll find hardly any clans that don’t have Indian ‘mothers’” (see above), the Indian contribution to the “genetic mix” nonetheless remains negligible. For example, in the case of Tooy, who made the statement and told the story of Kaási, Piyái, and Olíko, it might be estimated as something like 1/1024 (see Price 2008:158).

Indian contributions to Saramaka culture are at once important and circumscribed. Much of Saramaka material culture and horticultural technique (everything connected with the growing and complex processing of cassava, many local fishing and hunting techniques, the now-obsolete art of hammock-weaving and certain kinds of basketry and pottery-making) was learned from Indians during the early years of cohabitation. Yet few religious, artistic, or ideological traces of Suriname’s Indian cultures can be found among Maroons. The Indians—mainly women—who came to live with Saramakas shared their environmental and technical knowledge, which early Maroons appropriated gratefully. But beyond this material realm, they seem to have become Saramakas, in every way.

## INDIANS AS MAROON-HUNTERS, SARMAKAS AS INDIAN-KILLERS

Indians (most often Caribs) served the Government as the most effective of jungle scouts and bounty hunters against Saramakas. The Government’s military expeditions of the early eighteenth century were often led by Indian pathfinders, and many Indians served as private and redoubtable maroon-hunters.

Saramaka stories make it clear that, after the initial period during which they shared a territory near the plantation area, First-Time Indians were viewed by Saramakas as the enemy. Just as Indians became famed Maroon-hunters, Saramakas tended to kill Indian men on sight.

A First-Time story I elsewhere dubbed “Adugwé’s Indian” captures some of the emotional tone of Saramakas’ feelings toward these man-hunters. The incident dates from the 1750s and concerns Adugwé, an ancestor of the Dombi clan (Price 1983a:145). The speaker is Basia Bakáa of Botopasi.

At that time, Adugwé had gone on a raid to the city. He had been hiding under the wharf at Paramaribo Creek. Then, when he got to Wefingóto [Weergevonden Plantation], he leaned up against a tree to rest. That’s where the Indian spotted him. He took his bow and drew it back *haan gbá!* The arrow went *heeí, tjí!* Right in the collarbone. Stuck right in. He had to break it apart in pieces to get any of it out. He limped all the way to Puupángi Creek, and there he climbed a cashew tree. He took a liana and tied it around the remaining stub of the arrow until it was really tight. And then he yanked it out. His bone was broken! He opened his hunting sack. He took the Nawi *bióngo* [magical ingredients] and

sprinkled a bit of it into the wound, *te, te, te*. Until the day it was completely healed.

Another Saramaka historian added,

The Indians were really two. At the time he was shot, Adugwé managed to kill one of them. He cut off his head [an important war ritual]. Later, he captured the other one. He kept him for three days. Each day, he showed him the wound. The Indian would avert his eyes. This happened three times. Then Adugwé killed him. (Price 1983a: 145)[13].

There is another powerful First-Time story in which an Indian kills a Saramaka—a Lángu-clan ancestor named Makambí, who fought the whites in a fierce battle near Victoria that I can now date to 1753[14]. As the story was told to me in 2003 by Tooy, a Lángu descendant of the protagonists,

Antamá's brother Makambí went off to fight at Victoria. He and Bákisipámbo [another Lángu leader], Kwakú, and Kwadjaní [two leaders of the Nasí clan]. They had made a camp at Gaán Paatí. It was near the railhead at Kabel. You pass Makambí-kiíki landing, before you get to Wátjibásu, on the east side, that's where Makambí and Bákisi and Kwakú lived. That's where they left to walk on the footpath to go fight at Victoria. After they had fought for a time, Kwakú and Bákisi called Makambí and said "Let's go, we're tuckered out." Makambí said, "It's not time to be tuckered out yet." Three times they called him to leave. Three times he said no. So, they left him there to continue fighting. That's when the Indian hidden up in a tree shot him with an arrow! So, he took the arrow and yanked it out but his guts poured out too. He bent over and shoved his guts back in with his fingers. He left Victoria and went up Company Creek and across to Makambí Creek and went up it until he got to a stone called Tósu-gbéne-gbéne. When he got there, Kwakú and Bákisi were already resting at their camp at Gaán Paatí. Makambí couldn't go on, so he lay down on the stone. He began snoring there. The others heard him and went all the way to him. He died just as they arrived. They buried him there in a cave. That place had been Nasí-clan territory but it became Lángu's. And that's why it's called Makambí Creek.

It seems clear that post-peace treaty relations between Saramakas and Indians remained ambivalent. The killing of Indian men who they crossed in the forest was certainly not uncommon. Here's an account I heard recently from Tooy, alluding to such a killing, as well as other detailed events from two and a half centuries ago, all preserved in the ritual language of Papá, and requiring—even today—periodic libation and prayer.

At the mouth of the Pikílió, three Matjáú-clan men, Tata Djaki and Tata Winsu and Tata Akaasu, saw five Indian women and one man. They killed the man. The women were Mokolimô, Sêgbenu, and Agwé and they were with two of their daughters, Agúngun and Ayôô. Those are the names that you must invoke whenever there is a really large ceremony for the ancestors.

After describing where they had their gardens and other details, he says they were so “wild” that Saramakas weren’t sure they should keep them as wives. Tooy continues:

Asidamá, a Saramaka man, was shooting fish with his bow at the front of the canoe while Ma Sêgbenu steered at the rear when the Evil Thing of the Riverbottom at Sotígbo [five days by paddle up the Gaánlío from the last village], the Old Man called Sêgwenúawé [sometimes Singkwayoo, an anaconda god], came up from the deep and pulled her under. Asidamá pulled off his clothes and dove after her to see what had pulled her under, and the creature sang to him, *I míti Sêgwenú-ee, i míti Sêgwenúawé. Ayò Asidamá i kó ayò, i kúi yò, Sêgwenú-a, yesu Sêgwenúawé, i míti Asidamá sinko ayo* [“You’ve met up with Sêgwenú...”]. Then a howler monkey which saw all this from a tree next to the river sang out: *I míti dódo, i míti a mán dê ... yesu adódoo, i míti a mándê-e*. Howler Monkey’s song brought the woman right back up to the surface! The husband took her and put her in the canoe! This story remains in Félibéni! [“bent-iron,” the nickname of Papá]

A final example of Indian-killing, from the 1770s, emphasizes that, even if not uncommon, such killings of Indians always brought consequences and—as in the last example—needed ritual melioration.

Dúngi saw them at the creek across from Lafánti, at Dúngi Creek. He had come down to visit Djaki. He had come down to make a peanut garden there. That’s when he saw them, Foola and her husband Bentúla. He said: “I thought runaway slaves were a thing of the past, but now I’ve ‘caught’ myself two!” She said: “You haven’t caught us. We’re looking for my brother. Have we come to the right river? Do you know the man called Kúngoóka [a famous *óbiama*]?” She continued: “We’ve done a terrible thing. It is driving us crazy. But if we can get to Kungooka, he will be able to fix it up.” Dúngi said: “I can bring you to Kúngoóka. I know where he lives. He is at Dáome.” Then he brought them to Djaki, at Kúmbu. They discussed it inside and out. You see, the terrible thing that they did, the thing that had stopped up the mouth of the husband, that made him unable to speak, it was that they had killed a man. With an adze. His ghost was troubling them. It wouldn’t leave them in peace. It was a Dumukúku [an Indian] they had killed[15]. In Matawai. The woman was very pregnant. They went to Kúngoóka. As soon as he saw them, he went into his *óbia* house. Then he came out and said “that thing.” Before beginning the story of Foola and Bentola, Tébiní—the speaker—had discussed with Peléki, who was also present at this evening session with me in 1976, how until recently he and only one other living man still knew the words that Kúngoóka had spoken upon seeing his long-lost sister. The other man, Tébiní said, had just died suddenly, and Tébiní himself could no longer remember them. Together, they lamented the loss: “It’s lost, it’s finished!” exclaimed Tébiní. (Price 1990:408)

Other Saramaka First-Time stories attest to the presence of Indians as



guides and scouts for the whites—as does nearly every one of the scores of expedition reports in the archives dating from the early eighteenth century. To mention a single example, an expeditionary force that set out to find Kaási's village in 1712 consisted of forty-eight slaves, sixty-two Indians and seventeen whites (Price 1983a:78)[16]. Here is a typical Saramaka allusion to Indian guides:

[When they lived at Tuído] the whites came after them to fight many times. The Maroons would be warned of the whites' arrival by their *óbias*, and they had developed a special strategy. They would hide near a rapids and wait till the boats arrived. The white man would usually be sitting on a stool in the middle of the boat, and the Indian who served as guide normally sat up front. As the boat began ascending the rapids, they would first shoot the steersman at the stern so that the boat would go out of control. They [the whites] always had a parrot with them who would fly back to the coast and report how many people had been killed and at what place. There were battles like this in three places: near the mouth of Djibi Creek, then at Ketidan, and finally just below Tuído (Price 1983a: 94-95)[17].

## GROUPS OF INDIANS IN SARAKA VILLAGES

By the time of the Peace, one Saramaka village in Matawai included about a dozen Akurio Indians as well as the several Arawak captives from the Saron mission, and the Nasi village included the famous “Tufinga” group.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, during the final phases of the war as well as after the Peace, several small groups of Indians were assimilated into Saramaka villages.

Sometime around mid-century, the Matawai segment of Saramaka, living in the village of Tukumútu, had allied themselves with some Akurio Indians from a village called Tupi[18]. By 1763, this group had moved into Tukumútu, though, according to a white emissary, they lived “somewhat separately...there were about eleven or twelve of them, young and old.” A contemporaneous report, based on hearsay evidence, claims that these Akurio considered themselves “Black People” rather than Indians, and that some of them seemed to resemble “Indian-African mixtures”[19].

During the late 1750s, another small group of Indians—the “Tufingas” (or “Tufinga-luangos”)—was assimilated into the Saramaka Nasi clan. Since their story is complex and has been told elsewhere (Price 1983b:162-65, 1983a:128, 233), I simply present a few highlights here, beginning with a modern Saramaka account.

When they lived at Dosú Creek, Akwadjaní and his brother [Kwakú Etja] had a garden near Kanga Creek. Something kept stealing from their garden, but they couldn't figure out what it was. Each morning things would be missing, but there was no sign left behind. It was Indians! They had been coming there every night and then, during the day, staying in a large cave. They [the Saramakas] decided to

post a watch near the cave to see what lived inside. Now, when the sun got hot, these people [the Indians] used to come out to warm themselves in the sun. But they'd come out only one or two at a time. Then they'd go back in, and another would come out. Well, two girls came out to warm themselves, and they caught them. They took them away.

The girls' hair was very long. The men divided them; Kwakú Etja had one, Kwadjani had the other. They discussed how to make them look more acceptable to bring to the village. Kwakú cut the hair of his girl, but Kwadjani said he wouldn't, that it was a *tjína* [taboo] to cut an Indian's hair. The girl just stood there. Well, a week later Kwakú's girl was dead. But Kwadjani's girl, the one whose hair hadn't been cut, she made the Tufinga-luangos. Her descendants are still at Kambalóá [a present-day Nasi village].

Later, the Indian woman became pregnant. But no one knew who the father was. She refused to tell. So, at night, they set watch. One night, after dark, they heard, "knock, knock, knock!" Whoever it was stayed till cock's crow and then managed to slip off. The third time he came, they caught him and were about to kill him. He said, "Don't kill me." The animal! It was an animal that had made her pregnant. An armadillo. That's why Nasis don't eat armadillos. The animal had been betrothed to the young woman while she lived in the forest. Now that she was old enough, he had returned to make love to her. The girl child she bore was called Lusi. This was the Tufinga child[20].

It appears that the Nasis indeed captured some fleeing Indians and brought them to live with them. The story of the armadillo father would seem to be the Saramaka explanation, undoubtedly discovered by them through divination, of the strange shape of the "Twofinger" child who was born to Kwadjani's Indian wife. From testimony written down in 1763, when the first peacetime whites arrived in Saramaka territory, we can be sure that some eight or ten recently-discovered Twofingers—who had varying degrees of genetic deformity—were living among the Nasi. Indeed, the Government's white emissary was sufficiently impressed that he decided to bring one of them back with him to Paramaribo, "in order to show this remarkable spectacle to your High Mightinesses of the Court of Policy." The whites treated this Twofinger Indian with considerable scientific curiosity and sent a drawing of the man to the Holland Learned Society in Haarlem.

Yet another group of Indians found harbor with the Awana clan in the early 1780s, well after the Saramaka peace with the whites. They were "caught" (found) by Matjáú men but left in the care of Kodjo Maata, who was Chief Alabi's brother-in-law and main man during the second half of the eighteenth century. Kodjo, born in the early years of the century and himself part Indian—whence his sobriquet, Maata [mulatto]—was apparently a refugee from the group of mixed African maroons and Indians who lived to the west of the Saramacca River—the Karboegers of Coppename. As Basia Bakáa of Botopasi told me in 1978:

The Matjáús were at Kumbu. Djaki and his brother Awoyo. One day they saw an

*awaa* [palm] pit land in front of them, on the ground. After a moment, *vi pem!*, another. Djaki said to his brother: “This thing. Human beings! People are doing it.” And he circled around [behind the village]. He saw three Indians, two women and a man. He caught them and brought them to his house.... Now at that time Alabi had an Indian named Kodjo Maata living with him. When the three Indians arrived [at Kumbu], no one knew how to talk with them. But they knew Alabi had an Indian so they sent for him. So that they could talk, Indian with Indian! The Indians said they came in peace. And then they lived there with the Matjáus for a while. Then they went to the Awanas [where Kodjo lived]. They’re still with the Awanas today!

Awana Captain Góme, whose father’s matrilineage descends from these Indian women, told me that they were “Aluángo” (Arawaks) who had fled from a war on the Tapanahoni River, to the east. In his version of their arrival at the village, they tossed three balls of spun cotton rather than *awaa* pits, and the brothers said to each other: “It must be human beings. Because Evil (*ogi*) does not know how to spin.” In any case, these Indian newcomers married Saramakas and founded the Ingi Pisi (“Indian Quarter”) segment of the Awana clan.

A final group of Indians living soon after mid-century in the westernmost of Saramaka villages, with the Matawais, represent war booty[21]. They had been captured in a 1761 raid on the Moravian mission post at Saron, motivated in part by the fact that these Indians engaged in Maroon bounty-hunting[22]. As a Moravian missionary complained, “The miserable thing is that the Indians are given a reward for hunting down runaway negroes—forty florins for bringing them in alive but the same if they must kill them.... If only this miserable regulation could be suppressed!” (Price 1990:326). When the Government emissary showed up in 1763, just after the Saramaka peace treaty, he had orders to “negotiate for the return of the Indian women and children who were captured from the Moravians, that is 4 women and 7 children, if they are all alive; and if this does not work, as a last resort offer the Saramakas a small present such as beads [in order to persuade them].” The chiefs made him a novel proposal: “They answered me that they had obtained them by fighting and the possessors did not want to give them up, neither for a bounty nor for gifts of beads and cotton cloth, but that in order to show us that we were doing business with reasonable people, they would exchange them for Negroes, man for man, woman for woman, child for child. The remaining Indians totaled six persons.” To my knowledge, only one of these Indians was ever returned (on his deathbed). In 1770, a missionary visiting the Matawai reported that, “of the Indians stolen nine years ago from Saron, only two girls and a lad survive, but these three have completely assimilated themselves into the ways of the Negroes,” and in 1788, another missionary noted that “two of the Indians who were captured at Saron” were living in a Saramaka village on the Gaanlio.

For the great bulk of Saramakas, who lived along the Suriname River, it was only rarely after the 1763 Peace that an Indian was encountered. Unlike the Ndyuka and Aluku Maroons to the east, who dealt regularly with Indians for trade

(passing along, for example, white folks' goods in return for specially-trained Indian hunting dogs), or the Matawais and Kwintis to the west, Saramakas lived in an area that had, by the second half of the eighteenth century, been pretty much emptied out of its original indigenous inhabitants.

## **MORE RECENT RELATIONS**

During Suriname's civil war (1986-1992), the Government's use of coastal Indians (Caribs/Kali'na/Galibi) against Maroons again came to the fore. The Suriname army depended heavily upon Indian scouts in their operations along the Cottica and inland in Eastern Suriname. And these same Indians served as the Government's shock troops, committing some of the war's worst atrocities against Maroon villages[23].

It is only during the past decade that the long-standing and largely successful "divide-and-conquer" policy of the Suriname state, which held sway from earliest colonial times into the present and which deliberately encouraged enmity between Maroons and Indians, may finally have hit a snag. As the cash-starved Government, and its underpaid functionaries, have rushed to auction off large portions of the country's interior to multinational timber and mining companies (Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Canadian, American, Brazilian, and others), Indians and Maroons have finally found a common cause. It is true that centuries of mistrust have muted joint political action to date. Not least of the impediments is the general lack of literacy, or even a common language, among Indian and Maroon leaders of various groups. Researchers present at the meetings held in 2000 that brought these leaders together to discuss land rights describe considerable mutual incomprehension and confusion (Carlin and Boven 2002:40-41). But the legal cases now being brought to international tribunals—such as the Saramaka land rights case against the government of Suriname, which the Saramakas won in a hallmark decision before the Inter-American Court for Human Rights in 2007, will have direct implications on the land rights of all peoples in the interior of the country, as well as elsewhere in the Americas (see Kambel and MacKay 1999; Kambel 2002; Price 2009; and, especially, Price 2011). Suriname's Maroons and indigenous peoples are finally beginning to realize that they may have more to gain by joining together against those who seek to appropriate the country's resources for personal gain than by fighting each other (see Kambel 2007). Whether this growing realization has come too late in Suriname's history to make much difference, only time will tell.

## **NOTES**

1 An earlier version of this paper, "Vecinos molestos: Cimarrones e indígenas en Surinam," was presented at the UNESCO Seminario Internacional, La Ruta del Esclavo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 25 March 2004, and apparently published in *Comisión Nacional*

*Dominicana de la Ruta del Esclavo*, 2006, Santo Domingo, Editora Búho, though I have never seen that book. A briefer English version was scheduled to be published in a “*Liber amicorum*” for Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg in Suriname in 2009, but that publication is now in doubt.

2 On Hispaniola, “By 1503 Governor Nicolás de Ovando was already complaining that escaped [African] slaves could not be retrieved and were teaching the Taino Indians ‘bad customs’” (Landers 2002:234).

3 I am well aware that “Indian” (like “African” or “Maroon”) began as a European category and that “indigenous people” is in many cases the preferred term today. But since I write here largely from a Saramaka perspective, I use “Indian” as a translation for Saramaccan *íngi*, which lumps the indigenous peoples of Suriname in a single category. In fact, there are eight different indigenous peoples in Suriname today who speak languages of either the Cariban or Arawakan families: Kari’na (aka Caribs), Lokono (aka Arawaks), Trio, Akurio, Wayana, Sik’iyana, Tunayana (Katwena), and Mawayana. There seem to have been about twenty distinct groups at the time Europeans permanently settled in the 1650s (for details, see Carlin 2009).

4 The epigraphs that begin each section of this paper all come from a single footnote, Price 1990:403, note 68.

5 For more on the Karboegers, see Smith (2002:131-151).

6 Indeed, I was once told that “the Indians escaped first and then, since they knew the forest, they came back and liberated the Africans”—though this is not a widespread story. The English colony reached its economic peak in 1665, “when it had forty to fifty profitable sugar estates, a white population of about 1500, and a slave force made up of some 3000 Africans and 400 American Indians.” By 1690, Indian slavery in Suriname had almost disappeared (Price 1976:7-8).

7 The speaker is Otjútju (Belfon), who is now *gaamá* (paramount chief) of the Saramakas.

8 This story relates to Wii’s people, who escaped in the wake of the 1712 invasion of Suriname by French admiral Jacques Cassard (see Price 1983a:81-82).

9 Kaási is depicted as always traveling with Piyái, who served as his personal *óbiama*, and whose name means “shaman” in several of the Indian languages of Suriname. Kaási’s brother-in-law Piyái was entrusted with the knowledge of Kaási’s most sacred possession, his Loango god; and Piyái is said to have taught Kaási *dangara óbia*, the magic that permits invisibility (see Price 1983a:80).

10 See Pakosie (1972:5).

11 The speaker is Tooy.

12 Another Langu descendant, Metisen, told me in 1976 that after the adultery, Kaási’s own Indian wife left him, since he had taken her brother’s wife, and she went off with Piyái.

13 The speaker here is Tebíni. The matter-of-fact reference to Adugwé’s cutting off the first Indian’s head assumes knowledge by the listener of a whole complex of ritual and belief that involves both self-protection from avenging spirits and central Saramaka ideas about manhood, derived in part from West African antecedents. As Peléki once told me: “In those days, until you killed someone and cut off his head, you were not a real man.... And if you didn’t cut off the head, you hadn’t really killed him. You hadn’t mastered him. The head-cutting *is* the killing of a man. Because if you don’t know how to do it, he’ll come back to kill you.” The proper handling of the severed head was undoubtedly complex. The related hunting rites performed after killing a large animal (for example, a deer, but especially a tapir), which I have witnessed, have the same explicit goal—to settle its spirit permanently so it will not return to take vengeance. Neither those whites who accused the maroons of wanton barbarity because of head cutting nor modern historians discussing the practice seem fully to have grasped its deeper significance as crucial self-protection and as a special source of power. In the shrines of certain Saramaka great *óbias*, while preparing to go to battle, men drank from vessels made from the sawed-off skulls of their white enemies. I have never seen evidence that lowland South American peoples’ ideas about head-severing influenced those of the Saramakas.

14 Based on recent archival research, Dragtenstein (2002:149-150) describes the 1753 attack near Victoria with which I can now link these Saramaka accounts. In *First-Time*, I implied that the incident took place somewhat earlier, though I made clear I had no solid temporal anchors. I

reported simply that the Saramaka historian, Tebíni, had told me: “[The Nasi-clan men] had a big battle there with the whites, they and Makambí.... They fought until the battle was too much for him. The whites bested him. They killed him.... Then Kwadjani went back for Makambí. He went and gave him a proper burial at the head of [the place now called] Makambí Creek” (Price 1983a:83, 104).

15 When I told this story in *First-Time* and *Alabi’s World*, I believed that “Dumukuku/Dumakuku” (a term no longer in use in normal Saramaccan) meant “runaway slave—a newly-arrived maroon.” But as Tooy taught me while telling the story about Saramakas asking Indians for wives at Blauwgrond (see above), it, instead, seems to mean “Indian.”

16 After several days, the expedition discovered the site, which had twenty-five houses and was protected on one side by a swamp and on the other by a deep creek. The Saramaka inhabitants, apparently warned by their scouts, had fled a few days before, leaving a quantity of goats, turkeys, and other fowls, a great deal of food (bananas, taro, corn, manioc, yams, sugar cane, oranges), some cotton, and other supplies. After plundering and burning the houses and ruining the surrounding gardens, the troops abandoned the site.

17 The speaker is Paulus Andoma.

18 This alliance is first mentioned in 1749 (Journal of C. O. Creutz, now in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, the Hague, Societeit van Suriname 285, pp. 96-125b, translated in Price 1983b:49-82).

19 The source for the second sentence of this paragraph is the 1763 journal of J. C. Dörig, now in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, the Hague (Societeit van Suriname 155, 20/IV/1763, translated in Price [1983b:165-196]). For source references for the final parenthetical sentence, see Price (1983a:164).

20 The speaker is Baká, see Price (1983a:162-163).

21 During the 1760s, the area to the west of the Saramacca River remained dotted with Indian and “Karboeger” (mixed Indian-African) villages. For a time Captain Musinga maintained secret military treaties with some of them; others of these Indians fought with the Government against him in 1767 (Price 1990:325).

22 In the late 1750s, Moravian missionaries, who had been working with Arawak Indians in the colony of Berbice (to the west of Suriname), had moved to the Lower Saramacca River, bringing some thirty Indians with them and establishing the mission post of Saron. During 1760, a number of more warlike Carib Indians moved in; these same Caribs were active participants in bounty-hunting for escaped slaves. While the Caribs were temporarily absent, in January 1761, the Saramakas from Matawai—who needed free passage down the Saramacca River for easy access to Paramaribo—attacked the mission, killing two Indians, wounding ten, and carrying off four women and four (or possibly seven) children. At news of the raid, the Government sent an unsuccessful following commando, then established a military post, “The Seven Provinces,” nearby. The sources for all information in this paragraph and note may be found in Price (1990:80, 289-290, 325-326).

23 On Suriname’s recent civil war and its consequences for Maroons, see Polimé and Thoden van Velzen (1998), R. and S. Price (2003), and Price (2011).

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