



**UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA – UNB**  
**CENTRO DE DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL**

**Language, culture and sustainability: the case of the  
Ndyuka in Diitabiki, Suriname**

**FICENCA RAQUEL ELIZA**

**Brasília**  
**June 2017**

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Dissertação de mestrado submetida ao Centro de Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Universidade de Brasília, como parte dos requisitos necessários para a obtenção do grau de mestre em Desenvolvimento Sustentável junto aos Povos e Terras Tradicionais.

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**Brasilia  
June 2017**

To my beloved grandmother; Loseta 'Ma Bika' Eliza and my nephew Damian and niece Jahzara  
Eliza

“The Ndyuka language will never die as long as Ndyuka people speak the language and teach their children. What can happen is that the original state of the language may get lost. The pure state of the language is partly lost already. We see that it has got mixed with the Sranan tongo. To preserve the Ndyuka language, firstly do research about the language and write it down. Write it down as much as possible. This is the best way to keep our mothertongue alive”. Gaanman Da Bono Velantie, the Paramount Chief of the Ndyuka.

“Ndyuka tongo ná o lasi noiti so langa Ndyuka sama e taki Ndyuka tongo anga so langa den e leli den pikin taki en. A sani di kan pasa na taki a tuu tuu tongo enke fa a be de a fosi kan lasi. A tuu tuu Ndyuka, a pisi de lasi kaba. We syi taki a e mokisa fuu anga a Saanan Tongo. Fu kibii a Ndyuka tongo, a fosi sani di wi mu du a fu ondoosuku a tongo da wi sikiifi en. Wi mu tan sikiifi eng naamo. A so wan fasi wi sa kibii wi mamabee tongo”. Gaanman Da Bono Velantie, a Gaanman fu Ndyuka liba.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASS	Associative
CDS	Centre for Sustainable Development
CMPR	Compare
COP	Copula
DAT	Dative
DC	District Commissioner
DET	Determiner
DIR	Directive
GLO	Primary Education
ILO	International Labour Organization
INESS	Inessive
ITCZ	Inter- Tropical Convergence Zone
Lit	Literally
LD	Language Dutch
LN	Language Ndyuka
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MESPT	Master in Sustainability alongside Traditional People and Territories
MINOV	Ministry of Education and Community Development
NEG	Negation
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
PERF	Perfect
PROGR	Progressive
PROJ	Projective
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNB	University of Brasilia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCED	Commission on Environment and Development

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## GLOSSARY

Akisi sama	traditional marriage of the Ndyuka
Apinti doon	a special drum used as an instrument of communication
Baakaman	widow or widower
Bagasiman	a transporter
Bakaa	whitemen or a stranger
Bali basia	announcement
Basia	assistant of the Kabiten and Gaanman
Bee	family or children of a common (grand) mother or sisters
Bilo sama	people living at the downstream of the river
Boto	boat (in this thesis the use of it means coffin)
Dii dei wataa	the first ritual that is done after a funeral
Dii mun wataa	a ritual that is done three months after the funeral
Faaka tiki	ancestor shrine
Faya wataa	hot bath treatments women take during the postpartum periode
Gaan Gadu	the Creator of all kind
Gaan koosi	a sheet (in this thesis; it is worn across the shoulders by the widow or widower
Gaan kuutu	a meeting of all the traditional leaders of the different Maroon groups
Gaan kwei uman	adolescent girls who reach the stage to become a woman
Gaan lo	several matrilineal clans or the Ndyuka society
Gaanman	the Paramount Chief, the traditional leader with the highest authority
Gadu kondee	heaven
Gi kamisa	an event held for boys to be declared as men
Gi lebi	a ritual that is done for widow (ers)
Gi pangi	an event held for girls to be declared as women
Goon	agricultural plot
Kabiten	head leader of a village
Kampu	labor camp
Kee osu	mortuary

Kelepisi	association of people who prepare the funeral
Ken boto	a tree trunk that is roughly dug out and where cane sugar is smashed
Kina	a taboo
Kisiman	coffin maker
Kokoti	a traditional tattoo
Kumanti	a pantheon of the religious beliefs of the Ndyuka
Kuutu	a meeting
Kwey uman	adolescent girl (s)
Kwey	a small piece of cloth girls wear to cover their intimate parts
Lala pangi	unembroidered pangi
Lanti	a collective of the Gaanman, kabiten, basia, priest and elders of the village
Lo	matriclan
Lonten	marronage
Mun osu	menstrual hut
Nenseki	reincarnation
Obia	herbs which offers spiritual and medical support
Obiaman	a priest
Olo man	gravedigger
Opu sama	people living at the upstream of the river
Osu	house of a mother and her children according to the social structure
Pangi	a piece of cloth used by Maroons. It is usually worn around the waist by the women
Pikiman	an intermediary during meetings
Poti a baaka	the start of the mourning period
Poti mofu	engagement
Puu a baaka	the end of the mourning period
Puu a doo	a ceremony that is held when a child is born
Saamaka	one of the Maroon groups of Suriname
Sweli gadu	the deity of the covenant
Teke paati	a ritual performed at a funeral
Tey bee koosi	a cummerbund

Towe nyanyan	a ritual that is done by widow and widowers
Tuka	mourning music and dance
Tyai a ede	oracle bundle
Wasi koy	a custom where the man ask for the girls hand in marriage
Wasi	washing the body of the deceased

## RESUMO

Esta dissertação de mestrado põe em evidência um dos seis povos Marrons do Suriname, o povo Ndyuka, descendentes de Africanos que foram escravizados e escaparam das plantações durante o século XVIII. O povo Ndyuka foi o primeiro grupo de escravos fugitivos com os quais o governo colonial holandês assinou um tratado de paz, em 1760. A dissertação trata especificamente da língua e da cultura dos Ndyuka, que indissociavelmente refletem o importante papel que os Maroons desempenharam no desenvolvimento da história do Suriname. A dissertação, ao tratar de aspectos da cultura dos Ndyuka, procura levar ao entendimento de como os Ndyuka se diferenciaram e se fortaleceram como um grupo étnico distinto, fazendo sua própria história, longe do habitat milenar de seus ancestrais, com um modelo próprio de sustentabilidade. Mostramos, por meio de uma descrição sincrônica de aspectos culturais do povo, como têm resistido por séculos, independentemente das forças opostas à sua sobrevivência. A pesquisa empreendida tem como sua preocupação principal o uso e fortalecimento da língua Ndyuka no sistema educacional surinamês, assim como o reconhecimento do Ndyuka como língua co-oficial do Suriname. Esta dissertação pretende contribuir com a discussão sobre multilinguismo e fortalecimento de línguas minoritárias, examinando relações entre nível de proficiência linguística e políticas educacionais, no caso, o Ndyuka, sublinhando, dentre outros, a necessidade e urgente de estudos linguísticos cujos resultados devem ser aplicados ao ensino da língua Ndyuka na escola e ao desenvolvimento de sua escrita.

**Palavras-chave:** Ndyuka, Língua, Cultura, Identidade, Políticas Linguísticas, Sustentabilidade

## **Abstract**

This Master thesis is about one of the six Maroons tribes of Suriname, the Ndyuka, who are descendants of escaped African slaves from the plantations, during the eighteenth century. The Ndyuka was the first group of escaped slaves with whom the Dutch colonial government signed a peace treaty in 1760. The thesis approaches specifically the Ndyuka language and culture, which inextricably reflect the role of the Maroons in the development of Suriname history. The thesis aims to present an understanding of how the Ndyuka differentiated and strengthened themselves as an ethnic group, building their own history, far away from the millenary habitat of the African ancestry, and creating their own sustainable model. I show, by means a synchronic description of cultural aspects of the Ndyuka, how they preserved their culture for centuries, despite the contrary forces against their survival. The research has as its main aim the use and strengthening of Ndyuka language in the Suriname educational system, as well as the recognition of Ndyuka as a co-official language of Suriname. This master thesis is thought to be a contribution to the discussion on multilingualism and strengthening minority languages. It focuses on Ndyuka to examine the relationship between the level of linguistic and educational policies, and highlights, among other issues, the urgent need for linguistic studies to incorporate the teaching of the Ndyuka language at school as well as to preserve the language through writing and documentation.

**Keywords:** Ndyuka, Language, Culture and Identity, Language Policies, Sustainability



## ABSTRACT IN NDYUKA

### WAN SYATU PISI FOSI U BIGIN AINI NDYUKA

A wooko yaaso a wang wooko abaa wan fu den sigisi busi kondee sama fu Saanan, den Ndyuka sama, den baka pikin fu Afiikan sama di be de saafu anga be e wooko a den paandasi aini a ten fu a jali wan dusun anga tin a seibin. Den Ndyuka sama be de a fosi guupu fu saafu di be lowe anga di fii anga den sitaafu basi aini a jali wan dunsu seibin ondoo anga sigisi tenti. A wooko yaaso e go abaa a Ndyuka tongo anga a fasi fa den Ndyuka sama e libi. Den tu sani ya e go ana anga ana fu soy fa busikondee sama go na fesi aini den ten di pasa aini Saanan. A wooko yaaso e soy fa Ndyuka sama e libi anga fa den taanga den seefi enke wan spesuutu guupu, fa den libi makandii den ten di pasa, faawe fu den dunsu jali fu Afiikan lutu anga den deng eigi sabi fu tan a libi. Aini a wooko ya mi e soy diifeenti sowtu sani fu a fasi fa den Ndyuka libi omen yali anga den eigi sabi anga koni a winsi fa a be e taanga gi den. A ondoo suku abi wan spesuutu bosikopu, dati na a taki abaa den tongo fu Saanan anga fa wi mu taanga a Ndyuka tongo aini a leli sesitema fu Saanan, so seefi a elikeni fu a Ndyuka enke wan fu deng spesuutu tongo fu Saanan. A wooko yaaso de wan yeepi abaa a pisi toli fu den difeenti tongo di de anga fu taanga den tongo di den e fika a baka. Wi e ondoo suku den banti abaa a posisi fu den tongo anga leli, spesuutu a Ndyuka pe we syi taki a Ndyuka tongo de fanowdu fu leli pikin a sikoo anga fu sikiifi anga kibii a Ndyuka tongo.

**Sooto wowntu:** Ndyuka, Tongo, A fasi fa sama e libi anga sama na den, Tongo Sesitema, Sani gi baka pikin

## PREFACE

This thesis is the product of the Professional Master in Sustainability alongside Traditional People and Territories (MESPT) at the Center for Sustainable Development (CDS) of the University of Brasilia (UNB).

During the past two years that was part of my research master studies, I was given the opportunity to gain a substantive amount of experience and skills in the training of professionals in developing research and social and sustainability interventions, based on scientific and traditional knowledge relating to such areas as urban planning and territorial management or rights, respect for biodiversity, sustainability education and ethics, agriculture and preservation of cultural heritage of Maroons, Indigenous peoples and their traditional communities.

I have a bachelor degree in Public Administration (International Relations) from the Anton de Kom University of Suriname so most people were surprised and asked why I choose to write the grammar of my mother tongue language; the Ndyuka. In their opinion I do not have any linguistic knowledge or degree but it is possible to do this project, because I believed in myself. I chose this topic because of my interest in sustainability and because I really care about sustainability and equality in education, especially for children in Suriname's interior. Also I am of the opinion that language is the best instrument to represent culture. Although nobody can become a language expert in such a short period of time, it is no exaggeration to state that my personal learning curve and the drive to learn more about my language have reached a considerable level.

As a result of this thesis I am currently writing a children's book especially for the pupils of the Gaanman Akontoe Velantie School in Diitabiki, a primary school in the interior of Suriname. The book is titled *Ama and the kimoni moni's* 'Ama and the fireflies'. It is a story about a little girl in the interior who lives and do things in the same environment just like these children. Most of the books used in schools contain things like snow, streets with pelican crossings etc. which are not present in the interior villages. So because of these reasons I decided to write a story which they can relate to or represent them.

Ficenca Raquel Eliza

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I am also grateful to Suribraz Academic network Foundation for given me the opportunity to study in Brasilia.

Studying abroad is not easy and requires a lot of courage. Fortunately, I have been blessed with the most caring fellow students I could ever ask for. They have made my stay a lot easier. As Portuguese is not my native tongue, it was a struggle during the classes and to communicate with the teachers and my fellow students but they have helped me go through this process. I am grateful also to the teachers of this master's course; for their commitment and understanding from which I have matured within their teachings. The experience and challenges developed me as a person, taught me new skills, created new meanings, persistence in life and generally translated into valuable memories that I will cherish all my life.

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There are so many others who contributed in one way or another, whom I may have inadvertently left out and I sincerely thank all of them.

## INTRODUCTION

In Suriname, the official language for many Maroons and Indigenous children is a major barrier in education<sup>1</sup>. In my thesis “*Achieve Universal Primary Education; A study on the realization of the Millennium Development Goal II of the United Nations in Suriname*” (2014), I came to the conclusion that the quality of education within the rural areas is far below the level education offered in urban areas. The great problem is that children in the interior, who speak their native mother tongue, have had the weakest performance in the country ratings, with low scores and the highest percentage of drop-outs. These children have serious difficulties communicating in Dutch, which is the official language used in the Suriname educational system. It is a well-known fact that there are problems associated with the system of education in the interior of Suriname<sup>2</sup>. Since the civil war in 1986, education in this part of the country has deteriorated in relation to education in other areas. As a consequence of the war, schools and health centers were destroyed, with inland residents killed and the domestic economy totally disrupted (B. MIGGE AND I. LÉGLISE, 2013, p. 102).

This reality has enriched my impetus of seeking for an effective tool to help Ndyuka children to eliminate the linguistic barrier. This demanded an examination of Ndyuka sociolinguistic set, focusing on the use of languages at school as well as at home. Two important questions needed to be answered is there any multilingualism at school and at home? What would be the implications for Ndyuka children cultural identity in any case?

### Justification

As a Ndyuka, I feel the need to contribute to the development of my people and community by helping to strengthen my language and culture. As it is known, the Ndyuka, just like the other Maroons and Indigenous people, have their own modes of seeing the world and their own techniques and methodologies of sustainability, although various aspects of their cultural heritage have been affected by the colonization processes over hundreds of years. The

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<sup>1</sup> National Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action +20 Suriname (2014), Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Suriname (2014), <http://www.rutufoundation.org/new-project-in-suriname-strengthening-teacher-competence-in-multilingualism-and-diversity/>

<sup>2</sup> Suriname MDG Progress Report (2014)

external forces acting against these traditional cultures have promoted, among others losses, the progressive displacement of their respective native languages of their natural functions and the weakening of some cultural practices.

This thesis is therefore of fundamental importance for the discussion on educational, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic policies aimed at strengthening of Maroons groups of Suriname, particularly the Ndyuka ethnic group, since it highlights the sociolinguistics of the Ndyuka language in a multilingual co-social context, presenting data which reveals the importance of governmental policies to maintain strong Ndyuka language and culture. Therefore, this thesis reunites aspect of the linguistic history of the Ndyuka, which reflects the important role it played in the linguistic and cultural history of Suriname, as well as in the history of the Ndyuka people. It shows how the Ndyuka fundamentally differentiated as a distinct ethnic group and how they decided to make their own history away from the traditional habitat of their African ancestors, maintaining its millenarian sustainable practices, and showing that their cultural identity has resisted, despite all opposing forces to its survival.

The study also addresses the Ndyuka language, from a linguistic perspective, in order to review the urgent need for linguistic studies that help the application of linguistic knowledge in the teaching of the Ndyuka language at school and as a means of communication in its written form, however stimulating orality, which is the strongest basis for the strengthening of the Ndyuka language and culture.

Finally, this thesis intends to contribute to the preservation of Maroon languages as part of the cultural heritage of Suriname. The Ndyuka, like other Maroons and Indigenous peoples, have their own modes of sustainability that have been somehow damaged by the advancement of the dominant culture in their traditional ways of living. This external force may promote, among others, the displacement of their respective native languages and the weakening of their cultural practices, in general.

**The central question:**

What is the nature of multilingualism among the pupils of the Akontoe Velantie School and what are its effects in the vitality of the Ndyuka language and culture among these pupils?

**Other important questions are:**

1. Who are Maroons and where did they come from?
2. What are the fundamental characteristics of Ndyuka culture?
3. How did the Ndyuka language develop?
4. What are the characteristics of the structure of the Ndyuka language?
5. Which language and educational policy does Suriname have?
6. What is the actual state of Ndyuka language, culture and sustainability in the Diitabiki community?
7. What should be considered in the formulation of language policies in Suriname?

**Delimitation of study**

My research had been carried out at Diitabiki village, an ideal place to observe language use and attitudes. Children of surrounding villages commute to Diitabiki village to attend school. There is hardly any contact with the urban areas and no other research of this nature has been conducted there.

The study focuses on the multilingualism practiced by children and teachers at the Akontoe Velantie School and the local community, as well as it describes the interaction of the children with their respective families.

**Theoretical basis and methodological procedures of the research**

This thesis draws on the theoretical model of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) to demonstrate aspects of the history of the Ndyuka language. It is also based on a collection of case studies concerning linguistic revitalization and language planning (HAUGEN, 1983, 1966, 1959; HINTON and HALLE, 2005). I have also considered the cultural and sociolinguistic features characterizing the Ndyuka people and language.

The theoretical model of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) has as one of the fundamental criteria the considerations that the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers, and not an independent phenomenon that can be completely studied without references to the context in which it is embedded. Thomason and Kaufman certainly do not deny the



importance of pure linguistic factors such as the pressure of system patterns and mark-up considerations for the theory of linguistic change, but they argue that evidence of linguistic contact shows that pure linguistic factors are easily ignored when social factors push them in another direction. A brief survey on the history of Maroons from Suriname, and on their social and cultural organization, will show that they are inseparable from the history of their languages, as defended by Thomason and Kaufman.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p.200) state that the most extreme results of linguistic interference are not genetically related to any of the languages that contributed to their structural and lexical systems because they did not develop from a normal transmission process - That is, the transmission of a total set of lexical and structural characteristics. These and other principles and premises are fundamental to understanding the history of the Ndyuka language, from which we underlie some of its important aspects. We do not conceive the possibility of knowing its history without taking into account the social history of the Maroons as a whole and the social and cultural conditions that were decisive in the formation their languages.

Following Maher (1996, 2007, 2008), a survey on the sociolinguistic situation of the Ndyuka people has been developed at the primary school of Diitabiki. The research utilizes a qualitative and exploratory perspective, given the need to describe the relations between the students' linguistic performance at school, both in Dutch and in Ndyuka. I have applied a participative observation methodology on the pupil's linguistic performance and attitudes in informal environments, such as the school yard and the home environment. This permitted me to identify the languages used in communication in each domain of the pupil's social life. As to the data obtained from the research, I also videotaped the interactions between teacher-pupil and between pupil-pupil in the classrooms. Secondly, questionnaires proposed by Maher (2008)<sup>3</sup> had been applied to diagnose which is the most spoken language, the languages preferred by the students and the reason for their choices. The selection of these questionnaires is justified because they have already been widely used which results in accurate diagnoses on important sociolinguistic aspects of the languages that are studied, including the linguistic attitudes of teachers and students (AQUINO, 2010; RODRIGUES, 2015). The questionnaires also served to evaluate the pupil's qualifications regarding the languages used. Two questionnaires have been used: one for pupils and one for teachers. The interviews were semi-structured and open, and

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<sup>3</sup> In annex II, p. 164, annex III, p. 165

were conducted amongst students from kindergarten to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, which is the last grade of primary school in Suriname.

Regarding the history of the language, the main methodological references are Hock (1991) and Campbell (1998). I also carried out research on what has already been studied about the history of the Ndyuka language.

The historical study allowed me to understand that imperfect learning of English by Africans from different ethnic and linguistic affiliations played an important role during the Maroons development, together with the contributions from African languages, Dutch, Portuguese, and Amerindian languages. I took as reference case studies of Creole languages and other types of languages arising in contact situations, to understand how Ndyuka was formed and how the language still reflects the original cultures of its speakers.

The linguistic analysis has been crucial to understand Ndyuka lexicon and grammar. It is very important to know a language from its historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic perspective, in order to propose contributions for language policies and planning aiming to strengthen that language. The linguistic study on the Ndyuka language allowed me to draw a sketch of its grammar, which constitutes an important chapter of this thesis. I intend that the sketch shall be accessible to Ndyuka teachers, in contrast to existing linguistic works that are useful only for linguists.

I have also considered the importance of orality, stimulating individual memories as an important historical source.

## **Main and specific objectives**

The main purpose of this research is to explore how children in primary schools in the interior of Suriname develop speaking, reading, writing and understanding language skills by means of an instruction which uses their mother tongue as a main way of realizing bilingual or multilingual education.

### **Specific objectives:**

- To raise awareness of the value of maintaining the world's languages and cultures by promoting and resourcing mother tongue-based education for young children.

- To stimulate a discussion on how to help children learn, write, talk and understand their native language and also the Dutch language in an early.
- To stimulate a discussion on what are the teaching methods which reflect and valorize the best the cultural identity of the Ndyuka children and youth.
- To highlight aspects of Ndyuka language and culture showing that they are closely related to Ndyuka sustainability, all of them being part of an African cultural heritage.

### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is organized as following: (1) This Chapter introduces the study, presenting its importance, its main objectives, the methodology used and the main theoretical references; (2) **Chapter I** offers some background information about Suriname, focusing on its cultural diversity. It also presents a short history of the community I focused on for my research - Diitabiki; (3) **Chapter II** presents the Maroons of Suriname, their origin, with special focus on the Ndyuka people; (4) **Chapter III** is about the Ndyuka – origin, social and political structure, the various rituals they practice (at birth, adulthood, death etc.), their African inheritance, traditional marriage, the role of Ndyuka women in the society, their livelihood and the different type of art they practice in their community; (5) **Chapter IV** presents the oral tradition of the Ndyuka, a timetable of linguistically relevant events in Suriname’s history and some notes on the contribution of different languages on the Ndyuka development. This chapter also covers a description of the Ndyuka language, as a creole language; (6) **Chapter V** describes the language policies in Suriname; (7) **Chapter VI** shows the results of my research at the Akontoe Velantie School in Diitabiki, focusing on the multilingualism in the classrooms; (8) **Chapter VI** is followed by the conclusions, which bring the final considerations on the results obtained from the research. The Conclusions are followed by the References that were used throughout the study.

## **Chapter I. Notes on the History of Suriname with special focus on the Ndyuka village, Diitabiki**

### **1.1 Initial considerations**

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief description about the location of Suriname, the cultural diversity of the country, the administrative divisions and the history of the village Diitabiki.

### **1.2 The country profile**

Suriname was formally called Dutch Guiana and is the only Dutch speaking country in South America. It is located on the Northeast coast of South America, between 2 - 6 degrees latitude north and 54 - 58 degrees longitude west. The country is also part of the Caribbean, and covers an area of about 163,820 km<sup>2</sup>, located between French Guyana to the East and Guyana to the West. The southern border is shared with Brazil and the northern border with the Atlantic Ocean (see figure 1). The climate is tropical, influenced by the up and down movement of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), which promotes intense rainfall<sup>4</sup>.

According to the Millennium Development Goal (now known as the Sustainable Development Goal, SDG), MDG PROGRESS REPORT (2014, p.23), Suriname is one of the region's most diversified countries, with the highest biodiversity enriched by many unique ecosystems. The mangrove forests that are found on the coastal plain are important breeding, feeding and nursery grounds for fish, marine invertebrates, sea turtles and enormous numbers of migratory birds. This coastal region is considered to be the principal South American wintering ground for shore birds from boreal and arctic regions. Suriname is also one of the countries with the largest expanse of tropical rainforest in the world, with the most important natural resources of the country. Forest covers about 94% or 15 million hectares of the total land area of the country, of which about 2 million hectares or 13% has the status of Protected Area (four Multiple-use Management Areas, one nature park and eleven Nature Reserves).

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the economy of Suriname has been dominated by the bauxite industry. Bauxite mining continues to be a strong source of income for the Surinamese economy, but the discovery and exploitation of oil (state-owned oil company, Staatsolie) and gold has

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.surinameembassy.org/112805.shtml>

added substantially to the economic growth of Suriname. Agriculture products such as rice, fish, shrimp and bananas are strong components of the economy, and ecotourism is providing new economic opportunities (F. BRIEGEL, 2012, p. 2-3).

Dutch is the only official language and Sranan tongo is the general contact language which functions as the lingua franca (H. EERSEL, 2002, p. 90).



**Figure 1. Map of South America indicating Suriname’s location on the continent.** Source: <http://thierryvatin.e-monsite.com/pages/cette-annee-la/1970-1979/1975-4-jours.html>

### 1.3 The cultural diversity of Suriname

Suriname is a country with a rich cultural diversity and a multilingual population where each language has a certain function (H. EERSEL, 2010, p.5). After the abolition of slavery in 1863, the colonial government had to replace the workforce on the plantations and brought Asian contracted laborers to Suriname. The descendants of the immigrants came firstly from China

(1853), then from British India (1873), followed by Javanese from the Dutch East Indies, Java (1890) (L. GOBARDHAN-RAMBOCUS, 1997, p. 225; H. EERSEL, 2002, p.105).

Later other ethnic groups of immigrants came to Suriname such as the Lebanese in the 1890's, and the Guyanese who came approximately in the 1960's. In the 1980's a huge group of Haitians came to work in the agricultural sector, and in the 1990's the Brazilians came to work in gold mining (F. JABINI, 2012, p. 15). With the arrival of these groups, the Suriname society became more multilingual.

The total population of Suriname according to the last census in 2012 is 541,638 inhabitants.

**Table 1. Population of Suriname by ethnicity.** Source: General Bureau for Statistics of Suriname (2012)

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Maroon	117,567	21.7
Creole	84,933	15.7
Hindu	148,443	27.4
Javanese	73,975	13.7
Mixed	72,340	13.4
Other	40,985	7.6
Unknown	3,395	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>541,638</b>	<b>100</b>

The Hindu ethnic group forms the largest ethnic group with a percentage of 27.4 percent and the Maroons the second largest with a 21.7 % of the total population.

#### **1.4 The most common religions in Suriname**

By committing to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>5</sup>, the Constitution of Suriname recognizes that everyone has the right to practice his or her own religion.

There are various religions in Suriname. The most common ones are: Christianity, Hinduism and Islam (ABS, 2012).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

**Table 2. The most common religions in Suriname.** Source: General Bureau for Statistics of Suriname (2012)

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Population in %</b>
Christianity	48.4
Hinduism	22.3
Islam	13.9
Other or none	12.3
Unknown	3.2
<b>Total</b>	100.0

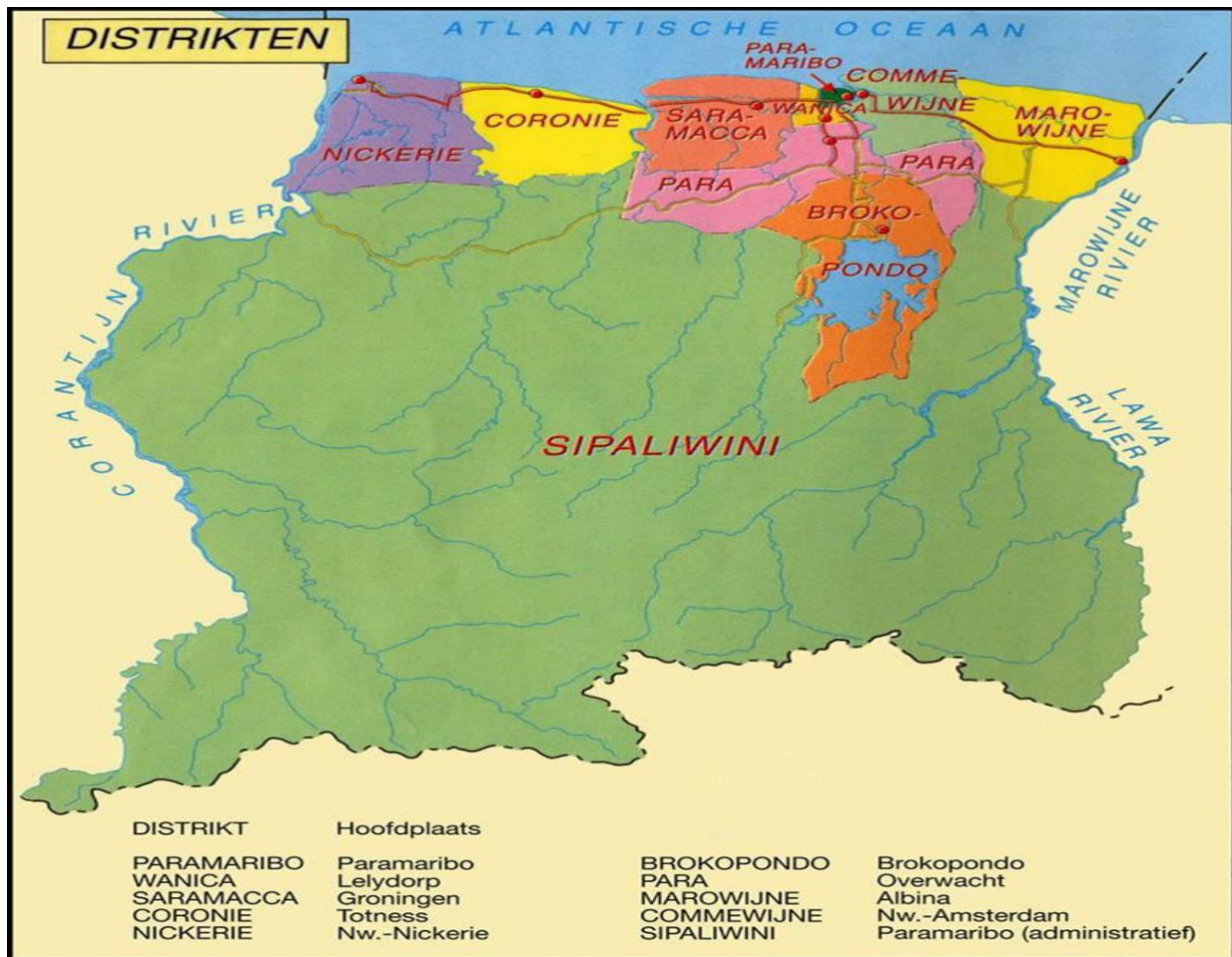
In the Surinamese society, the government recognizes several religious days as national holidays to indicate the respect for the diversity of different cultures in Suriname. ‘Maroons day’ is celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October to memorize the day the Ndyuka signed the peace treaty with the colonial government.

### **1.5 Administrative divisions**

Legislative power is exercised by the National Assembly, which has 51 elected members. Parliamentary elections are held every five years. Administratively the country is divided into 10 districts, namely Nickerie, Wanica, Para, Commewijne, Marowijne, Saramacca, Coronie, Brokopondo, Sipaliwini and Paramaribo. Each district is in turn further divided into resorts. The districts and resorts are public entities without legal personality. Each district is governed by a district commissioner (DC). The capital Paramaribo is divided into two resorts each one of which is headed by a DC. Sipaliwini has an area of 130, 600 km<sup>2</sup> and is the biggest district of Suriname. This area covers nearly 80% of the total national territory, and consists essentially of forest<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.surinaminfo.com/htm/nederlands/districten.htm>



**Figure 2. Map of Suriname along with the ten districts.** Source: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/2b/c2/68/2bc26848fb2df9bb81f3a5126de82dd2.jpg>

### 1.6 History of the village Diitabiki

Diitabiki is a Ndyuka village of the Tapanahony resort (district Sipaliwini), located along the Tapanahony River in the South East of Suriname. This village has been a very important village because it is the residence of the *Gaanman* - Paramount chief of the Ndyuka people. Previously this village was called *Lukubun* (Lit. watch out) which was also the residence of the forth Gaanman of the Ndyuka: Gaanman Pamu Langabaiba (A. PAKOSIE, 2002, p. 8) (THODEN VAN VELZEN & VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 58).

The village has an airport, a primary school and a modern medical centre. The school is located next to the clinic at Dataa Kondee ‘Doctor Village’. The school is a public school and it



received its name in honor of a previous Gaanman Akontoe Velantie. There is also a radio broadcasting station named "Radio Paakati". Paakati means broadcasting or announcement.

The Ndyuka who lived around the Tempati creek resisted the inhumane treatment they had to endure on the plantations so they fled and in 1757 they settled at the Mama Ndyuka. The runaway Ndyuka founded several villages, including the village Bongo Doti, which was the seat of the first great chief of the Ndyuka, Fabi Labi Beyman. When Fabi Labi Beyman died around 1764, the Ndyuka began to depart to the Tapanahony River and a fight started for who should become the next Gaanman. Ultimately this battle was won by the Otoo-lo<sup>7</sup>.

The Puketi village located along the Tapanahony River was the residence of the Gaanman from 1770 till 1833. Since 1833, Diitabiki has been the residence of all the Gaanman (THODEN VAN VELZEN & VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 52). In 1950 Diitabiki became the capital of the Ndyuka people, when the chief and priest Akontu Felanti became the Gaanman. This village became even more important for the Ndyuka, because it was the place where, for hundreds of years, the Gaan Gadu 'Great God' oracle could be consulted (T. Van Velzen, 2011, p. 5). However, since 1973, Diitabiki is no longer the center of religious power (M. VAN KEMPEN, 2002, p. 199)

The name Diitabiki is often used in Paramaribo, as well as in other districts and in governmental documents as "Drietabbetje" or as "Dritabiki". However, the translation of the name is wrong. It does not mean three islands as most people think. Dii Tabiki means expensive island, according to the traditional leader, Kabiten Jesentoe Velanti, son of the late Gaanman Akontoe Velanti, during an interview I had with him (Interview on 2/10/2017). The Ndyuka say that this island is 'expensive' because of all the villages in the Ndyuka community; Diitabiki is the only village where the Gaanman (the traditional leader with the highest authority in the Ndyuka community) resides.

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<sup>7</sup> A lo is a matriline. Each Maroon community consists of several matrilineans.

## **1.7 General considerations**

In this chapter I presented some information about the location, division, economy, natural resources and biodiversity of Suriname. I also presented a note on the history of the village Diitabiki, highlighting its importance for the Ndyuka people, as it has been the place where I did my research.

## **Chapter II. The Maroons of Suriname**

### **2.1 Initial considerations**

This chapter presents the Maroons of Suriname, of which the Ndyuka is part, their tribal origins, their history, the resistance of slavery, the peace treaty signed by them with the colonial government, the time they fled from the plantations and their own settlements in the interior of Suriname.

### **2.2 The origin of the Maroons of Suriname**

Slavery has played a fundamental role in the Guianas since the first European colonial empire. The Guianas was inhabited by Indigenous peoples - Arawakan and Cariban -, when the Spanish fleet of Alonso de Ojeda and his partner Christopher Columbus explored the area in 1499. Although De Ojeda and his crew deemed that there was nothing of value to be found on what they called the 'Wild Coast,' it became the meeting place for several Europeans in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Guianas became popular and attractive to Europeans when the English explorer sir Walter Raleigh suggested that there was a place "Manoa" that was full of gold between the Orinoco and the Amazone, where the king named "El Dorado" took baths of Gold. Many Europeans were inspired by this myth and came to the Guianas to try their luck. These journeys, especially for the Dutch, resulted in the definitive colonization of Suriname (E. JAGDEW & J. EGGER, 2014, p. 57-58).

In 1667, after the second Dutch-English War, the Dutch conquered Suriname under the direction of Abraham Crijnsen. Suriname was previously an English colony (as the English were the first European settlers in Suriname) from 1651-1667 which means that Suriname knew African slaves already during the British colonial government (T. VAN VELZEN & I. VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 5) (H. EERSEL, 2002, p.15).

Suriname proved by its climate and soil conditions to be extremely suitable for growing tropical crops - sugar, coffee, cocoa and cotton, which were of great demand in Europe. In order to grow these tropical crops, there was the need for land and workers for the plantations (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1992, p. 8)

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Indigenous people were forced into slavery, to work on the sugar plantations. Because their refusal to work as slaves they were replaced by a large number of Africans who were brought from the West Coast of Africa to Suriname (H. EERSEL, 1997, p 209).

According to Alex Stipriaan, the reminiscent of the slaves that were imported from the Western coast of Africa between 1668 and 1830 was about a total of 213,000 individuals. The main original area of the African slaves was the "Loango Coast" (now Southern Cameroon, Gabon, Congo and northern Angola), the "Gold Coast (Ghana), the "Windward Coast" (Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone) and the "Slave Coast" (West Nigeria, Benin, Togo). After their crossing to the depot on Curaçao or directly to Suriname, they were brought to Paramaribo, which is now the Capital of Suriname, to be sold at the market, and then they were deported to one of the many plantations where they were subjected to a cruel life. These African slaves would later flee from the plantations and start their own settlements inside the forests of Suriname (M. VAN KEMPEN, 2003, p. 191).

### **2.3 Resistance of slavery and the fight for freedom**

Approximately two centuries before the abolition of slavery in Suriname (1863), there was a process of self-emancipation that took place headed by the Saamaka (one of the Maroon groups in Suriname). The resistance of the slaves was a hard fight and to escape from the cruel and inhumane life, moved by their desire of freedom, they fled from the plantations giving rise to the marronage<sup>8</sup>. The period between 1685 until 1793 got to be known then as the time of the Maroon Wars in Suriname (See H. EERSEL, 2002, p. 15).

The fact that the runaway slaves had to depend on the plantation for food, tools, and clothes, meant that the Maroons<sup>9</sup> had to rob the plantations. These disruptions, as well as the fact that slaves were running away to join the ranks of the other escaped Maroons, threatened the operations of the plantations causing the owners of the plantations to take measures against them

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<sup>8</sup> The resistance of slavery

<sup>9</sup> The Word 'Maroon' comes from the Spanish word "Cimarrón" which originally referred to runaway cattle. From around the sixteenth century it was mainly used to refer to the African slaves who fled from the plantations. They were wild and untamed in the eyes of the colonial government (A. Kobben, 1979, p. 182)

(THODEN VAN VELZEN & I. VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 10). Marronage was a common response of enslaved Africans throughout the Americas. However, only few of them managed to build sustainable communities, such as in Suriname and Jamaica, as it had been the case of the famous "Quilombo de Palmares" in Brazil (A. ST-HILAIRE, 2000, p. 107-109).

The geography of Suriname favored the escaped slaves, since the plantations were near swamps, rivers and dense jungles. In addition, these areas were barely visible during the rainy season. Planters and European mercenaries never felt at home in these areas. The slaves themselves were more familiar with these areas because they had built their plots in the woods, behind the plantation to sustain themselves and meet part of their livelihood. It was indeed not too difficult for a slave to disappear unnoticed from a plantation, and they fled individually or in small groups into the forest (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1992, p. 16).

According to Stripriaan and Polime (2009, p. 16-17) there were two types of marronage:

- Petit-marronage, which means that slaves left the plantation temporarily to hunt, trade or joined other Maroon groups for a short period of time. Afterwards, they simply returned to the plantation. This type of marronage mostly took place individually or in small groups.
- Grand marronage implies that the slaves fled the plantation without the intention to return. This was carried out by large groups of slaves and their goals were to join a maroon group or form their own group to build an independent life.

An explanation of the manner by which marronage occurred is given by Wim Hoogbergen (1977, p. 18-21), who observed that there were three ways of becoming a Maroon:

- To flee to an existing Maroon group who had established in the interior already;
- To be abducted or escape during an attack on the plantation by the 'free' Maroons;
- To escape the plantation step by step. Because they settled close to the plantation itself, they could not stay for a long time on the spot. Either they must then return to the plantation with the risk of heavy penalties or even the death penalty, or they go deeper into the woods. They were called "Kapeweri Negros" because they settled and hid in the *kapeweri*; the forest that is lay around the plantations. They fled in these secondary forests to hide out there for a long time. These runaway slaves kept a close relationship

with the plantation slaves. Food and goods were robbed from the plantations on a regular basis. This group of slave is also called the "Hiding Negros".

On the other hand, according to Hein Eersel (2002, p. 14) there were slaves who escaped slavery by killing themselves and their family by drinking poisonous herbs. However, the slaves could also escape slavery by manumission (releasing slaves individually). A slave could get manumission if he had done something special, for example to point out a camp of runaways slaves. In this case, they could obtain their freedom (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1977, p. 5).

Years after the unsuccessful military expeditions of the colonial government, the Dutch government declared peace with the Maroons. The first group with whom the government signed peace treaties was the Ndyuka, in 1760. Two years later, they signed a treaty with the Saamaka, followed by the Matawai, in 1767. Signing these peace treaties, however, did not stop the flow of new slaves to the existing Maroon groups. The relation between the colonial government and the Maroons remained constantly intense (H. EERSEL, 2002, p. 15) (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1977, p. 1-4) (A. KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 2).

According to Eric Jagdew (2014. p. 92), the most important clause in this treaty was that all future runaway slaves who wanted to join the Maroon groups were to be returned to their masters. The Maroons would then be paid for this service. This caused a political rift within the Maroon groups and within the plantations. By signing the treaties, the Maroons were granted land ownership rights (demarcation of the living areas of the different Maroon groups), and they were allowed to sell their products in markets, openly. Despite the difficult conditions imposed by the treaties, the Maroons built their own society and their cultural identity based on their African heritage.

Maroon communities were destroyed everywhere in the world, by means of brutal military force, forcing them to assimilate into the wider society, so that their own culture would be forgotten. The Maroons of Suriname are the only surviving, culturally and politically autonomous Maroon communities in the Americas, and are the ones who preserved the best African culture outside of Africa (A. ST-HILAIRE, 2000, p. 101).

## 2.4 The Maroon groups of Suriname

Maroon communities were formed by self-liberated slaves, from Brazil to the southeastern United States, from Peru to the American Southwest for more than four centuries. Maroons are known in Spanish (Cuba, Mexico, Hispaniola, Columbia etc) as palenques and in Brazil as quilombos<sup>10</sup>.

There are the six Maroons groups in Suriname:

- The Saramaccans (Saamaka)
- The Ndyuka (Okanisi)
- The Matawai
- The Alukus (Boni)
- The Paramaccans (Paamaka)
- The Kwinti

The following chart presents the groups of Maroons according to the time they fled the plantations and their current location. The Karboegers and the Brosu do not exist anymore.

**Table 3. Maroon groups in Suriname based on Smith (2002). Source: (R. BORGES, 2014, p.23)**

<b>. Group</b>	<b>Time of flight</b>	<b>Current location</b>
Karboegers	English period	Extinct or assimilated
Saamaka	ca 1690	Upper Suriname River
Matawai	ca 1700	Saramacca River
Ndyuka	1712	Tapanahony, Marowijne, and Cottica Rivers
Aluku	Before 1760	Lawa River
Kwinti	ca 1760	Coppename River

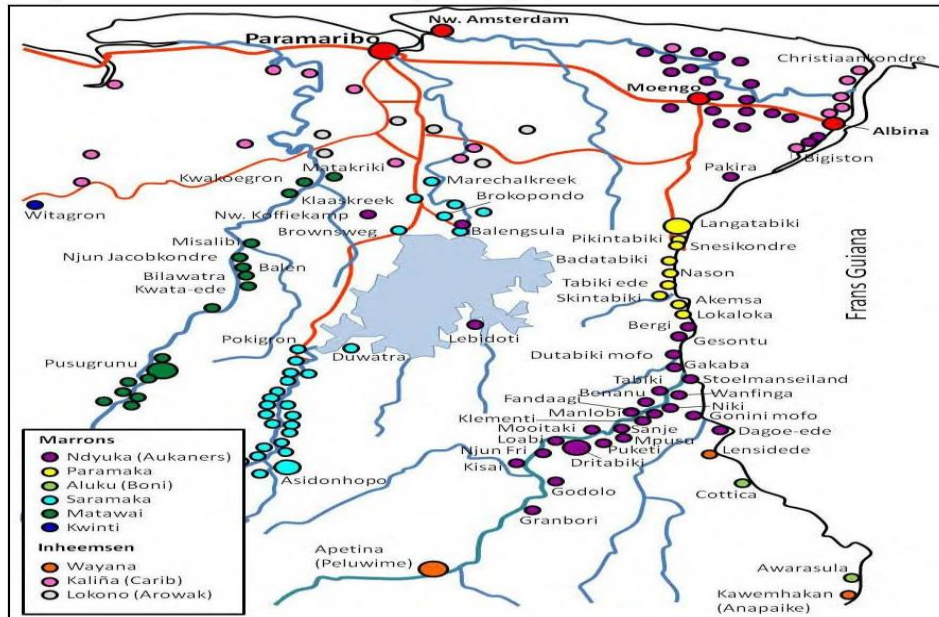
<sup>10</sup> Price, R (2013). "Maroons in the Caribbean" <http://www.caribbean-atlas.com/en/themes/waves-of-colonization-and-control-in-the-caribbean/waves-of-colonization/maroons-in-the-caribbean.html> (Accessed 7 April 2017)

Paamaka	1800	Marowijne River
Brosu	1820	Assimilated to Ndyuka

According to Köbben (1979, p.1) and Thoden van velzen and Van Wetering (2004, p. 20) the Ndyuka Maroons are also located along the Tapanahony, Marowijne and Cottica Rivers, as well as along the Lawa River.

A characteristic of the Maroons, according to Köbben (1979, p.1) is that their settlements are along the river banks in the interior of Suriname. Their main means of existence is agriculture, which they carry out in the form of shifting culture<sup>11</sup>. The main crops are cassava, rice, banana, corn, yams and peanuts, but in addition, traditionally they have received income in the transportation sector.

There are cultural differences between the Maroon groups. They speak differentiated languages and differ in traditions but share several elements such as political, social organization and kinship (matrilineal) (THODEN VAN VELZEN & W. VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 13).



**Figure 3. Map of Maroons settlements Source :**

<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/zGXJ3kL1Pi4/URKTgkojkzI/AAAAAAAAAGV4/1bMNIZn5IS8/s1600/Inheemsen+en+marrons.jpg>

<sup>11</sup> Every year new fields are created by the burning of vegetation



## **2.5 General considerations**

This chapter presented information on the roots of the Maroon people, which lie in different parts of the West African Coast. They came from countries like Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Ivory Coast. As I have mentioned, their ancestors fought for their freedom after they were enslaved. Because of the brutal treatment on the plantations they resisted against slavery and fled from the plantations into the woods. The Maroons fought hard against the military troupes of the colonial government and these fights resulted in peace treaties. This chapter is closed with a chart of time of flight of the different Maroon groups and the location of their present day residential areas.

## Chapter III. The Ndyuka Society

### 3.1 Initial considerations

This chapter gives a description of the origin and migration of the Ndyuka. It also includes the social, political and economic aspects of the Ndyuka society. A description will be given of the different rituals that are performed in the life of the Ndyuka.

### 3.2 Origin and migration of the Ndyuka

The Ndyuka is divided into *Opu sama* ‘upstream’ and *Bilo sama* ‘downstream’ people. The traditional homeland of the Ndyuka is the Tapanahony River and its immediate surroundings in the deep interior of Suriname. Their great chief is Gaanman<sup>12</sup> Da Bono Velanti who resides in the Ndyuka political center, Diitabiki.

The Ndyuka are Maroons who live in groups alongside the rivers of Suriname. According to the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal peoples in independent Countries (article 1) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Ndyuka is internationally part of Tribal Peoples. Article one of this Convention implies that:

(a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;

(b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions<sup>13</sup>.

The Ndyuka have their traditional authority that has their own enforcing laws and justice in their territory, however collective land rights are not recognized. Suriname does not have a coherent policy towards Indigenous peoples and Maroons, whether in terms of the environment, development or sustainable management of natural resources.

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<sup>12</sup> The Gaanman is the highest traditional chief the Ndyuka

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)



**Figure 4. The *Kampu* ‘Camp’ of Gaanman Da Bono Velantie.** The villages are always alongside rivers. Source: Eliza (2017)

Migration flows of the Ndyuka began shortly after the peace treaty in 1760. Their first migration started from the Mama Ndyuka creek, the first communities being settled in areas along the Tapanahony River. The last few years many Ndyuka migrated to other parts of Suriname and abroad. In the 19th century, many Ndyuka migrated to the coastal Cottica river area in the East of Suriname to work in the logging industry. The second half of the 20th century saw a rise of migration to the capital, the city of Paramaribo, as well as to French Guiana, due to the civil war (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 3) (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 17).

### **3.3 The Ndyuka identity**

The Ndyuka is seen as a minority ethnic group in Suriname. In the coastal area, the concept Ndyuka is used for the different Maroon groups in general. The Ndyuka are also called ‘Aucaners’ by the Dutch. The colonial government named the Ndyuka the “free negroes from behind Auka” after the plantation from which the peace treaties were signed. This name was later shortened to Aukans and adopted by the Ndyuka as Okanisi. In older literature, the Ndyuka are known as “Djuka”, “Djoeka” or “Bushnegro” (THODEN VAN VELZEN & HOOGBERGEN, 2011, p. 4). The name Ndyuka is derived from the Mama Ndyuka creek where this group settled

during the first forty years after fleeing from the plantations. The creek in turn was named after a bird known from Africa. This bird makes a sound that resembled “Ndyuka” (A. PAKOSIE, 1998, p. 2).

Because of political purposes the term "*Boslandcreool*" was introduced in the 1960's to connect the Maroons with the Creoles (R. Price, 1976, p. 2-3).

Creoles are descendants of Africans who did not flee from the plantations. They adapted themselves to social condition of the plantations and formed a new culture out of slavery. This group has laid the foundations of what they call now the Creole culture (H. EERSEL, 2002, p.14).

The term Creole was originally used for whites who were born in South America and West Indies and whose parents were from overseas. The blacks who were born in Suriname appear to be called Creoles. With the arrival of the Asian workers the term “Creole” got a new meaning, since it was applied to distinguish blacks and colored people, forming the new communities in Suriname.

The Maroons consider themselves fierce and proud tribesmen, because they fought for their freedom instead of waiting to get emancipated (H. EERSEL, 2002, p. 17).

Anton de Kom wrote in his book *Wij slaven van Suriname* ‘We the slaves of Suriname’ (1999, p. 65) that the Maroons are the first freedom fighters against slavery in Suriname:

"Our fathers escaped slavery from the plantations despite the chains and guardianship. They were tortured by horrible punishments and threats of the white domination. They suffered in the jungle but at the end of their heavy journey they gained freedom"

The Ndyuka fought hard to keep their identity. Glória Maura (2012, p. 133) wrote that someone's identity is characterized by where he or she comes from and by the elements which are of great influence in his or her life such as customs, rituals, beliefs and values. The Ndyuka strongly maintain their ethnic identity preserving fundamental features of their ancestral African culture.

### 3.4 Village and settlement

Almost all traffic between the villages is made through the river, and for just a few close spaced villages there are connections by footpaths. Each settlement is a village if the following objects are present:

- A *kee -osu* or *gaanwan osu* ‘mortuary’
- A *faaka tiki* ‘ancestor shrine’



**Figure 5. An ancestral shrine in Diitabiki.** Source: Eliza (2017)

Without a *kee osu* and a *faaka tiki*, the rituals that need to take place before a funeral cannot be done. The settlements that do not have the status of a village are called *Kampu*. Those are considered as labor camps. Across every path leading from the river to the village there is a barrier of woven fronds under which every person must pass. The barrier is to ward off evil spirits and also to cleanse the visitor of any evil intentions toward the occupants of the village.

At the *faaka tiki* sacrifices are made for the ancestors. You can seek help for different reasons, such as for illness, accident, or major companies, such as when someone leaves the village for a long time. Anyone who feels the need can offer sacrifices to the ancestors. They will even assist a stranger, a *bakaa*<sup>14</sup> or someone who belongs to another ethnic group (Data collected during an interview with an elder from Diitabiki (February, 2017)).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> A *bakaa* is someone with a European background or an outsider

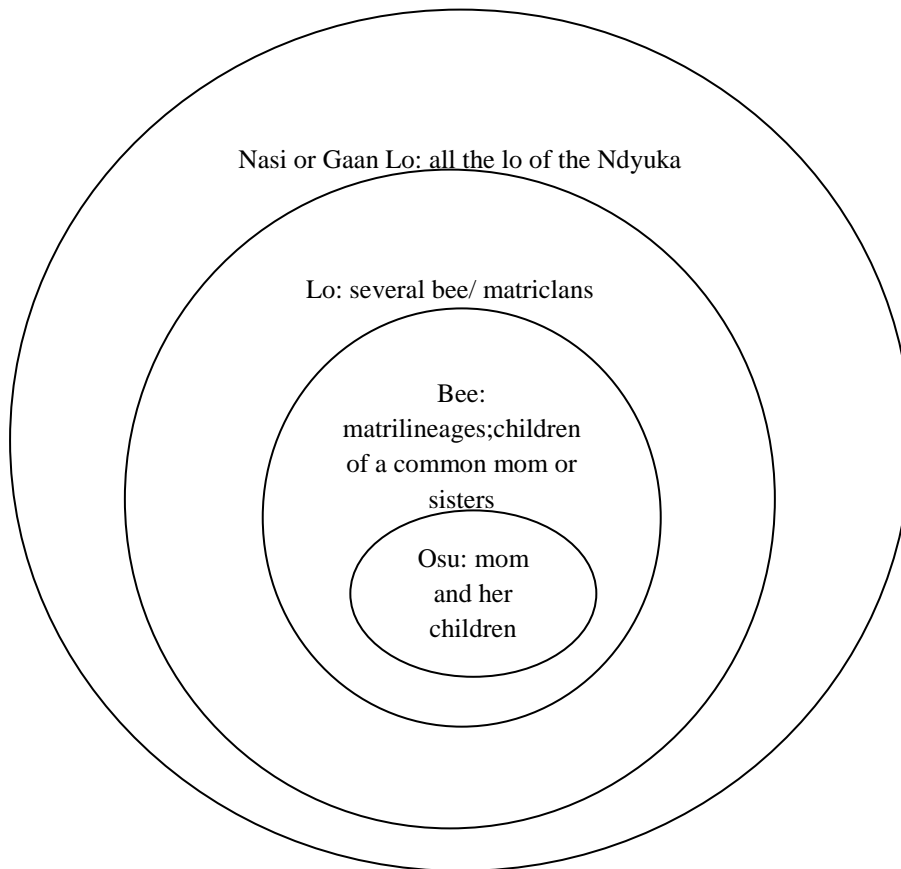
<sup>15</sup> See also Köbben (1979, p. 34-35) and Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2004, p.20).

### 3.5 The social structure of the Ndyuka community

The most important structural principle in the social organization of the Ndyuka is matrilineality. The core of the group is formed by the descendants in the female line of a joint ancestral mother (A. KOBLEN, 1978, p. 26).

The social structure is as following:

- *Nasi or Gaan Lo*
- *Lo*
- *Bee*
- *Osu*



**Figure 6. Sketch of the Ndyuka kinship.** Source: drawn by F. Eliza (2017)

## **The Nasi or Gaan Lo**

The Gaan lo is made up of matrilineans. The trunk is made up of groups of people who feel connected by bond relationships since the period after the permanent establishment of the Ndyuka as a national community.

## **The Lo**

The primary family unit in the Ndyuka society is the *lo* and each matrilinean contains kinsmen who are matrilineal related. They use the *lo* and the *bee* to indicate their belonging to a family. The following divisions inside the Ndyuka *lo* are: *Misidyan*, *Pedi*, *Dikan*, *Beei*, *Ansu*, *Nyanfai*, *Pataa*, *Kumpai*, *Dyu*, *Pinasi*, *Piika*, *Lebimusu*, *Lape* and the *Otoo lo*.

The *Otoo lo* in turn is divided into two groups: *Baaka bee* (black section) and *Lebi bee* (red section). The Gaanman is selected from this *lo*.

The Ndyuka has unofficially fourteen *lo* and officially twelve *lo*. The *Lo* of the Gaanman is counted as the thirteenth *Lo*. This could be due to the small size of the *Lape lo* and to the fact that the *Lebimusu* only joined the Ndyuka in 1807 (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 21).

As Köbben (1979, 28-29) states, the origin of the matrilineal clans in Suriname is unique. They were created approximately in the first half of the eighteenth century by runaways from a particular plantation or various plantations. The names of the clans are derived from the name of the plantation or from the owner of the plantation. For example, the *Otoo lo* were slaves from Mr. Oto, the *Pinasi lo* came from the name of a plantation owner L'Espinasse, the *Dyu lo* worked for the Portugese Jews plantation owners and the *Misidyan lo* were slaves from the planter John.

## **The Bee**

The *lo* are subdivided into matrilineages called “*bee*”, which is the Ndyuka word for belly. A *bee* is composed of a woman and her male and female children and also her descendants through a succession of daughters. Members of the *bee* (*bee sama*), whose elders can usually identify a particular female as the ancestor of the group, share land rights, a lineage deity, and an ancestral shrine called a *faakatiki*. In most villages, several *bee* live together. The *bee* is strictly

exogamous<sup>16</sup> and is further subdivided into matrilineal segments, sometimes called ‘*wan mama pikin*’, which consists of all the descendants of one (great) grandmother (KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 29) (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 22).

## **The Osu**

The bee is divided into matrisegments: *wan mama pikin*. According to Köbben (1979, p. 33), the *osun* (the family) is formed by the mother and her children (they belong to the same maternal line) together with her husband who belongs to a different maternal line. Each matrilineage is in turn again divided into a number of matrisegments; ‘*wan mama pikin*’ (one mother’s children) or *mama osun pikin*” (maternal home’s descendants).

### **3.6 The political organization of the Ndyuka**

As the other Maroon groups, the Ndyuka have considerable autonomy within the Suriname political structure. According to Scholtens (1994), Köbben (1979) and St-Hilaire (2000), the traditional autonomy of the Ndyuka has been historically a state within a state. The political position of the traditional people is recognized orally but their existence is not acknowledged by any law of the government of Suriname (B. SCHOLTENS, 1994, p. 7).

The political structure between the traditional leaders and the central government is based on unwritten rules such as practical considerations, oral agreements and custom. The treaty of 1760 recognizes the functions of the *Gaanman* and *Basia*. This latter position was assigned to the headmen of certain important *lo*. Only with the closure of the peace treaties, the colonial government imposed central leadership and introduced the position of *Gaanman* (A. PAKOSIE, 2002, p. 6).

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<sup>16</sup> The members of the *bee* have to select their partners from outside of their bee. They cannot choose a partner from the matrisegment. Thoden van Velzen & Hoogbergen (2011, p. 9) notice that recently the number of intra-lineage marriages is on the increase.



Although the Maroon societies of Suriname are matrilineal, men occupy the most important positions at the administrative and political levels. The political hierarchy of functionaries is as follows:

- The Gaanman (Paramount chief, *Kondee masaa*)
- The Ede Kabiten (Head Captain)
- The Kabiten (Captain or village headman)
- The Basia (Assistant)

These functionaries are appointed at tribal councils; *kuutu* or meetings. The designation and installation of these officials takes place according to the Ndyuka tradition. After installation, each official, upon recommendation, is appointed and confirmed by the Surinamese government in order to receive official recognition and the payment of a salary every month (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2004, p. 22).

A short description of the tasks will be given below, according to Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2013, p. 29-31);

- **The *Gaanman***

The *Gaanman* is the head chief of the Gaan lo of the Ndyuka. He is elected from the *Otoo lo*<sup>17</sup>. He is the leader with the most privileges and represents the Ndyuka community. He is the headman of the board *lanti*<sup>18</sup> and is inviolable. The function of the *Gaanman* is the oldest of the political organization and he was the only leader that received a monthly allowance.

- **The *Ede Kabiten***

The *Ede Kabiten* represents the *Gaanman*, who is the supreme authority. It is not an inherited function, and the role of *Ede Kabiten* is to supervise the administration of a specific territory. He has the authority to lead one or more villages.

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<sup>17</sup> Since 1833 the Gaanman of the Ndyuka is always chosen from the Otoo lo through matrilineal succession.

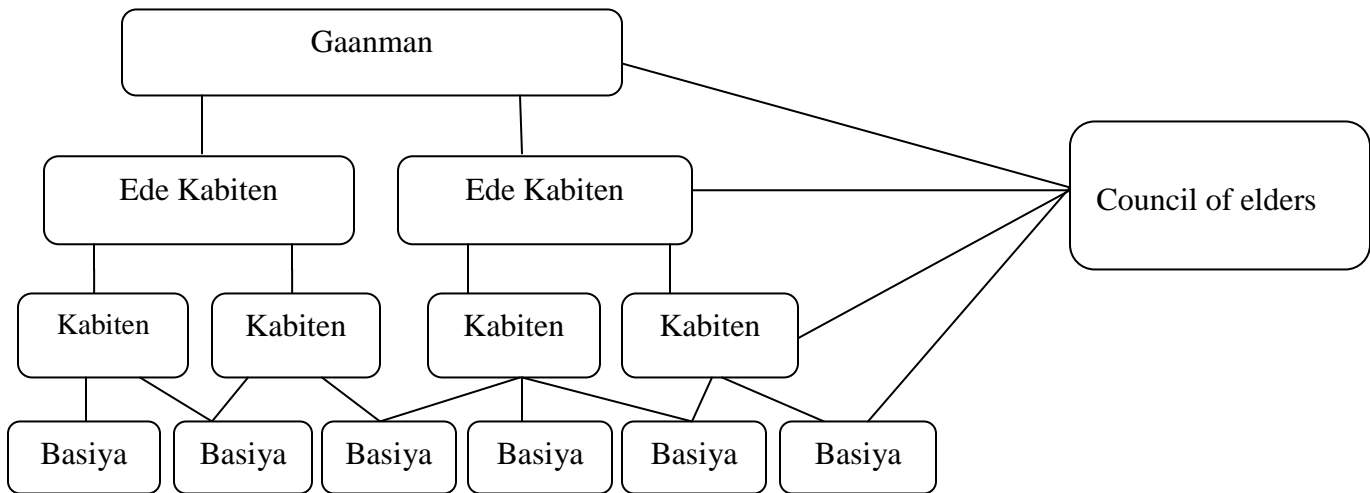
<sup>18</sup> This collective is a composition of the Gaanman, Kabiten, Basia, priests and several elders of the village

- **The *Kabiten***

The *kabiten* is the most important leader of the village (socially and politically) and he represents the village externally. A *kabiten* may have several assistants depending on the size of the village.

- **The *Basiya***

The *basiya* are female and male assistants. The male *basiya* assists the higher officials in carrying out the ritual and administrative matters. The tasks of the female *basiya* are restricted to domestic activities.



**Figure 7. A schematic representation of the political structure of the Ndyuka.** Source: drawn by F. Eliza (2017)

The *Gaanman* and the other functionaries together with the elders form the council of the Ndyuka community. Most decisions affecting the life in the village are made by this council. Regularly *kuutu* ‘meetings’ are held to discuss the most important issues that are submitted for arbitration ranging from conflicts concerning land disputes to major crimes. In council meetings a neutral third party; *lanti* participates. In all cases, consensus is reached through negotiation, often with a strong role being played by Gods and ancestors. During the *kuutu* there is always a *pikiman* (someone who acts like an intermediary) who repeatedly confirms what both parties have said (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING 2013, p. 35).



**Figure 8. A kuutu held in Diitabiki.** Source: Eliza (2017)

The succession of leadership of the Gaanman and Kabiten are inherited through the matrilineal line and are elected for life (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 35). The captain's son is not in line to succeed him, but his sister's (oldest) male child will be next to succeed him. If there is no such individual, then the oldest male child of the nearest female relative will be chosen to fulfill this position (A. KOBHEN, 1979, p. 42) (INTERVIEW WITH TRADITIONAL LEADER OF DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY 2017).

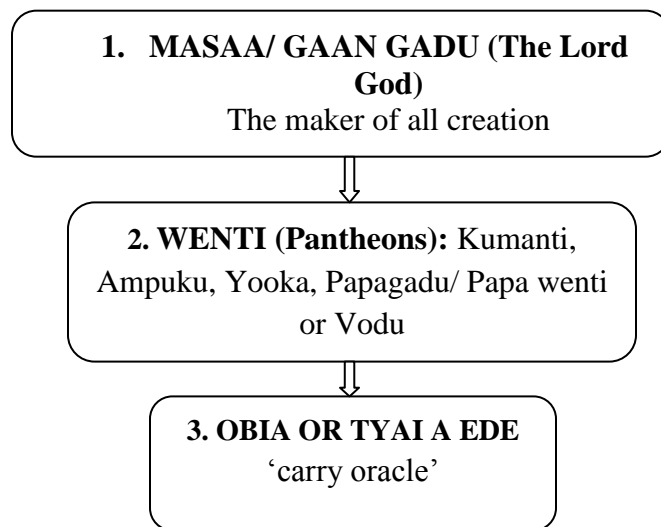
In the Ndyuka community there was no need for political forces. They have their own tribunal to settle disputes that occur in the community. They maintain peace and security in the village and use their own legal system punish those who have been found guilty of wrong doing or a crime.

The jurisdiction of the clan rests with the central council with the *Gaanman* as the chairman. However, things have changed overtime. The traditional authority and the peace in the community are disturbed, due to the high level of crimes, mainly robbery attacks in the Ndyuka community, in particular in Diitabiki, so that military external aid are highly needed (INFORMATION FROM THE KUUTU HELD IN DIITABIKI WITH THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND THE MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SURINAME, FEBRUARY 2017).

### 3.7 The religion of the Ndyuka

Religion plays an important role in the life of the Ndyuka. Many authors (VAN KEMPEN, 2002; KÖBBEN, 1979; THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2004; PAKOSIE, 2001; THODEN VAN VELZEN & HOOGBERGEN, 2011) have written about the religion of the Ndyuka. According to Köbben (1979, p. 130-131) and Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2013, p. 7) it is difficult to understand the religious beliefs of the Ndyuka, without having any knowledge of their religious institutions. As said before, the *faaka tiki* is one of the most important characteristic of a village. It is the place where traditional leaders or priests perform several sacrifices to God and to their ancestors, such as prayers for the well being of the community, for recovery of someone who is sick, for protection for someone who is about to travel, etc. The ways of communicating with the entities are, among others, spirit possession to interpret visionary dreams and consulting objects that are known as *tyai a ede* ‘oracle bundles’. The influence of the priests during the rituals is very important (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 7).

The hierarchy of the religious beliefs of the Ndyuka is as described in the following chart:



**Figure 9. Hierarchy of the religious beliefs.** Source: F. Eliza (2017)

The Ndyuka have many points of contact with the supernatural world. According to Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering (2013, p. 36), Hoogbergen (1990, p. 68), and from an interview

conducted by the author of this thesis with an elder of *Diitabiki* (FEBRUARY, 2017), and an interview by André Mosis<sup>19</sup>, the following description is given about the spiritual beings mentioned above in the sketch of the hierarchy of God and pantheons in the Ndyuka religion:

**1) *Masaa Gadu/ Gaan Gadu:***

*Masaa Gadu* or *Gaan Gadu* is the only and Highest God of the Ndyuka religion. In the Kumanti language He is known as “*Kedi Ama Kedi Ampon*”. He is the source of all living creatures. Every Ndyuka can ask this Supreme Being for help without intervention of others.

**2) *Wenti/ Pantheons:***

There are four *wenti* or pantheons that work according to the Ndyuka on behalf of *Gaan Gadu*. The task of these pantheons is to oversee and protect the Ndyuka community. To make connections with these spirits (also called mediator Gods) you need the help of a medium - priests who are specialized in one of these particular spirits. They influence people by possessing them.

- The *Kumanti*: a spirit that is associated with celestial bodies and prey animals. The medium of these spirits played an important role during the flight from the plantations
- The *Ampuku*: a forest spirit
- The *Yooka*: this is the pantheon which consists of the deceased ancestors of the Ndyuka. Ancestral worship is central in their everyday life.
- The *Papa wenti/ Papagadu* or *Vodu*: this is a spirit that houses in the boa constrictor and other reptiles. It is the most feared snake by the Ndyuka.

**3) *Obia* or *tyai a ede ‘carry oracle’:*** The oracle is a sacred bundle made of numinous objects placed and carried on the head of two men. According to the Ndyuka, this oracle was used by the Ndyuka during the time of flight from the plantations to help them get their freedom. The *Gaan Gadu* is also called by the sacred name *Sweli Gadu* ‘the deity of the covenant’. The *Sweli Gadu* helped the slaves to escape, protected them, warned them of danger in the forest and showed them which direction they should take. They placed this tabernacle on a shelf and it was carried on the heads of two men. If they went in a direction where there was danger, then it prevented the men from walking further. By that

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUSARaC3LAs>

they knew they were going the wrong way (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 8).

Animals and birds were also seen as guides and important elements in the forest showing them which way to go (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2011, p. 80, 90).

The political leaders, priests and the elders of the village are often the ones who interpreted the movements of the pantheons. Nowadays the *obia* is used to indicate medicinal herbs that are used in rituals, which offer spiritual and medical support (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 338).

The most popular sacred language that is practiced by the Ndyuka is the *Kumanti* language. This is spoken by experts who get possessed by the *Kumanti* spirit (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1990, p. 205).

Each of these pantheons have their own rituals, sacrifice place, dance, priest and secret language. Spirits can reside in all things of nature such as trees, animals, creeks and rocks (A. KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 130-131).

### **3.8 Rituals in the Ndyuka community**

The Ndyuka have rituals at the most important moments of their life. For example, there are rituals surrounding birth, puberty and adulthood, marriage and death. These rituals are very extensive and comprehensive as described in the following brief descriptions. The *bee* or the family of the Ndyuka plays an important role in each of these subjects.

#### **3.8.1 Birth**

When a child is born, the mother stays inside the house with the child until the main ritual surrounding the birth takes place on the eighth (when it's a girl) or ninth day (when it's a boy). The child is brought out and he or she is shown to the father and to the rest of the community. It is a ceremony that can be compared as a baby shower, but it is celebrated after the baby is born. At this birth ceremony, called "*puu a doo*", the child is welcomed by the family and the community. Wishes are made such as a happy, long and healthy life for the baby. The mother is

covered with bath towels and *pangi*<sup>20</sup> and she receives gifts. The ceremony is closed with a libation(s) to the ancestors and God for the new member to the family (INTERVIEW WITH MY GRANDMOTHER, MA BIKA LOSETA ELIZA, MAY 2016). (See also A. PAKOSIE, 2002, p. 5)



**Figure 10. The puu a doo ceremony. Source: F. Eliza (2012).**

The following is a description is about part of the custom when a woman gives birth. This information is gathered from interviews (MA BIKA, MAY, 2016) (MA I LOEKOE AND NONI, DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

After the woman gives birth, she starts with the *faya wataa*, a hot bath treatment, which she must undergo throughout the postpartum period (four months). This steam bath is very essential during this period. The importance of this treatment is to help restore the body and the uterus of the woman. The hot bath treatment consists of decoctions of herbs which has an astringent effect. During this period the woman places a *tey bee koosi* ‘cummerbund’ to her abdomen every day. The use of the *tey bee koosi* together with the astringent effect of herbs ensures that the stretched muscles and pelvis throughout the pregnancy and birth go back to their original state as much as possible.

She has to drink at least two times a day, tea that is made of herbs (this has to be bitter) to purify the uterus, as well as the blood. She also wears a *kamisa* (this differs from the traditional

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<sup>20</sup> A piece of fabric that the women wear as a skirt

cloth of the man). It is a small piece of cloth that is attached on a string which she wears for some months.

### 3.8.2 Anatomy of body and soul

The Ndyuka strongly believe in life after death, and that the deceased move into a different world called *gadu kondee* ‘heaven’. They believe that the soul can return to earth after an indefinite period. This reincarnation is called *nenseki*. The returning soul is usually a paternal relative. When the ancestral *nenseki* is returned, the child who came as him or her becomes sick. Sometimes the child with the *nenseki* is born with a (birth) mark on his/her body. From his or her, a child sometimes inherits a certain *kina*<sup>21</sup>.

A ritual has to be performed to heal the child. The child is brought to the paternal family and together with an elder of the family they consult the ancestors about which deceased member is born again. When they find out who the person is, a libation is done to show that they appreciate his or her return<sup>22</sup> (INTERVIEW WITH AN ELDER OF DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY 2017).

### 3.8.3 African names in the Ndyuka society

According to Pakosie (I. VAN KESSEL, 2002, p. 128), there are a lot of African influences in the name of the Ndyuka culture especially from the Akan culture. Traditional Ndyuka names often have unique stories behind them. This can differ from the day a baby is born to the circumstances surrounding the birth, mood, desire etc. Pakosie believes that according to comparison of ordinary names (not names of days) it can be shown that the naming tradition of the Ndyuka has been influenced by the Yoruba culture.

The Ndyuka receive an *osu nen* ‘house name’ at birth by which they are known in the village. Sometimes these names can even be sentences. For example *a moi a lafu* which means she has a beautiful smile. If a mother wanted a girl for a long time and she gives birth to her; the girl’s name might be *san mi be wani* ‘what I wanted’.

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<sup>21</sup> This is usually a food taboo which children can inherit from their father.

<sup>22</sup> Interview on you tube of Andre Mosis, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUSARaC3LAs>



A name that was given to a child by a circumstance, for example, when a woman was pregnant, she went to the *goon* (agricultural plot) and she got attractions while she was about to pick a corn, the mother may name the baby *kalu* ‘corn’ or *kalu mma* (literally it means ‘corn mother’ but it actually means corn sweetheart). If a baby used to cry a lot, the name may be given to represent an object which makes a noisy sound or they will just call the child *kee mofu* ‘cry mouth’ (INTERVIEW WITH MY GRANDMOTHER, MA BIKA LOSETA, ELDER OF DIITABIKI)

Pakosie gives a comparison of names among the Maroons, in particular the Ndyuka and the Akan. It is shown that the Ndyuka have retained many African names. A clearly discernible influence of the Akan may be seen in the Ndyuka names for the days of the week in the table below:

**Table 4. A comparison of Ndyuka and Akan names.** Source: Pakosie (2002. p. 128)

<b>Born on:</b>	<b>Ndyuka</b>		<b>Akan</b>	
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	Kwasi	(Kwasida/ Kwasiba)	Kwasi	Akwasiba
<b>Monday</b>	Kodyo	Adyuba	Kodyo	Adwoa
<b>Tuesday</b>	Kwamina	Abeni (Abena)	Kwabena	Abena
<b>Wednesday</b>	Kwaku	Akuba	Kwaku	Akuwa
<b>Thursday</b>	Yaw	Yaba	Yaw	Yaa
<b>Friday</b>	Kofi	Afi (Afiba)	Kofi	Afua
<b>Saturday</b>	Kwaami	Amba (Ama)	Kwame	Ama

According to Pakosie, the Akan culture has the biggest influence on the overall Afro-Surinamese culture. In addition, there are components in Ndyuka names which may be found in, among others, Swahili (East Africa), Mwera (Kenya) and Zaramo (Tanzania). This indicates that, in whatever way, other African cultures have influenced the names of the Ndyuka (PAKOSIE IN I. VAN KESSEL, 2002, p. 128).

This tradition has changed over the years. Today the majority of parents give their children European names and it is less likely that they get a traditional *osu nen* ‘house name’.

### 3.9 Reaching adulthood

When a girl or a boy becomes adults in the Ndyuka community, it is celebrated. As said before, rituals are important in the life of the Ndyuka, thus reaching adulthood is also celebrated with certain rituals. According to Pakosie (2002, p. 6-8) and according to my grandmother, Ma Bika Loseta (from an Interview, May, 2016) there are two stages of reaching adulthood in the life of girls;

- ***Gi kwey***: Young girls between ten and twelve years old who are in their puberty get *kwey* from their aunt. Traditionally this used to be a sister or cousin of the girl's father. The *kwey* is a small piece of cloth like an apron that is tied on the hips of the girl. The *kwey umang*, as girls are called who got *kwey* received household items and a *lala pangi* 'unembroidered pangi' to prepare herself for the next stage of adulthood.
- ***Gi pangi***: the exact age to get *pangi* differs from family to family. The age limit is between sixteen and twenty years old. The girl who is about to be declared a woman is called *gaan kwey uman*. The party is prepared in silence when the *gaan kwey uman* is about to get *pangi*. This is a surprise for her. At the *gi pangi* her paternal aunt removes the *kwey* and ties several *pangi* on her waist. She gets a lot of presents and household items such as various *pangi*, kitchen ware, a kettle, etc.

It may occur that a *kwey uman* gets *pangi* before they declare her as a woman. This may happen when she gets pregnant. Another way to get *pangi* is when a younger sibling of the girl gets pregnant, and then the older sister automatically gets *pangi* even if she did not reach the age to be given the status of an adult woman.



**Figure 11.** *Gi pangi* ceremony. Source: Marijke Awegni (2017)

*Gi Kamisa*: the boys go straight into adulthood by receiving the *kamisa* as soon as they are in the puberty stage. This does not mean that they are already considered to be men. When the boy has received *kamisa*, his age only plays a role in being grown up as adults. There is no intermediate phase as in case of the girls. The *kamisa* is a cloth that is crossed-out between the legs.

This tradition is not practiced as much as it used to be, especially by the Ndyuka who live in the urban areas.

### **3. 10 Menstruation**

As soon as a young girl knows she gets her first period, she knows that there are rules and that she cannot participate in her everyday life activities. Menstruation has always been surrounded by *kina* ‘taboo’ that excludes women and girls from many aspects of social and cultural life. Culturally menstruation is considered to be impure. A woman is required to go into seclusion during her menstrual cycle. Menstrual taboos in the maroon culture prohibit women from engaging in activities such as cooking for men, traveling with men, or touching items that are used by men. Women are not allowed to perform many of the village’s functions, and they also face other restrictions during their menstrual cycle. Each month the women are exiled to a

*mun osu* 'menstrual hut'. A special bench is made for them. Menstruating girls and women are also restricted from offering prayers and have to avoid speaking with men who recently participated in a ritual. Different paths are created for them in the village which leads to the river. At the river they have also a special place where they bathe and do their daily activities. The perceived repercussions of violating the taboos can have serious consequences including illness or other misfortunes in the community. After menstruation they have to take a steam bath which is their regular morning and evening routine (INTERVIEW WITH MY GRANDMOTHER MA BIKA, 2016).

### **3.11 Traditional marriage**

The Ndyuka has a traditional monogamous marriage. Rituals surrounding marriage take place during the wedding ceremony according to the tradition of the Ndyuka. The marriage takes place as the woman's family accepts the beverages and other goods that the man's family has brought. The responsibility for the woman is then symbolically transferred to the man's family (PAKOSIE, 2002, p. 9).

Based on information I received from a young man who I interviewed from the village of Pikin Kondee (a Ndyuka village not far from Diitabiki) in 2016, my grandmother (2016) and a traditional leader of Diitabiki and Pakosie (2002, p. 9) I will describe the following types of marriage in the Ndyuka society. These are;

- *Poti mofu*
- *Akisi sama*
- *Towe nyanyan*

#### ***Poti mofu***

This is a form of arranged engagement which is determined by the parents. I will explain this with an example. If Mrs. X goes to see a friend and the friend has a daughter, compliments are made how pretty the girl is. Sometimes a grandmother can arrange the engagement for her grandson or the father can arrange the engagement for his son. Then Mrs. X goes to her friend's home with a little bowl and a little spoon to ask for the girl's hand. From the moment the mother of the girl accepts the items she is destined to become the wife of Mrs. X son. While she grows up, she is taught, as soon as she is wise enough, that she already belongs to someone. She grows

up normally like all children until she reaches the age to get married. Formerly the girl whom they had preserved for the boy was supposed to obey her parents' wish even if she was not in love with the boy. This tradition is not practiced that much any more. Nowadays, some children refuse to accept the partner arranged by the parents and have the ability to choose their own partners.

### **Akisi sama**

This is the official marriage according to the tradition of the Ndyuka. Men and women are free to choose their own partner. Different rituals precede the marriage. *Wasikoi* is a custom where the young man goes to his maternal uncles<sup>23</sup> to ask for the girl's hand in marriage. After informing the girl's family about this matter, an official meeting is planned. The uncles of the boy and other relatives go to the girl's home with a bottle of rum to do a libation. The boy has to have certain components. So before they give their daughter away they investigate if the boy knows how to build a canoe, a house or hut, if he is a good hunter and knows how to fish. After some days when both families have agreed to the proposal, the boy's family brings more rum and various drinks for the girl's family. This is the *akisi sama* 'completing the marriage'. The boy and the girl are not present at this ceremony. If the girl's family does not accept the drinks, the proposal is not approved by them. *Den gi a uman* is the ceremony where the family of the girl gives her symbolically away to the boy and the boy has to pay the wedding prize. The husband's family is now responsible for the marriage commitment and for the girl.

**Towe nyanyan:** This last type of marriage in the Ndyuka culture is the case of a widow or widower who wants to remarry. A ritual must be performed before he or she weds again; the *towe nyanyan*. When the *baakaman* 'widower' chooses a woman he wants to marry, he goes with his maternal uncles to his deceased wives' family to ask permission to marry his new wife or vice versa. The widow or widower must do the *towe nyanyan* ritual for the spirit of the deceased husband or wife so that they live in peace with their new partner. The ritual must be

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<sup>23</sup> Uncles of the maternal side play an important role in the culture of the Ndyuka. They also play a major role in the important ritual moments in life such as birth, marriage, problems in the relationship of husband and wife or in the family and death. In following a matrilineal custom, when a father passes away, the mother's oldest male relative, brother, or uncle, takes the father's place as the head of the family.

done by the widow and her new partner or vice versa. The *towe nyanyan* ritual is when the widower and his new partner put food for the soul of the deceased. They say prayers and do libations.

This type of ritual is considered to have been abolished, because the new generation of men and women refuse to do this ritual, because they are afraid that their new partner will leave them. The ritual is now considered to be taboo in the Ndyuka community.

There has been a huge change in the marriage traditions of the Ndyuka. The most compelling reason is because of the urbanization. In the coastal area of Suriname it is difficult and unnecessary to give the man the same obligations as a man living in the interior. The man in the city gets different conditions. He has to make sure that he has a good job to take care of his wife. Although the wedding prize differs from the one in the interior, it is still being paid.

### **3.12 Polygamy**

Just like other Maroon groups, the Ndyuka tradition permits polygamous marriage. Men are allowed to have several wives; however there are certain conditions (A. KÖBBEN, 1979, p.55).

If a man wishes to have a second wife, he has to be able to provide for two households without any disadvantage for either of the women. He has to discuss this matter with his first wife. It is his duty to inform his wife even though he does not need her approval.

According to Köbben (1979, p.55), co-wives never live in the same village because this can lead to tension. But actually sometimes co-wives do live in the same village and have a peaceful relationship with each other (DATA FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH AN ELDER FROM DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY 2017).

In Suriname traditional marriages of the Indigenous people, Maroons and Asians are not legal. Concubinage is not acknowledged by the law. In 2013<sup>24</sup>, some politicians from Maroon origin have paid attention to this subject to recognize traditional marriages. According to the anthropologist Emanuels, this recognition would greatly improve the position of the Maroon women. "A traditional marriage creates certain certainties just like western marriage" he said,

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<sup>24</sup> From a newspaper "*de Ware Tijd*" on 25/05/2013 <http://werkgroepcaraibischeletteren.nl/marroncultuur-kent-traditioneel-monogaam-huwelijk/> accessed on 4/21/2017

and for that reason he thinks that traditional marriages must be recognized. The dominant institutionalized norm is still the civil marriage<sup>25</sup>.

### 3.13 Death, burial and mourning

For the Ndyuka, the *bee* or the family plays a crucial role. They have to supervise and participate in every aspect of a child's life, from the nurturing till death. The issues of death are not just a matter of the family of the deceased but also of the whole community. Rituals are again very essential.

#### 3.13.1 Death

The Ndyuka believe that when someone dies, he is not dead, but exchange his life here on earth to the land of his ancestors. The *apinti doon*<sup>26</sup> 'a drum' is played to announce the message of a deceased. If the deceased is a political functionary, for example, the Paramount chief, the *apinti doon* will be played three days in a row, and all villages of the Ndyuka community will start mourning (A. KOBLEN, 1979, p. 128).

When someone dies, the *kee osu* is always decorated with several *pangis*. The family of the deceased plays an important role since the *baakaman* 'mourner' (the widow or widower) is being handed over to them to take care of him or her during the whole period of mourning. This is the beginning of the *poti a baaka* 'the mourning period' of the *baakaman*. From this moment the *baakaman* is completely isolated from social life, such as going to parties, leaving the house after 18.00 pm, and he is not allowed to leave the village or work. The *baakaman* gets to wear mourning clothes - *a gaan koosi* 'a sheet', which is worn across the shoulders. The women's hair is cut. The main prohibition is that they must abstain from sex during the mourning period. It is a custom that the *baakaman* is guided by persons who already has been in mourning.

In the days before the funeral, he or she is obliged to cry every day to show their grieving and he or she is not allowed to sleep on a bed, but in a hammock. If the husband has a second

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<sup>25</sup> Marriages must be registered in order to be recognized by the state. Due to the dearth of registry offices in the interior of Suriname, however, that requirement is generally not met (International Law Report, VOL. 116, 2000)

<sup>26</sup> The Apinti doon is a communication instrument of the Maroons that is used in the village or for religious purposes. When you hear the sound of the apinti you know that there is important news. It is known as the talking drum of the Maroons. It is based on solid recognizable drum sounds. The everyday Apinti language used by the Maroons is called *wanwi* (PAKOSIE IN I. VAN KESSEL (ed), 2002, p. 128)

and/ or a third wife, they are obliged to mourn together with their husband. They automatically become a widow, according to the tradition of the Ndyuka (A. PAKOSIE, 2002, p. 10; A.KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 133, DATA FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH AN ELDER FROM DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

### **3.13.2 Burial preparations**

Every morning, the *Basia* passes every house in the village hitting on metalwork that serves as a bell to *bali basia* ‘to announce’ the process and preparations of the funeral. The *obiaman* ‘priest’ plays a major role in the preparing of the funeral. The initial rites which are carried out over a period of one week to three months, depending on the status which the deceased had in the society. For example, if a Gaanman dies, the burial will take place after three months.

The preparations are being made by the association of the *oloman* ‘gravedigger’ and *kisiman* ‘coffinmaker’. There is also an association which is the *kelepisi* who prepares the *wasi* ‘washing’ of the deceased. All these members are related to each other.

In the *boto* (coffin) of the deceased they put all kinds of things and personal belongings such as hammock, sheets, clothes, etc. The Ndyuka believe that the deceased will need those things in the new world. Close family members of the deceased can take part at the *wasi* of the deceased. If it is the very first time someone is going to take part in the *wasi*, they do a little ritual and libation (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 43, DATA FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH AN ELDER FROM DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

### **3.13.3 The funeral**

The widow is not allowed to be present at the funeral of her husband and vice versa. If her child is dead, she is not allowed to attend the funeral either (DATA OBTAINED FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A TRADITIONAL LEADER AT DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

When a Paramount Chief has passed away, his burial is different. He gets a special burial and the burial preparations, and rituals take longer. The duration of the burial will take part after three months and the grave and the coffin are bigger than that of other deceased.



The day before the burial, the villagers dance and sing till late into the night, *pee booko de* (playing till dawn breaks). The meaning behind this is that the life of the deceased here on earth has come to an end and a new life is waiting for him in another world. During this process of mourning, they perform the *Tuka*. This is only performed at ceremonies of mourning. The *tuka* is a composition of complain songs and mourning music. In the songs, they are saying goodbye to the deceased (PAKOSIE, 2008, p. 2).

The graveyard lies far from the village in the forest. The inhabitants of the village have to climb a *mongo* ‘mountain’ to reach it.

Some loose shots are fired when passing places where used to be a village. Before they put the coffin in the grave, a ritual *teke paati* ‘separating from the family’ is performed (INTERVIEW ELDER OF DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

The first ritual that is done after the burial is the *dii dei towe wataa*. This is the first libation and food offering that takes places after three days. Rituals are done on the *aitin dei towe wataa* ‘eight days’ after the burial. The second important libation is done after three months; the *dii mun wataa* (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 43).



**Figure 12. The coffin of the late Gaanman Sokoton Gazon Matodja in 2012. Source:** <https://abengcentral.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/thousands-pay-final-respect-to-paramount-chief-matodja-gazon/>

### 3.13.4 Mourning

After the funeral, the mourning period varies from six months up to a year depending on what decisions the family of the deceased has made about the length of mourning. There are some discussions going on to make the mourning period shorter. *Puu baaka*<sup>27</sup> is the last rite that is done in memory of the departed. The *puu baaka* takes place at the *booko de* ‘mourning festivities’. The *puu baaka* lasts three days; starting from Friday to Sunday. During the *booko de* a lot of traditional food and dishes are prepared. Although the food nowadays tends to be more Western; the traditional dishes have to be present always. Traditional objects such as calabash are used for making plates and spoons for use during the libations (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2013, p. 34, 43), (DATA FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A TRADITIONAL LEADER, DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

In the closing of the mourning period, a traditional juice is made of sugarcane. The men cut the cane and then it is crushed in a *ken boto* ‘a tree trunk that is roughly dug out’ by a group of people who dance and sing around it. The men play drums in boats on the river and the women wear their finest *pangi* and dance to the rhythm.



**Figure 13.** The *fon ken* done by men in the *kee osu*. Source: Reon Daparoe (2016)

The last ritual of the mourning process is that the widows or widowers take a bath in the river, accompanied by the family of the departed. The in-laws have to take everything that the

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<sup>27</sup> Termination of the official mourning period

widow or widower has used during the mourning period such as the clothes and the bench she used to sit on etc. After the bath in the river and the rituals are done, he or she is dress in red. This ritual is called *gi lebi* ‘give red’. It means that he or she is closing a sad and difficult chapter and is starting a new life again (DATA FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH AN ELDER OF DIITABIKI, FEBRUARY, 2017).

### 3.14 Subsistence and economy

The economic organization of the Ndyuka has always been based on shifting cultivation which is exclusively performed by women. They are responsible for every output on the agricultural plots. Their main livelihood is agriculture. The primary crops are cassava and rice. Further their crops include banana, yam and other root crops such as corn, pepper and peanuts etc. The women collect fruits and nuts such as *apodon* (*Euterpe oleracea*), *maipa* (*Attalea maripa*), *awaa* (*Astrocaryum vulgare*), *obe* (*Elaeis guineensis*<sup>28</sup>) etc from the forest. From these nuts they produce oils to bake and cook. Nowadays some of the Ndyuka make a business of it to produce soaps and other skincare products.

Every year new fields are created by the burning of vegetation. Their livelihood is supplemented by hunting, fishing, forestry and is later influenced by the participation of men in the (post) colonial economy (A. PAKOSIE, 2000, p. 19, 20; A. KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 1).

There is a clear division of labour between men and women in the Ndyuka community. Children take part in traditional livelihood activities from a young age especially helping their mothers in the agricultural plots. Women are responsible for the domestic chores. They plant, harvest and process the main food staples and take care of children while the men are responsible for the construction of the *goon* ‘agricultural plots’, hunting, fishing, building houses and boats.

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<sup>28</sup> All these scientific names of these crops I have used from the website Wikipedia on Google



**Figure 14. A hunter, who is my father Dooso Naisen with his catch.** Source: David Eliza (2017)

The production activities such as the construction of the agricultural plots and harvesting are carried out in close cooperation. For example, when it is time to harvest, the woman asks for help from her sisters, cousins, sisters-in-law to help her harvest cassava in her agriculture plot. Everything is done collectively from the harvesting of the cassava to making an end product such as *kwaka* or *kasaba beele* 'cassava cakes. Reciprocity takes place all the time in an Ndyuka society. When it is time to harvest from an agricultural plot of one of the women who helped to harvest the cassava, the lady who she helped before has to return the favor. This is called reciprocity by the anthropologist Sabourin (2016, p. 2-4).

Temple (1998) systematized the elementary structures of reciprocity by identifying the human values they help produce or reproduce. The face-to-face relationship is typical of mutual aid between families and farmers and promotes friendship between the groups (SABOURIN, 2011, p .34-35).



**Figure 15. Women preparing *kwaka*.** Source: F. Eliza (2017)

In the following paragraphs I will give a description of the time line of the economical history of the Ndyuka from the period 1760-1975 based on Pakosie (2000, p. 19) and Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2013, p. 272-277).

After signing the peace treaty in 1760 with the colonial government, the Ndyuka began to participate in the economy of Suriname. They were granted the right to trade their goods in the coastal area. Their logging and agricultural products were important not only for their own use, but also for generating an income. These were the most important economic activities for the Ndyuka. Usually the men went to work outside their community for extended periods of time in the coastal areas and the women stayed home. In 1885 many men worked in the logging industry. After some time this job became less interesting, because of the increase in the gold sector in 1920. After this period they worked in the balata industry and as wood suppliers.

With the independence of Suriname in 1975, a difficult period for the Maroons began. In the meantime many Ndyuka had come to the city. There were no job opportunities for them. They sought work in different industries but did not have access to the economic opportunities primarily because they were not western educated, which meant that they did not have access to the public sector and could not fulfill political positions. The domestic war of 1982, fought between opposing political parties for dominance over the rich assets of the interior, caused more misery for the Ndyuka. Many of them, who fled to the city remained unemployed, lived in poor residential areas and had the lowest positions in the civil service and companies. After the war,

they sought work in the wood industry, worked in a palm oil company and many of them went to work in the shipping industry at the Marowijne River as *bagasiman* 'transporter'.



**Figure 16. Ndyuka men transporting tons of oil.** Source: Reon Daparoe (2016)

Today agriculture is still an important means of livelihood for the Ndyuka, but it is decreasing. Men are not always able to prepare the agricultural plots, because they are working in gold mining, as transporters or in French Guiana. Men still hunt but it is no longer one of the necessities for life. The women have no other choice than to pay someone else to get the job done. Children and young people help less with the agricultural activities, because nowadays they go to school and most of them have to migrate to the urban areas. The reason is the lack of secondary schools in the interior. Buying products (soap, clothes, kitchen stove, etc) from the urban areas has also become part of their life.

Economic growth in gold and timber threatens the rainforest and the Ndyuka society. Gold mining and logging on a large scale are causing loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution, in particular water pollution which is dangerous for the health of the people. The rivers are very important to the Ndyuka and are increasingly becoming contaminated with chemicals, especially mercury, used for extracting gold. All household activities are done by the river like dishwashing, washing clothes, bathing, drinking and cooking. Now the river water cannot be drunk anymore because it is full of mercury as a result of the exploitation of gold mining in the various areas.

Despite closer integration into the national society, the interior remains deprived of essential public services. There is no electricity, public transport, running water, postal service, and access to national television and radio in the grand majority of forest communities.

### **3. 15 The role of Ndyuka women**

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century women were very important at the survival of the early Maroon communities. Many writers have written about how strong, fierce and courageous Maroon women were.

Köbben (1979, p. 148) describes women who fled during *lonten* ‘marronage’ as courageous;

“The women who fled were more courageous than the men, because they took their little children along, tied them on their back while the men wanted to leave or kill them. In the beginning, the runaway slaves suffered from hunger because they had to live only from hunting and what they have gathered. Fortunately, a woman whose name was Sa Sapá was hiding rice pellets in her hair before she ran away from the plantation and thus she had rice to sow”

Another example of how Ndyuka women were fearless is described by Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2004, p. 40). After signing the peace treaties with the Ndyuka in 1760 the colonial government put a post holder at the settlements of the Ndyuka to ensure that no new refugees of slaves join the group. Unfortunately for the colonial government this happened frequently. He described how a Ndyuka woman named Ma Akuba protected and refused to hand her compatriots to the post holder;

“In 1808, when a post holder protested to Ma Akuba, that there were four runaway slaves in the village, she resisted fiercely that she would not hand them over as long as the Paramount chief of the village was offering runaway slaves shelter”

According to Hoogbergen (1990, p. 218) the Maroon woman is the bearer of the community. During the fights with the colonial government the fertility of women and the power of the *obia* were subject to the survival of the Maroon groups. The women were kept safe inside the local community which enhanced the tendency towards matrilineal kinship to protect them from danger. The Maroon women were and are the fundament of the Maroon groups. Without

women, there is no offspring. The Ndyuka have a saying that the Ndyuka woman is the *gudu* ‘wealth’ of the bee ‘family’. They were and are literally the foundation of the group and they made sure that their settlements could develop and continue to sustain itself (W. HOOGBERGEN, 1990, p. 218).

Traditionally women were not allowed to hold political positions but they were involved in decision-making processes (THODEN VAN VELZEN AND VAN WETERING, 2004. p. 22).

It was not easy for the Maroon women to integrate in the urban areas of Suriname especially when they migrated to the city due to the civil war. But somehow they have managed to make a living. In the last few decades, women have worked hard for their recognition and to improve their position in the social, economic, and political levels of the Maroon communities. Women now have greater influence in local politics. An important change in the role of women in the administrative and political life of Maroon communities began when all Maroon groups agreed to bring a change in the system and appointed female leaders at a *gaan kuutu* ‘meeting of the different Maroon groups’ that was held in 1994 in Gaan Santi; a Ndyuka village in the District Sipaliwini. In 1994, Gaanman Gazon Matodja, the late Paramount chief of the Ndyuka, who died in 2011, appointed the first female village leaders in history, across the entire Ndyuka area on the Tapanahoni River<sup>29</sup>.



**Figure 17. The late Gaanman Gazon Matodja.** Source: <http://werkgroepcaraibischeletteren.nl/tag/matodja-gazon/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.starnieuws.com/index.php/welcome/index/nieuwsitem/8295>



Women were housewives taking care of the children and the elders, working on the agricultural plots. Nowadays, the Maroon women have placed their stamp on the social and economic ladder in the Surinamese society. The younger generation of women pursued an education and now work in government offices, the private sector, Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) etc and the older women in particular businesses for example having an income with artwork; embroidered *pangi* or selling their agricultural crops or herbs for different uses at local markets in Suriname.

### **3.16 Ndyuka art, music and dance**

The Ndyuka culture is a very rich and diverse culture. Their music and dance come in many forms and varieties, most of them influenced by their African heritage. The anthropologist Herskovits argued that; "Maroon art in all its consequences is eventually the life of the Maroons"<sup>30</sup>

#### **3.16.1 Art lovers**

Maroon art is indeed something that is practiced by them every day. Practically every object is decorated. You will encounter art such as carvings on wood, calabashes, paddles, boats and stools, spoons and bowls, embroidery on *pangi*, hairstyles and their skin as well in the form of tattoos almost everywhere in a Ndyuka village. There was also a clear division of tasks in this area. But in some it was practiced by men and women as in the graph of the gourd. Carving on wood is essentially a male dominated art and embroidery on cloth is done largely by the women. Sometimes the art works were used to express someone's love. For example if a woman was in love with a man, she would carve a calabash for him in the Afaka writing<sup>31</sup> language. The tattoo of the Ndyuka '*kokoti*' was only placed by women. This is a scar tissue that was carefully arranged with a sharp object with the seed of a particular fruit. They created different patterns on their back, hips, faces and chests.

The elder Ndyuka women have this type of tattoo. The younger generation of Ndyuka women does not put it anymore.

According to Richard and Sally Price in (N. SAUNDERS, 2005, p. 177) Maroon art is a completely new, creative and innovative adaptation and development and not a static leftover

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.kingbotho.com/htm/englisharticles/theartofsurinamemaroonsSallyPrice.html> visited on 4/27/ 2017

<sup>31</sup> the Afaka writing will be described in chapter 3

from the seventeenth century of Africa. In the twentieth century Maroon art became very popular. The African influence throughout color, objects and forms are always present in Ndyuka art. Practicing these arts is not done as an everyday activity anymore, but many women see it as a source of income by embroidering pangi.



**Figure 18.** The “Parliament” of the Gaanman in Diitabiki decorated with the popular African design ‘Kente’. Source: Eliza (2017)

### **3.16.2 Music; beating drums and pounding feet**

According to Andre Pakosie (1998, p. 2) the music culture of the Ndyuka is unique and versatile. It has been developed by the diverse groups on the plantations. The music differs from African music, but there are some African elements in it. The most popular type is the “Aleke”. This genre of music can be called the pop music of the Ndyuka.

Each Ndyuka dance has its own rhythm and its own lyrics, a single also its own hand-clap.

Drums are used in various combinations to accompany different secular dance forms, to make announcements, to supervise and comment on the proceedings of large public council meetings, and it is used in rituals to communicate with spirits<sup>32</sup>.

The most popular dance styles according to Van Kempen (2002, p. 207) of the Ndyuka are;

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.kingbotho.com/htm/englisharticles/theartofsurinamemaroonsSallyPrice.html>

- Mato: folk tale
- Susa: this is a dance style where two dancers show their dancing skills
- Songe; this is a dance style where the women simulate a fish how it defends her calf and the men are representing the fishermen with arrow and bow
- Awasa: a dance where the women show their beauty through the dance and the men show their dancing skills
- Aleke: the aleke songs are about current social events in everyday life
- Tuka: the tuka is only performed at mourning rituals. These are lamentations songs and dances that are practiced before the funeral of a deceased

All dances except the mato are accompanied by beating drums and rattling ankle bands that accentuate the rhythm of the pounding feet.

### **3.17 General considerations**

The culture of the Ndyuka has changed during the years. Some of the rituals are not practiced as they used to before. Some traditions are different from the village and life in the city. There have been changes in the political organization of the Ndyuka. Due to increasing criminality police presence is required in their community. Also there is a difference in their livelihood. There are changes in their economic life and they depend on some products of the urban areas. Nowadays, men and women have other sources of income.

## CHAPTER IV. Ndyuka, a Creole language of Suriname

### 4.1 About its origins

Ndyuka is one of the seven Creole languages originated from Proto-Saamaka. The others Creole sisters are Saamaka, Sranan ou Sranan tongo, Aluku, Kwinti, Paamaka and Matawai. Proto-Saamaka origin is still an incognito, although several linguists have raised different hypotheses on how it could have developed.

### 4.2 The oral tradition of the Ndyuka

The Ndyuka are people who inherited oral traditions from their African ancestors. In the transmission of traditional knowledge by orality, the training of memory is crucial, and the elders play an important role in Ndyuka society as the main transmitters of the traditional knowledge to the new generations. It happens that some aspects of Ndyuka cultural tradition are secret knowledge, so that they are only passed on in *osutoli* (home stories) to members belonging to the same matrilineal group. By high exception, a Ndyuka belonging to another matrilineal group may receive that knowledge, a privilege never given to a *bakaa* (stranger).

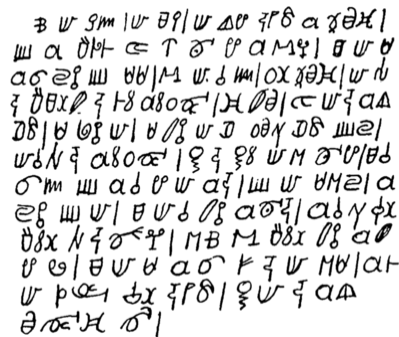
André Pakosie distinguishes six categories of oral tradition among the Ndyuka (*apud* M. VAN KEMPEN, 2002, p. 201):

- **Baka-koni ‘former knowledge’:** the special knowledge that remains reserved for members of the related group and only applies when it is really necessary.
- **Gaanmama-sani:** these are certain knowledge’s that are inherited from the ancestors such as knowledge of Gods, herbs, medicine and art.
- **Gaansama toli:** historical stories.
- **Mato or Anainsitoli:** folk’s tale, myths and riddles.
- **Kiya:** education and training.
- **Leli ‘learning’:** the transformation of certain cognitive skills.

### 4.3 The Afaka Script

According to George Huttar (1992, p. 593-598), the Afaka script is an Indigenous syllabary of a creole language which is the Ndyuka. The Ndyuka came to be the only Maroon who had developed its own writing system. This system was named by its inventor, the Ndyuka man Afaka Atumisi. He designed a syllable of 56 signs after they were revealed to him, by dreams, in 1908.

The use of the Afaka writing system had been forbidden by the Ndyuka Gaanman Amakti, as a response to the mission, led by Franciscus Morssink from the Roman Catholic Church, whose purpose was to use the system as an instrument to preach the gospel and Christianize the Ndyuka. The Gaanman wanted to keep their culture.



**Figure 19. The Afaka writing system.** Source:

[http://scriptsource.org/cms/scripts/page.php?item\\_id=script\\_detail\\_sym&key=Afak](http://scriptsource.org/cms/scripts/page.php?item_id=script_detail_sym&key=Afak)

The studies by Richard Price make fundamental references about the main linguistic studies on the possible origin of the Maroons from Suriname, mainly the Saamaka (PRICE, 1976). For most linguists, the initial Creole would have been formed around the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This is the view of Migge and Goury (2008, p.5), who considered the historical information available and suggested that the Creole was formed around the end of the 17th century, during the transition from the village to the agricultural cultivation.

For Huttar (1994), one of the earliest scholar specialists on the Ndyuka language, the first stage of proto-Creole from Suriname would have arisen in the first half of the eighteenth century, when a large number of slaves fled the plantations. Smith (2002, p. 131) presents a time frame of the important linguistic events in the history of Suriname, which I reproduce below:

**Table 5: Time table of linguistically relevant events in Suriname's history**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1651	Settlement of Suriname by the English
C. 1660	Marronage of Jerme's group in the Para region
C. 1665	Sranan creolized from Caribbean Plantation Pidgin English (a hypothesis defended in Smith 1999a)
1665	Jewish settlers arrive (from Cayenne with Portuguese Creole-speaking slaves (a hypothesis defended in Smith 1999c)
1667	The Treaty of Breda by Suriname was surrendered to the Dutch
1668	The effective start of the Dutch administration
1668-75	More than 90% of the English leave with c. 1650 slaves
C.1680	Sranan partly relexified to Portuguese, giving Dju-tongo ('Jew-language') on the Middle Suriname River plantations (a hypothesis defended in Smith 1999c)
1690	Mass escape of slaves who founded the Matjáu clan of the Saramaccan tribe (speaking Dju-tongo); This clan is the oldest of the Saramaccan clans
1712	Mass escape of slaves who founded the Ndyuka tribe (speaking Plantation Sranan)

According to Smith (2002, p. 132), it is therefore understood that the origin of Proto-Sranan occurred after 1651. He raised the hypothesis that the basis for the Sranan had been a pidgin of the Caribbean area colonized by the English. For Smith, Sranan would have appeared in Suriname, based on this pidgin. He recalls that there are two competitive points for the region from which the English base pidgin would have expanded: St. Kitts, proposed by Baker (1999)

and Barbados (Smith 1999a). Smith fought the idea that Saramaccan had become a creole prior to Sranan, since he considered Saramaccan to be the same 'Dju-tongo' language, the same language spoken on the Surinamese Jewish plantations, since the Jews only arrived there in 1665. He also argued (p.135) that if Dju-tongo was created in 1680 on the basis of the pre-existing Sranan, the creolization period would have been between 1651 and 1680, thus over a period of 30 years.

With respect to the presence of Portuguese elements in Marron languages, Morris Godman (1987) and Smith (1987) defended the idea that the formation of Saramaccan would have given way to the presence of Portuguese Jews in the context that led to the creolization of that language. For Smith (1999a), Jews of Cayenne and their slaves would have come from Pernambuco, another Dutch colony at the time. Smith (2002, p. 137) noted that his thesis was questioned by Jaques Arends (1999a), John Ladhams (1999a, b) and William Jennings (1999), who argued contrary to Smith's thesis for historical reasons. However, for Smith, who believed that "a solid piece of linguistic evidence must always take precedence over a historical construct," his thesis certainly held, even without historical evidence, a belief I disagree with.

Smith (2002, p. 142) proposed a table depicting the effects of "marronage" in Suriname, reproduced here:

**Table 6: Timetable of languages during marronage**

<b>Period of marronage</b>	<b>Linguistic effects of marronage</b>
1650-1667	Amerindian languages
1690-1710	Mixed English - Portuguese creole
1710-1800	English-based creole
1800-1863	English-based creole

On the Amerindian presence in the Maroon languages of Suriname, Price (2014, p. 142) observed, among other things, the following:

What seem most impressive about these cases in captured indigenous women have become the wives of the first men Saamaka is their rapid conceptual assimilation, the fact that their children were considered entirely Saamaka. If "it is difficult to find ... any clan that does not have 'Indian mothers' - as the Saamaka sometimes say with little exaggeration - the indigenous contribution to the 'genetic mix', however, remains negligible. Consider, for example, the case of Tooy, who uttered the earlier statement and told the story of Kaasi, Piyai and Oliko, in which this contribution can be estimated as something like 1/1024. Price (2008, p. 158). Indigenous contributions to the Saamaka culture are both important and circumscribed. Much of the material culture and the Saamaka horticultural technique (everything related to the planting and complex processing of cassava, many local hunting and fishing techniques, the now obsolete weaving art of net, and certain types of basketwork and ceramics) has been learned With the Indigenous people during the first periods of coexistence. Nevertheless, few religious, artistic or ideological features of the indigenous cultures of Suriname can be found among the maroons. The Indigenous people - mainly, the women - who went to live with the Saamaka shared their environmental and technical knowledge, of which the first maroons appropriated themselves greatly. But beyond this material realm, they seem to have become Saamaka in every way.

Although Price did not describe the relations of indigenous of Aruak and Karíb origin with the Saamaka, words from Aruak and Karíb origin are also found in languages like Ndyuka and Sranan.

#### **4.4 The language sources in the development of the Ndyuka language**

In this section, I present examples of words coming from the languages that have contributed to the Ndyuka vocabulary. Linguistic influence from these languages are also phonological, prosodic and morphosyntactic. Considerations on these kinds of influence are made in the chapter which deals with a sketch of the Ndyuka language.

##### **4.4.1 African languages as a source of the Ndyuka vocabulary by George L. Huttar (1985)**

G. Huttar conducted research on West African languages which contributed to the vocabulary of the Ndyuka language. The following table contains some Ndyuka words of Kwa and Banto Languages.



**Table 7: Ndyuka words derived from Kwa and Bantu languages**

	<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Kwa</b>	<b>Bantu</b>
<b>Mammals</b>	Nyuundu		ñ-yuundú ‘otter’
	Nzaú		Nzawu ‘elephant’
	Pingi		Mpingi ‘mouse’
	Púkúsu		lu-mpukusu ‘bat’
<b>Birds</b>	Mbakí		Nuni a mbáki ‘bird of prey’
	Kitikoóma	Gã á-klomá	Nkiti- nkiti ‘small hawk’
	Mbukóko ‘ibis, flamingo’		Mbulokoóko ‘blue plantain eater’
	Mpiye		Mpiya ‘toucan’
	Sansankila		PB –kila ‘tail’ K nsanza’ longtailed tyrant’
	Tótómboti		Tóótáńti, ntoto ñti ‘woodpecker’
<b>Reptiles</b>	Ángama ‘lizard’	Adangme agama’ chameleon’	
	<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Kwa</b>	<b>Bantu</b>
	Anyooká		Nyóka ‘serpent’
	Koo ‘turtle’	Ewe kló Gě è-kló Gu òklo	
	Mboma ‘boa constrictor’		Mboma ‘python’
	Vodú ‘snake’		ñ-vóólú ‘a small snake’
<b>Fish</b>	Siiba ‘minnow’	Awutu sriba	
<b>Invertebrates</b>	Anainsi ‘spider’	Akan anansi	
	Babé ‘butterfly’	Baule abèbé	Ki-mbèmba- mbémba Ki-mbémbéle
	Goóngóon ‘millipede’	Twí ã-kōrōŋ ‘kind of beetle’	PB kongolo
	Makonkón ‘grasshopper’		K kónko
	Nkólá ‘snail’		Nkódya, kóola
	<b>Natural inanimate objects</b>	b (u) wingi ‘fog, dust’	
	Muntyáma ‘rainbow’		Mu-kyáma
	Pémbá ‘white clay’		pèmba
	Puulú ‘bubble’		K pulúlu
<b>Body parts</b>	Ágba, ágwa ‘jaw’	Igbo àgbà	
	Agana ‘thigh’		Other: bisa gan ‘leg’
	Bánsa ‘side’ ‘rib’		mbaansya
	Búba ‘skin’	Yor. bubá	Búuba ‘habit’

	Fukufúku ‘lungs’	Yor. fùkúfúkù	
	Kúmba ‘navel’		CB-kóbu
	Mantámá ‘cheek’		K táma
<b>Bodily actions and conditions</b>	Bwásigwási ‘leprosy’		K bwási
	Dyónko ‘doze’	Twi tò ñkó	
	Fulá ‘blow’ ‘spray’		K fúla
	Káku ‘stotter’		káku
	Katanga ‘cramp’ foot asleep’		K nkatángá
	Kookóo ‘cough’	Twi ñ-kóŋkon	Ka-kohokoho
	Kumá ‘defecate’	Chakosi ‘kùmà	K kūuma
	Laú ‘insane’		K lāu
	(meke) múwa ‘to yawn’		K mwá
	<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Kwa</b>	<b>Bantu</b>
	Nyan ‘eat’		Wolof nyam Fula nyama
	Tikotiko ‘hiccough’	Gã, Awutu tikòtikò	
<b>Artifacts</b>	Afiti, aviti ‘animal trap’	Twi afidie, awutu efiri	
	Apitinn ‘message drum’	Akan, Twi mpintin	
	Dyembá (koosi) ‘cloth worn by men across one shoulder’		K dyèmba
	Doodó ‘chamber pot’	Adanme dudo	K dòodo
	Gá ‘arrow’	Ewe ga ‘arrow’	
	Kandú ‘charm against theft’		K kánda
	Kenti ‘house where oracle made of cloth is stored’	Akan kenté	
	Kiikii ‘branched stick for mixing food’	Chumburu kii ‘turn’	
	Kúla ‘boat pole, used bu kulaman at front of boat’		K nkúla
	Masanga ‘hut’		K sánga
	Masúa ‘fishtrap’		K ma-swá
	Mutate ‘woven backpack’		K mutete
	Obia ‘charm, medicine’	Awutu obire ‘charm’	
	Saká ‘rattle’	Aizi jaka	K sàka
	Sengee (nafi) ‘handleless knife’		K sengele
	Tutu ‘horn’		K túutu

<b>Foods</b>	Afufu ‘mashed bananas, etc’	Yor. Fùfú Akan fufú	K mfūmfu
	Doku ‘mashed cooked plantains’	Abbey òdúkō	
	Kpokpó, kwokwó ‘dumpling soup’	Akan kókó ‘porridge’	
	Tontón ‘mashed banas’; tontón tiki ‘stick for pounding food’		K ntóoto
<b>Other</b>	Ádúu, átúu ‘greeting accompanying embrace’	Twi atuu	
	<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Kwa</b>	<b>Bantu</b>
	Ákáá ‘soul/ shadow’	Twi akra	
	Awasá ‘dance’		Coming from other AF language: Hausa wasá ‘play’
	Bakaá ‘white man; outsider’	Ibo, Efik mbakára	
	Dyúku ‘poke’ stab’		Coming from other AF language: Fulani jukka
	Gandá ‘open public parts of the village’		K ngánda
	Kina ‘taboo’ allergy’		K nkinda
	Kokó ‘knob’	Yor. kóko	K kóko
	Kunu ‘avenging spirit’		K kúnu
	Nongo ‘proverb’		K nóngo
	Pii ‘ideophone for quiet, motionless’		K pii
	Pingi ‘pinch’	Nupe ‘piŋ’	
	Potopóto ‘soft, weak, muddy’		K poto-poto
	Tyakatyaka ‘messed up’mpointing in all directions		K tyákka, tyāka
	Tyóbo ‘dirty’		K tsobo, cf. nsòbo
	Tóin ‘ideophone for tiny’	Yor. tin	
	Tóko ‘war’	Nupe took ‘curse’	
	Tyali ‘regret’ sad’		K ky-ali
	Wowóyo ‘market’		K wówo ‘foule’

#### 4.4.2 Source: English

English is the main lexicifier language of the Suriname creoles. The other lexicifier languages are Dutch, Portuguese, and African languages.<sup>33</sup> There are also borrowings from Tupí-guaraní, Aruak and Kariban languages, as showed in the charts below:

**Table 8: Ndyuka words derived from English lexicifier**

Ndyuka	English
osu	house
doo	door
bika	because
peeti	plate
tapu	top
sitali	star
mun	moon
san	sun
liba	river
booko	break
baala	brother
wataa	water
faya	fire
dyali	yard
udu	wood
somoko	smoke

<sup>33</sup>Peter Bakker (2009) has found 473 verbs in Saramaccan, in total. According to him “It is undoubtedly true that my list does not contain the fulllexicon of Saramaccan verbs, but the list certainly contains a major part of the existing verbs. Most of the verbs are of Portuguese (174; 37 %) or English (159; 33 %) origin. Strangely enough, Portuguese verbs outnumber English verbs, even though the basic vocabulary of Saramaccan contains more English than Portuguese items. Smith and Cardoso (2004: 120) independently arrived at the same conclusion: they counted 275 verbs of English and Portuguese origin, where 121 (44%) were of English extraction, and 154 (56%) from Portuguese. If I restrict my count to the Portuguese- and English-derived verbs, my percentages are comparable (52% Portuguese, 48% English). The third biggest set consists of the verbs of unknown etymology (55). Many of these are probably African, but there may also be some unrecognized Portuguese or English verbs and verbs from other sources. The fourth largest set contains Dutch verbs (35) and the fifth one those from Gbe (27). Minor sources are Kikongo (5 verbs), Amerindian (1 verb from Kalina), Ingredient X (1) and Twi (1). In a number of cases an etymological source was impossible to decide upon because of the existence of similar source words. These etymological pairs number: Dutch-English (n), Dutch-Portuguese (1), English-Portuguese (1), Portuguese-Gbe (1), 1’wi-Gbe (1). Two percent of the etymologies are ambiguous, but none of these ambiguities would affect the following hierarchy, which is based on the number of identifiable etymologies of all identified verbs.”

asisi	ash
siton	stone
uwii	hair
sii	seed
lutu	root
ede	head
ain	eye
fesi ede	forehead
Fesi	face
nosu	nose
nosu olo	nostril
nosu tiki	bridge of the nose
sikin fesi	cheek
bon	bone
tapu	top
neki	neck
mofu	mouth
sikin	skin
tongo	tongue
tifi	teeth
bobi	breast
bobi ede	nipple
bendi	bend
bee	belly
futu	foot
ana	hand
fisi	fish
sineki	snake
nefi	knife
fatu	fat

kaw	cow
dagu	dog
pişi	piece
linga	ring
pali	paddle
boto	boat
sipi	ship
finga	finger
mindii finga	middle finger
tooto	throat
ondoo ana	underarm
baka	back
ondoo	under
ati	heart
boo	to blow
mun siki	menstruation
gi	give
eeye	yes
nono	no
fu	of or for
disi	this
yaaso	here
ipi	heap
fuu	full
ete	yet
silow	slow
wan	one
tu	two
dii	three
fo	four

mi	me
yu	you
den	they
sapaten	suppertime
mamanten	morning
bakadina	lit. 'back of dinner'/after dinner
mun	month
yali	year
fosi	first
koto	skirt
olo	hole
soy	show
sopu	soap
moo	more
toobi	trouble
koosube	close by
wei	wear
sawtu	salt
susu	shoes
lampu	lamp
sowtu	sort
supun	spoon
sutu	shoot
kuutu	court
buulu	blood
nombuu	number
duungu	drunk
wan sama	someone

wani	to want
anga	along
abaa	abroad
uman	woman
lolo	roll
faawe	far away
lon	run
ondoo	under
man	man
meke	to make
didon	lie down
kon	to come
sungu	sunk
se	side
dise	this side
gwe	go away
sidon	sit down
sende	to send
kai	call
pee	play
bai	buy
lemiki	lime
te	till
efu	if
ala ten	all time
ibii	every
ete	yet
ten	time
soo	sloth
opo	open



boli	boil
alisi	rice
tumisi	too much
silow	slow
yee	hear
ambaa	hammer
kofi	coffee
omen	how much/ many
ala	all
kande	can be
son	some
son ten	some time
tyaipi	till it heap
losi	roast
nyun	new
dede	death
kii	kill
kiin	clean
ati	hat
ati	hurt
piki	speak
piki	to pick
pooti	poverty
taki	talk
taa	tar
eside	yesterday
tamaa	tomorrow
tide	today
dei	day
now	now

alen	rain
afu	half
afu liki	after a while
first	fosi
lasiti	last
monde	monday
sataa	saturday
sonde	sunday
wan	one
dee	dry
beelee	bread
bifo	before

#### 4.4.3 Source: Dutch

**Table 9: Ndyuka words derived from Dutch lexifiers**

<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Dutch</b>	<b>Glossary</b>
kasi	kaas/ kast	closet
bon	boom	tree
tafaa	tafel	table
kelisi	kers	cherry
ananasi, nanasi	ananas	pineapple
apeesina	sinaasappel	orange
nangaa	nagel	nail
fanafu	vanaf	since
gaw	gauw	quick
kuguu	kogel	bullet
piisii	plezier	pleasure
yapon	japon	dress
puubei	proberen	to try

sopi	sopie	liquor
suwa	zuur	sour
sutuu	stoel	chair
yuu	uur	hour
winkii	winkel	store
mese	metseen	mason
kownu	koning	king
bowtu	bout	leg
bosooko	borstrok	tshirt
sooto	slot	lock
buduufu	bedroefd	sad
embee	emmer	bucket
bosu	bos	forest
amandaa	amandel	almond
toombo	trommel	case
doifi	duif	dove
sikapu	schaap	sheep
swalufu	zwafel	matches
woluku	wolk	cloud
suku	zoeken	search
guun	groen	green
bakuba	bacove	banana

#### 4.4.4 Souce: Portuguese

**Table 10: Ndyuka words derived from Portuguese lexifiers**

<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>	<b>Gloassary</b>
kodo	cada	each
kaba	acabar	finish
adyosi	adios	bye

guyaba	goiaba	guava
saaka	salgar	salty
kama	cama	room
sukuma	espuma	foam
kaabita	cabrita	goat
geme	gemer	to moan
siponsu	esponja	sponge
gotoo	esgoto	gutter
gagu	gago	stutter
pikin	pequeno	small
kai	cair	fall
subi	subir	to climb
feba	febre	fever
tyupa	chupar	to suck
pina	penar	poor
tan	estar/ estan	to be
pasa	passar	pass
taa	outra	other
gaan	grande	big
te	até	till
kaka	caca	poop
afo	avó	grandmother
tiyu	tio	uncle
tiya	tia	aunt
pai	pai da esposa ou do esposo	father
mai	mãe da esposa ou esposo	mother
baba	babar	drool
baiba	barba	beard

guli	engolir	to swallow
bakiyaw	bacalhau	codfish
sabi	saber	to know
fula	furar	to pierce
gafa	gabar	to boast
bun	bom	good

#### 4.4.5 Souce: Indigenous languages

**Table 11: Ndyuka words derived from Indigenous lexifiers**

<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Tupi-Guaraní</b>	<b>Glossary</b>
maakusa	marakujá	passion fruit
anamu	inamú	vulture
tamanuwa	tamanduá	ants eater
kasun	acaju	cashew
<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Aruak</b>	
amaka	hamaca	hammock
<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Karib</b>	
kaiman	kaman	crocodile
sipali	sipari	sting ray
nyamaa	aimara	kind of fish

#### 4.5 A Sketch of the Ndyuka language

This chapter presents a sketch of the Ndyuka language. Ndyuka and the other languages developed out the earlier Surinam creole, Proto-Saamaka, is unique in that it reunites the contribution of three main lexifier Indo-European languages: English, Portuguese and Dutch, besides the contributions of African languages, as well as the contribution of Indigenous languages from Suriname and adjacent regions.

This sketch highlights aspects of Ndyuka word classes, morphosyntactic and syntactic patterns, as well as some aspects of Ndyuka phonological system.

#### 4.5.1 Phonology

Ndyuka has oral vowels. Nasal vowels are short. Vowels are divided in front, central and back vowels. The following chart displays Ndyuka phonological vowels.

**Table 12: Vowels**

	Front	Central	Back
+ High	/i/ [i]		/u/ [u]
- high	/e/ [e] [ɛ]	/a/ [a]	/o/ [ɔ] [o]

Ndyuka has 14 consonant phonemes, as listed in Table 13, which are distributed over six places of articulation and seven manners of articulation.

**Table 13: Consonant phonemes; distributed over six places of articulation and seven manners of articulation.**

Point of articulation		Labial	Labiodental	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Manner of articulation							
<b>Occlusive</b>	Vl- voiceless Vd- voiced	/p/ [p] /b/ [b]		/t/ [t] /d/ [d]		/k/ [k] /g/ [g]	
<b>Affricate</b>	Vl Vd						
<b>Fricative</b>	Vl Vd		/f/ [f]	/s/ [s] [ʃ]			/h/ [h]
<b>Nasal</b>	Vd	/m/					

		[m̥] [m]		/n/[ŋ] [n] [ŋ] [n]			
<b>Lateral</b>	Vd			/l/ [ɭ]			
<b>Approximant</b>	Vd	/w/ [w]			/j/ [j]		

#### 4.5.2 Phonological processes

Coronal stops /t/, /d/, fricative /s/ and nasal /n/ palatalize following /j/:

/ndyuka/ [n̥d̥uʃka]

/maʃnyan/ [maʃɲã] ‘mango’

/syen/[ʃe] ‘shame’

Nasals consonants become syllabic word initially preceding stops:

/ndyuka/ [n̥d̥uʃka]

/mboma/ [m̥boʃma] ‘boa constrictor’

Nasal takes the point of articulation of the following obstruent word medially:

/nangaa/ [naʃgã] ‘nail’

/bansa/ [banʃsa] ‘side’

Vowels become nasalized preceding nasal consonants:

/aini/ [aĩni] ‘into’

/kambaa/ /kãmʃbaa/ ‘room’

/pen/ [pe<sup>h</sup>n] 'pain'

Ndyuka Syllable structure is (C1)(C2(V))(C3) where C3 is a velar nasal (n --> ŋ / \_# consonant, or w:

/mun/ [mu<sup>h</sup>n] 'moon'

/silow/ [si<sup>h</sup>low] 'slow'

Ndyuka presents sequence of two homorganic vowels:

mangii 'thin'

seefi 'self'

gaandi 'aged'

koo 'cold'

tuu 'true'

### Stress

Stress falls on the last syllable of a word.

/finga/ [fi<sup>h</sup>ŋga] 'finger'

/bansa/ [ban<sup>h</sup>sa] 'side'

/ndyuka/ [n<sup>h</sup>d<sup>h</sup>u<sup>h</sup>ka] 'Ndyuka'

### 4.6 Morphology and morphosyntax (Syntax)

The overall morphological profile of Ndyuka is typical of creole languages. It is an isolating language with few instances of derivation. Predicates may be headed by verbs, as well as by nouns, and adjectives. It has prepositions, adjectives precedes the head noun, as do articles, possessive pronouns and quantifiers. Adverbs follow the predicate, either the verb if it is intransitive, or the direct object if it is transitive. Questions expressions are clause initial



constituents. Ndyuka has a nominative alignment system and the basic word order is S V O DAT or S V DAT O.

#### **4.6.1 Word Classes**

Ndyuka open word classes include nouns and verbs (except auxiliaries and copulas). Claused classes include adjectives, adverbs, personal pronouns, articles/demonstratives, prepositions, conjunctions, exclamations, ideophones and discursive particles.

##### **4.6.1.1 Nouns**

Nouns have referents which may be concrete things, feelings, sensations, days of the week and months.

#### **Things**

osu

‘house’

wataa

‘water’

faya

‘fire’

#### **Feeling and Sensation**

lobi

‘love’

pen

‘pain’

koo

‘cold’

waan

‘warm’

### **Days of the week**

Some days consists of a single expression – Monday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The other days are formed by the juxtaposition of names of ordinal numbers followed by the word *wooko* ‘work’.

monde	‘Monday’
tude wooko	‘Tuesday’
diide wooko	‘Wednesday’
fode wooko	‘Thursday’
feeda	‘Friday’
sataa	‘Saturday’
Sonde	‘Sunday’

### **Months**

Months are expressed by the combination of names of ordinal numeral followed by the word *mun* ‘month’ and the word *fu baka yali* ‘of the year’.

<b>Mun</b>	<b>’Month’</b>
Fosi mun (fu baka yali)	‘first month’
Tu mun (fu baka yali)	‘February’ (second month)

Dii mun	‘March’ (third month)
Fo mun	‘April’ (forth month)
Feifi mun	‘May’ (fifth month)
Sigisi mun	‘June’ (sixth month)
Seibin mun	‘July’ (seventh month)
Aitin mun	‘August’ (eight month)
Neygin mun	‘September’ (ninth month)
Tin mun	‘October’ (tenth month)
Elufu mun	‘November’ (eleventh month)
Tualufu mun	‘December’ (twelfth month)

#### 4.6.1.1.1 Noun modifiers

Nouns are modified by articles/demonstratives, pronouns, adjectives and quantifiers. All of them precede the head noun.

#### 4.6.2 Articles

Ndyuka has two particles which fulfill the role of articles: *a* ‘definite’ and *wan* ‘indefinite’. Examples:

**Table 14: Definite and indefinite articles**

Definite		Indefinite	
A	osu	Wan	osu
The	house	A	house

A	fire	Wan	fire
The	fire	A	fire
A	lobi	Wan	Lobi
The	love	A	Love
A	pen	Wan	Pen
The	pain	A	Pain
A	koo	Wan	Koo
The	cold	A	Cold

#### 4.6.3 Nouns modified by pronouns

##### Possessive pronouns

Ndyuka possessive pronouns are the following:

**Table 15: Possessive pronouns**

Mi	‘my’
Yu	‘your’
En	‘his, her’
Wi	‘our’
Yu	‘your’
Den	‘their’

Examples:

*mi osu*

‘my house’

*en pen*

‘his/ her pain’

*den uman pikin*

‘their daughters’

*wi mati*

‘our friend’

*mi e go a mi kambaa*

I am go to my room

‘I am going to go to my room’

Ndyuka possessive constructions may consist of an expression with the preposition *fu* :

*a wagi fu en booko*

the car of her broken

‘The car of her is broken’ or ‘her car is broken’

*a poli pikin fu yu*

that/the spoiled child of yours

‘That/the spoiled child of yours’

#### 4.6.4 Demonstratives

Demonstratives are expressed by the particle *a*, which also functions as a definite article, by the third person possessive pronouns *en* ‘his/her’, and by *disi* ‘this’ and *dati* ‘that’

Examples:

*den osu yaaso bigi, ma dati pikin*

these house here big but that small

‘These houses are big, but that (house) are small’

*a disi moi moo a dati*

this beautiful more than that

‘This is more beautiful than that’

#### 4.6.5 Nombuu ‘numerals’

##### Cardinal

wan ‘one’

tu ‘two’

dii ‘three’

fo ‘four’

feifi ‘five’

sigisi ‘six’

seibin	‘seven’
aitin	‘eight’
neigin	‘nine’
tin	‘ten’
elufu	‘eleven’
tualufu	‘twelve’
tin na dii	‘thirteen (tin +dii) na’
tin na fo	‘fourteen’
twenti	‘twenty’
twenti anga wan	‘twenty one’
dii tenti	‘thirty’
dii tenti anga wan	‘thirty one’
fo tenti	‘forty’
fo anga wan	‘forty one’
feyfi tenti	‘fifty’
feyfi anga wan	‘fifty one’
sigisi tenti	‘sixty’
sigisi anga wan	‘sixty one’
wan ondoo	‘hundred’
tu ondoo	‘two hundred’
feyfi ondoo	‘five hundred’

dunsu                      ‘thousand’

Nouns in Ndyuka do not have plural forms.

wan boi	feifi boi
‘one boy’	‘five boys’
wan baasi	tu baasi
‘one balloon’	‘two balloons’
a buku	‘dii buku’
‘the book’	‘three books’
a boto	den boto
‘the boat’	‘the boats’
a pikin	fo pikin
‘the child’	‘four children’
a bomooki	‘aitin boomiki’
‘the flower’	‘eight flowers’

### **Ordinal**

a fosi wan	‘the first’
di fu tu	‘the second’
di fu dii	‘the third’
di fu fu fo	‘the forth’



di fu feifi	‘the fifth’
di fu sigisi	‘the sixth’
di fu seibin	‘the seventh’
di fu aitin	‘the eighth’
di fu neigin	‘the ninth’
di fu tin	‘the tenth’

#### 4.6.6 Adjectives

According to Dixon and Archenvald (p. 10), adjectives typically fill two roles in the grammar of a language:

(a) In a statement that something has a certain property. There are two syntactic techniques for coding this: (a-i), the adjective functions as intransitive predicate or (a-ii), the adjective functions as copula complement.

(b) As a specification that helps focus on the referent of the head noun in an NP that relates to a predicate argument. This is shown by the adjective functioning as a modifier within an NP. In each example, the modifying adjective is underlined. Examples of Ndyuka adjectives are the followings:

Adjectives in Ndyuka fill the two roles. Examples of adjectives are the followings:

hebi, ebi, ibi	‘heavy’
anga bali bali	‘noisy’
buduufu	‘sad’
tyali	‘sad’

kusumi 'worried'

ati boon 'angry'

Examples of adjectives modifying nouns:

moi uman 'beautiful woman'

bun manengee 'good man'

gaan osu 'big house'

pikin dyali 'small garden'

switi boomiki 'perfumed flower'

bun mati 'good friend'

piiti moni 'ripped money'

poli pikin 'spoiled child'

### **Antonyms adjectives**

big/small house                      gaan osu                      pikin osu

beautiful/ ugly dress                      moi yapon                      takuu yapon

big/ small tree                              bigi bon                      pikiŋ bon

clean/ dirty clothes                      kiin koosi                      tyobo koosi

strong/ weak man                              taanga man                      swaki man

fat/skinny cow                              fatu kaw                      mangii kaw

rich/ poor family	gudu famii	pina famii
happy/ sad boi	poolo boi	buduufu boi
new/ old car	nyun wagi	gaandi wagi
sweet/ sour apple	switi apaa	suwa apaa

### Examples

*poti a pikin saafi aini en kama*

put the child slowly in her/his bed

‘put the child slowly in her/his bed’

*kandi a wataa saafi saafi go aini a bidon*

put the water slow slow go into the tank

‘put the water very slow into the tank!’

### Ndyuka color adjectives

#### Examples:

geli ‘yellow’

taya ‘yellow’

baaw ‘blue’

guun ‘green’

baaka ‘black’

weti		‘white’
lebi		‘red’
asisi		‘grey’
sukaati		‘brown’

**Color adjectives as noun modifiers:**

baaw	tafaa	‘blue table’
geli	kan	‘yellow cup’
weti	foo	‘white bird’
lebi	boomiki	‘red flower’

Multiple adjectives modify a noun. Examples:

**Article-Noun-Adjective**

a	koosi	kiin	‘the clean cloth’
a	buku	deki	‘the thick book’
a	kuku	switi	‘the delicious cookie’
a	yapon	dii	‘the expensive dress’

**Article- Adjective-Noun**

a	booko	gaasi	‘the broken glass’
wan	bun	man	‘a good man’

wan gaandi mma                    ‘an old lady’  
a koni boi                            ‘an intelligent boy’

#### 4.6.7 Comparison

In this section I describe comparative structures in Ndyuka. According to Cuzzolin and Lehmann (2004), “in a **comparative construction** four elements are identifiable:

- (a) The element which is compared, the **comparee**, or **topic of comparison**;
- (b) The element that serves as **standard of comparison**;
- (c) The element, called the **pivot**, or **marker of comparison**, that introduces the standard of comparison;
- (d) The predicate that represents the **parameter of comparison**.

<i>John</i>	<i>is smart-er</i>	<i>than</i>	<i>Sam</i>
comparee	predicate-CMPR	pivot	standard

Ndyuka has three main types of comparative structures, which semantically are divided in comparative of superiority, comparative of inferiority, and comparative of equality. Comparative strategies are all syntactic and the pivot is a lexical morpheme.

#### Comparative of equality

<i>mi</i>	<i>koni</i>	<i>enke</i>	<i>yu</i>
I	intelligent	as	you

‘I am intelligent as you’

<i>mi</i>	<i>langa</i>	<i>enke</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>boi</i>	<i>de</i>
I	tall	as	DET	boy	there

‘I am tall like the boy over there’

*a geli yapon ya moi enke a lebi yapon*

The yellow dress here pretty like DET red dress

‘This yellow dress is as pretty as the red dress’

### **Comparative of Superiority:**

*a baaka susu betee moo a weti wan*

the black shoe better more the white one

‘The black shoe is better than the blue one’

*Zara pikin moo Damian*

Zara small more Damian

‘Zara is younger than Damian’

*Damian langa moo Zara*

Damian tall more Zara

‘Damian is taller than Zara’

*fu go anga opolani gaw moo enke fu go anga boto*

to go ass airplane hurry more than to go with boat

‘Going with the airplane is faster than going with the boat’

*a boi taanga moo a uman pikin*

the boy strong more the female child

‘The boy is stronger than the girl’

The pivot is the same in superiority and inferiority comparative constructions (*moo*), what distinguishes them is the semantics of the predicate nucleus.

*Damian langa moo Zara*

Damian taller than Zara

‘Damian is taller than Zara’

*Zara pikin moo Damian*

Zara small than Damian

‘Zara is younger than Damian’

Ndyuka has also a superlative expression, as shown by the examples below:

*a moo moi wan*

the more beautiful one

‘The most beautiful’

*a moo takuu wan*

the more ugly one

‘The most ugly’

*a moo gaan dyamanti moo dii*

The more big diamond more expensive

‘The bigger diamond is more expensive’

#### 4.6.8 Prepositions

Ndyuka has prepositions. The following are the Ndyuka prepositions exemplified in full clauses:

***anga*** ‘associative’

*mi e go anga yu*

me prog go ASS you

‘I am going with you’

***aini*** ‘inessive’

*a meti de aini a patu*

the meat is INESS the pot

‘The meat is in the pot’

*den buku de aini a kasi*

the book COP INESS the box



‘The books are inside the box’

**tapu** ‘on’

*a patu de tapu a tafaa*

the put COP on the table

‘The pot is on the table’

**naase fu** ‘directive’

*mi e go na se fu Brasília*

I progr go DIR side to Brasília

‘I am going to Brasília’

**gi** ‘dative’

*mi sende wan buku gi yu*

I send a book DAT you

‘I sent a book to you’

**ondoo** ‘under’

*a apaa ① kai ondoo a boy*

the apple PERF fall under the tree

‘The apple fell under the tree’

*a boto* Ⓟ *sunḡu.*      *a de ondoo wataa*  
the boat PERF sink      it COP under water

‘The boat sunk. It is underwater’

***mindii***      ‘**perlative**’

*pasa mindii den sama*  
pass through the person

‘To pass through the persons’

*mi e go mindii a staati*  
I PROGR go by the street

‘I am going in the middle of the street’

***a***      ‘**static locative**’

*mi de a osu*  
I COP the house

‘I am at home’

*den de a sikoo*  
they COP the school

‘They are at school’

**na ~ a ‘dynamic locative’**

mi go na sikoo

I go to school

‘I went to school’

mi e lon na a dyali

I PROG ran at the garden

‘I am running in the garden’

a fesi ‘in front’

baka ‘behind’

se ‘beside’

fu ‘for’

*gi en wataa fu a (fa) koo en ati (koaati)*

give him/her water for calm.down him/her heart

‘Give him water to calm down’

**4.6.9 Verbs**

Verbs are intransitive, transitive and ditransitive, according to the number of complements they take: intransitive (one complement), transitive (two complements), and ditransitive (three complements).

Ndyuka has the following personal pronouns which occur as subject of predicates—verbal, as well as nominal predicates.

**Table 16: Personal pronouns**

<b>Subject personal pronouns</b>	
Mi	'I'
yu, i	'you'
a	'he, she, it'
wi, u	'we'
yu, u	'you'
den	'they'

**Examples of intransitive verbs:**

*mi e siibi*  
I PROG sleep  
'I am sleeping'

*yu e siibi*  
I PROG sleep  
'You are sleeping'

*a e siibi*  
he/she PROG sleep  
'He/she is sleeping'

**Examples of transitive verbs**

*mi e aliki a poku*  
I PROG listen the music  
'I am listening to the music'

*yu e aliki a poku*  
you PROG listen the music  
'You are listening to the music'

### **Ditransitive verbs**

*mi e sende wan buku gi yu*  
I PROG send a book for you  
'I am sending a book for you'

*mi sende wan buku gi yu*  
I PROG a book to you  
'I am sending a book to you'

*Dayenne o gi mi wan yapon*  
Dayenne PROG give me a dress  
'Dayenne will give me a dress'

*Dayenne ① gi mi wan yapon*  
Dayenne PERF give me a dress  
'Dayenne gave me a dress'

#### 4.6.10 Adverbs

Adverbs in Ndyuka are manner, time, doubt, quantifier adverbs, among others. In the following, I have presented the types of adverbs identified in Ndyuka.

##### Time adverbs

ten	‘time’
alaten	‘always’
ibii yuu	‘always’
sonten	‘sometime’
eside	‘yesterday’
taa eside	‘the day before yesterday’
tamaa	‘tomorrow’
taa tamaa	‘the day after tomorrow’
tide	‘today’
now	‘now’
fosi	‘before’
baka	‘after’

Other expressions of time:

den dei a fesi	‘in the future’
wan tu ten pasa	‘some time ago’

afu liki	‘after some time’
taa yali	‘next year’
a yali di e kon	‘next year’
a yali di pasa	‘last year’
senten	‘since’
a wiki di pasa	‘last week’
now fosi	‘now before’
now now	‘now’

**Quantifier adverbs are the following:**

ala	‘all’
ibii/ inii	‘every’
ibii/ inii	‘each’
afu	‘half’
tyaipi	‘many’
tyaipi or fuu	‘much’
pikinso	‘little, few’
‘hii or hii hii	‘whole’
kodo	‘only’
difeenti	‘different or various’
tyaipi	‘many’

sowan 'some',

nawan 'none'

### **Manner adverbs**

buduufu 'sadly'

tyali 'sadly'

kusumi 'sadly'

ati boon 'bitterly'

moo moo 'especially'

gaw 'fast'

saafi 'slow'

feke 'light'

lekiti 'light'

esi 'fast'

silow 'slow'

### **Doubt adverbs**

kande 'maybe'

kande 'perhaps'



## Locative adverbs

koosube	‘near’
faawe	‘far’
fu ape go anda	‘from there to there’
fu ya go anda	‘from here to there’
kukutu	‘left’
leti	‘right’

Adverbs modify verbs following its head if the verb is intransitive:

Examples:

kon esi baka  
come fast again  
‘Come quickly again!’

kon esi esi!  
come fast fast  
‘Come quick’

*yu e nyan gaw tumisi*  
you PROG eat fast much  
‘You are eating very fast’

*a soo na wan silow meti*  
art slow cop art.ind slow animal  
'The sloth is a very slow animal'

*bee moo yu. yu nyan ipi tumisi*  
belly much you you eat much too much  
'You are full. You ate too much'

When the nucleus of a predicate is a transitive verb, the adverb follows the object:

*aliki a toli fini fini baa*  
Listen the story carefully please  
'Please listen to the story carefully'

*kandi a wataa saafi saafi go aini a bidon*  
put the water slow slow go into the tank  
'Put the water very slow into the tank!'

*poti a pikin saafi aini en kama*  
put the child quietly in her/his bed  
'Put the child quietly in her/ his bed!'

### **Examples of adverbs modifying nouns:**

*ala osu*  
'all houses'

difeenti      lobi  
'various      love'

tyaiipi      pen'  
'lots of      pain'

nawan      koo  
'no      cold'

sowan      mati  
'a certain      friend'

pikin so      wata  
'a little      water'

mi      na abi      fuu      mati  
1      not have      many      friend  
'I do not have many friends'

### **Some restrictions**

The quantifier *pikin so* 'few' modify only nouns whose referents are non countable, such as *feba* 'fever', *wataa* 'water', *koo* 'cold', *waan* 'warm'. On the other hand, quantifiers such as, *tyaiipi* 'many' and *fuu* 'much' are used with both, countable and non countable nouns.

### **4.6.11 Exclamations**

Exclamations or interjections in Ndyuka are expressed by words. We have found exclamations that convey surprise, sadness, pleasure, anger, strong emotion, skepticism. A list of exclamation is presented below:

kee/ keebaa	(aah) (ooh)	‘when you hear a sad news/story’
ooho!	oh	‘when you are surprised’
tan!	what!	‘when you are surprised or mad’
san!	what	‘when you are surprised’
gaanga!	wow/ what	‘when you are surprised’

Examples in context:

kee, luku fa a tyali	oh, what sad!
keebaa u ná abi koni fu en	ah, we cannot help it!
ooho! a man didibii ye!	oh, that man is very evil!
oho! fa i taki?	oh, is that so?
tan! a naki yu baka?	what! did he/she hit you again?
ta n! mi o soi yu!	what! i will teach you a lesson!
sán! a man dede!	what! the man died!
gaanga! so fuu?	wow! That is too much!

### **Ideophones**

Sound symbolism is a pervasive fact in Ndyuka discourse. We present here some of Ndyuka ideophones:

tya kum tya kum	‘sound of chewing’
tyublum/ tyublun	‘sound of something falling in the water’

dyubuu/ dubuu	‘something going under water’
kin kin kin	‘the sound someone make while eating and hitting the plate with the spoon’
kein kein kein	‘the sound someone make while eating and hitting the plate with the spoon’
	‘when you hit something for example you are sharpening a iron knife’
kuwéen	‘squeaky sound when opening a door’
gbarra	‘sound when you pushing a table or a chair’
gbolo gbolo	‘drinking water fast’
gbien/ gbei	‘when someone/ something fell hard on the floor/ the ground’
	‘the sound of a shooting gun or the sound of fireworks’
gbei	‘hitting someone hard’
brrrr	‘shivering when it is cold/ when you drink something very bitter’
tyuwa tyuwa	‘footsteps of someone walking’
tyoloôh	‘pouring water from a kettle into a cup’
dyuluûh	‘when it is raining very hard’
tow tow	‘the sound of raindrops or a tap that is not closed tight’
gwaw/ gwow	‘the sound of something breaking for example a branch’
gblai	‘when its slippery and someone fell’
gbein gbein gbein	‘the sound of a church bell’
tyaf	‘lighting a match’

heii	‘when you are scared to see something nasty’
gbolow	‘when someone or something fell unexpectedly’
holow	‘when you are tired and sit fast on the floor’
gbo bgolow	‘when you get up very quickly and start running’
pii/ shhh	‘silence’
fai fai	‘the sound of cutting grass or little branches’
kokoliyekee	‘sound of a roaster’
ko ko ko ko ko	‘knocking on the door’
gbiie gbiie	‘hitting someone’
kelllin	‘phone ringing’
zaw	grabbing something out of someone’s hand
tuke tuke	breathing heavily
gbiem gbieliem	rolling of the thunder
gee	to burp
koso koso	coughing
dyuguu	the face someone make when he is very angry
kien kien	holding someone very tight or when something is closed very tight
guwaa guwaa	when someone is rough
tyuwa tyuwa	when someone walks away madly/ when someone walks firmly
dyuluúh	when something is completely wet

guwii a bottle	/when you putting weight to open something for example opening
kuwii	pinching someone or getting pinched
tyu tyuwi tyuwi	in the early morning (sounds of birds)
falaw	throwing something far away
nyalaw nyalaw	lightening striking or something glittery or something that is shiny
mukii	smiling
hmmm	when someone is surprised

#### 4.6.12 Conjunctions

Ndyuka has the following conjunctions:

neen	‘then ’
di	‘when’

Example:

*di mi doo osu neen a be boli*  
 when I reach house then she was cooking

‘When I reached home she was cooking’

da ‘than’

Example:

*mi o kon a yu da wi o go koi*

I will come to you than we will go out

‘I will come to you than we will go out’

a *winsi/ winsi* ‘no matter’

Example:

*awinsi san pasa mi o tan biibi*

No matter what happen I will keep believe

‘I will keep believing no matter what happens’

*moo* ‘than’(comparison)

Example:

*tide waan moo eside*

Today warm than yesterday

‘Today is warmer than yesterday’

*te* ‘when’

Example:

*te yu doo da yu piki mi*

When you reach than you tell me

‘Tell me when you reached’



ma 'but'

Example:

*boli ma na poti fuu sawtu*

Cook but do not put a lot salt

'Cook but do not put a lot of salt'

#### 4.6.13 Predicates

##### 4.6.13.1 Non-verbal predicates

Ndyuka distinguishes four types of non-verbal predicates: equative predicates, inclusive predicates, attributive predicates, and locative predicates.

Equative predicates contain the copula (particle) *na* followed by a noun. Clauses with equative predicates have a SP (subject -predicate) order.

Examples:

*mi na Ficenca*

I COP Ficenca

'I am Ficenca'

*en na mi pa*

he is my father

'he is my father'

en    na    Maria  
She   is    Maria  
‘She is Maria’

en    na    basi  
he    is    chief  
‘he is chief’

#### 4.6.13.2 Inclusive predicates

Non-verbal inclusive predicates differ from equative predicates in that the noun in the predicate is marked by the indefinite article *wan*, which does not occur in equative predicates. The inclusive predicate also contains the particle copula *na*, as does the equative predicates.

Examples of inclusive predicates:

en    na    wan    dataa  
she   is    a    doctor  
‘she is a doctor’

mi    na    wan    boliman  
I    am    a    cook  
‘I am a cook’

#### 4.6.13.3 Atributive predicates

Atributive predicates are predicates headed by an adjective. This kind of predicate has no copula verb, just the adjective nucleus.

*a    koosi   lebi*

the cloth red

‘The cloth is red

*a bon pikin*

the tree small

‘The tree is small’

*a te faya*

the tea hot

‘The tea is hot’

*a embee fuu*

the bucket full

‘The bucket is full’

#### **4.6.13.4 Locative predicates**

Locative predicates are non-verbal predicates which contain the copulative constructin *de* + *a* followed by a locative expressions. Examples:

*a pikin de a ini a liba*

the child COP in the river

‘The child is in the river’

*den koosi de a ini a bokusu*

the clothes COP in the box

‘The clothes are in the box’

*a boi de a mi ba:la*

that boy COP my brother

‘that boy is my brother’

#### **4.6.13.5 Verbal predicates**

Verbal predicates have a verb as its head. In the indicative mood, the basic word order is SV(O) (DAT) and auxiliaries (aspect markers) precede the verb:

*den boomiki e sumee switi*

the flower PROGR smell good

‘The flowers smell good’

In transitive constructions objects follow the verb:

Ditransitive constructions present word orders: S V DAT O or S V O DAT

S V DAT O

*a gi mi wan buku*

he/she give me a book

‘He/she gives me a book’

*Dayenne na e (nai) gi mi wan yapon*

Dayenne NEG PROGR give me a dress

‘Dayenne is not giving me a dress’

*Dayenne á gi mi wan yapon*

Dayenne NEG DAT me a dress

‘Dayenne did not give me a dress’

*Dayenne na o go (naw) gi mi waŋ yapon*

Dayenne NEG PROGR give me a dress

‘Dayenne will not give me a dress’

V O DAT

*mi na e (nai) sende wan buku gi yu*

I NEG PROGR send a book DAT you

‘I am not sending a book for you’

*mi no (mya) sende waŋ buku gi yu*

I NEG send a book DAT you

‘I did not send a book for you’

*mi na o go (naw) sende waŋ buku gi yu*  
 I NEG PROGR send a book DAT you

‘I will not send a book for you’

#### 4.6.14 Tense, aspect and mood

There are four mood expressions in Ndyuka: indicative, gerund, subjunctive and imperative.

The indicative mood expresses assertions and combines subject personal pronouns with auxiliaries. Ndyuka has three aspect/tense markers. They are analyzed here as auxiliaries. They contribute to aspectual meanings but also may make reference to tense. The *e* auxiliary marks the progressive aspect, and corresponds to the present tense in some contexts. The perfective aspect, which has a zero mark, also may coincide with the notion of present tense. The projective aspect in turn also corresponds to a future notion. It is expressed by means of the auxiliary *o*. In the constructions with auxiliary verbs, it is the auxiliary that combines with subject pronouns, like in English ‘I go to sleep’, or as in Portuguese ‘eu vou dormir’.

#### Progressive aspect

*mi e siibi*  
 I PROGR sleep  
 ‘I am sleeping’

*yu e siibi*  
 you PROGR sleep  
 ‘you are sleeping’

*a e siibi*  
 he/she PROGR sleep  
 ‘He or she is sleeping’

*wi e siibi*  
we    PROGR sleep  
'We are sleeping'

*den e siibi*  
they    PROGR dormir  
'They are sleeping'

### **Perfective aspect**

*mi siibi*  
i            sleep  
'I slept'

*yu siibi*  
you    sleep  
'You slept'

*a siibi*  
he/she sleep  
'He/she slept'

*wi siibi*  
we    sleep

‘We slept’

*den siibi*

they sleep

‘They slept’

**Projective aspect**

*mi ogo siibi*

mi PROJ sleep

‘I am going to sleep’

*yu ogo siibi*

you PROJ sleep

‘You are going to sleep’

*a ogo siibi*

he/she PROJ sleep

‘He/she is going to sleep’

*wi ogo siibi*

we PROJ sleep



‘We are going to sleep’

den ogo siibi

they PROJ sleep

‘They are going to sleep’

### **Cliticization of subject personal pronouns**

Subject pronouns may criticize on the auxiliary verb, yielding the following results:

mi + e = mye

mi e go na skoo > mye go na skoo

‘I am going to school’

mi + o > myo

Mi o go na winkii > myo go na winkii

‘I will go to school’

di + e > dye

A yali di e kon > a yali dye kon

‘Coming next year’

a + e > ae ~ ai

a e waka > ai waka

‘He/she is walking’

den + e > dee

den e siibi > dee siibi

‘They are sleeping’

yu + o > yo

yu o abi > yo abi

‘You will have’

a + o > aw

a o kai > aw kai

‘He/she will fall’

wi + o > wo

wi o go wooko > wo go wooko

‘We will go to work’

gi + en > gyen

gi en wan apaa > gyen wan apaa

‘Give her an apple’

Fa +a > faa

Fa a exame go? > faa exame go?

‘How did the exam go?’

Fu + a > fa

A wani wataa fu a wasi en ana > a wani wataa fa wasi en ana

‘He wants water to wash his hands’

### **The verb *abi* ‘to have’**

With the verb *abi* ‘to have’ the progressive aspect behaves differently. It is marked with its zero allomorph.

*mi*    ①    *abi*

i        progr    have

‘I have’

*yu*    ①    *abi*

you    progr    have

‘You have’

*a*      *abi*

he/she have

‘He/she has’

*wi abi*

we have

‘We have’

*den abi*

they have

‘They have’

The perfective aspect is marked by the auxiliary *ben*:

*mi ben abi*

I rlz have

‘I had’

*yu ben abi*

you perf have

‘You had’

*a ben abi*

he/she perf have

‘He/she had’

wi    ben    abi

we    rlz    have

‘We had’

den    ben    abi

they    rlz    ter

‘They had’

#### **4.6.15 Imperative**

In the imperative mood, there is no subject expression. The single verbal word distinguishes the imperative from other moods.

Examples:

*siibi!*

sleep!

*poti    pikin so    alisi!*

put    a little    rice

‘put a little rice!’

*poti    a    pikin    saafi    aini    en    kama*

put    the    child    quietly in    her/his bed

‘Put the child quietly in her bed’

#### 4.6.16 Gerund

The gerund mood is expressed by means of the reduplication of the predicate nucleus:

*mi doo singi singi*

I arrive sing sing

‘I came in singing’

*diingi a wataa saafi saafi*

drink the water slow slow

‘Drink the water slowly’

*a patu de kiin kiin*

the pot is clean clean

‘The pot is clean’

*a diingi mu de koo koo*

the drink must be cold cold

‘The drink must be cold’

#### 4.6.17 Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is marked either by the particle *te* ‘when’ (imperfective) or by the particle *di* ‘when’ (perfective):

*te    yu    doo   mi    o    gwe*  
when you come i will leave

‘When you come, I will leave’

*di    a    doo   mi    be    gwe   kaba*  
when she arrive I was leave already

‘When she arrived I already left’

#### 4.6.18 Serial verbs

Ndyuka has serial verb constructions. As defined by Haspelmath (2015, p.6), “A serial verb construction is a monoclausal construction consisting of multiple independent verbs with no element linking them and with no predicate-argument relation between the verbs.” The motion verb may be adjacent to the main verb or not. The following examples from Ndyuka have the main verb and a motion verb (in bold):

*kandi a    wataa saafi saafi   **go**   aini   a   bidon*  
put the water very.slow   **go** into the tank

‘Put the water very slow into the tank!’

**lon**   kon   esi esi  
**run**   come quickly

‘Come quickly’

#### 4.6.19 Negation

Ndyuka has two marks of negation: *a* and *na*. In certain construction negation may be expressed either by *á* or by *ná*.

*Ana á de a osu*

Ana NEG COP the house

‘Ana is not home’

*A ná Ana du en*

her NEG Ana do it

‘Ana did not do it’

They may also occur negating a single predicate:

*mi a ná bakaa*

I neg neg white man

‘I am not a white’

*a ná tamaa ma tide*

NEG NEG tomorrow but today

‘It is not tomorrow, but today’



*a na apé!*

NEG NEG there

‘Not there!’

In other constructions only *na* occurs:

*mi na o go na winkii*

I neg proj go dir store

‘I won’t go to the store’

*u na e yee a poku*

we neg prog hear the music

‘We do not hear the music’

#### 4.6.20 Coordination

Coordination of two independent clauses is made by means of the conjunction *neen*:

*a go a winkii neen a bai patata*

she go the store and she buy potato

‘She went to the supermarket and bought potatoes’

*mi wasi neen mi siibi*

‘I took a shower and I slept’

*u bai koosi neen a bai susu*

We buy clothes and she buy shoes

‘We bought clothes and she bought shoes’

#### 4.6.21 Subordination

##### Adverbial clauses

There are six main types of adverbial clauses in Ndyuka: temporal, reason, conditional, consecutive, concessive and final.

##### Temporal

*di a doo mi be gwe kaba*

when she arrive I be leave already

‘When she arrived I had already left’

*di yu telefon mi mi be e wasi*

When you telephone me me be PROGR wash

‘When you gave me a call I was taking a shower’

*di a kon luku mi mi be e leli*

When he come see me me be PROGR study

‘When he visited me I was studying’

## Reason

*mi e gwe bika a e lati*

I      PROGR leave      because      it      PROGR late

‘I am leaving because it is getting late’

*mi mu gwe ma mi ná abi moni*

I      must      leave but      I      do not have      money

‘I must leave but I do not have money’

*a mu gwe ma a ná abi moni*

She      must      leave but      she      does not have      money

‘She has to leave but she does not have money’

*Clyde gwe bika a be mu go teke en pikin*

Clyde leave because      he      was      must go      take      his      child

‘Clyde left because he had to pick up his child’

## Consecutive clauses

*a man diingi a sopi te ne a fika duungu duungu*

The      man      drink the      liquor much that      he      stay      very drunk

‘The man drank the liquor too much that he became very drunk’

## Concessive clauses

*a taki a á go koi ala dati a go koi*

he say he does not go travel although he go travel  
'Although he traveled, he said that he did not travel'

*a kon a ini a winkii sondee a abi moni*  
he come in the store without he have money  
'He entered the store without having money'

### **Final**

*gi en wataa fu koo en ati*  
give her water to calm down her heart

'Give her water to calm down'

*mi doo ma na fu tyai yu anga mi*  
I come but NEG to take you with me

'I came but not to take you with me'

*mi kon fu leli*  
I come to study

'I came to study'

*a doo fu kiin a osu*  
he arrive to clean the house

'He arrived to clean the house'

#### 4.7 A comparison of two Creole languages: Sranan tongo and Ndyuka

As said before Sranan tongo is the lingua franca of Suriname. It is also known as “*taki taki*”. Sranan tongo is not only spoken by almost every ethnic group in Suriname but it is also the native language of the Creoles.

The Ndyuka language is very similar to the Aluku, Kwinti and Paamaka languages, and to a large extent mutually intelligible with Sranan tongo. The Saamaka language has similarities with the Matawai (H. EERSEL, 1989, p. 14)

I will compare these two English based Creole languages; Ndyuka and Sranan tongo in the table below to demonstrate that they are different but also closely related to each other:

**Table 17: A short demonstration of the Ndyuka language and Sranan tongo**

<b>Ndyuka</b>	<b>Sranan tongo</b>	<b>Glossary</b>
kondee	kondre	‘country’
eside	esde	‘yesterday’
wooko	wroko	‘work’
buku	buku	‘book’
pikin	pikin	‘small’
yuu	yuru	‘hour’
taki	taki	‘talk
tee	tere	‘tail’
koli	kori	‘seduce/ betray’
lafu	lafu	‘laugh’
osu	oso	‘house’
tyali	sari	‘sad’
membee	memre	‘remember’
wei	weri	‘wear’
koosi	krosi	‘cloth’
baala	brada	‘brother’
di fu tu	di fu tu	‘the second’

musude	musudey	‘dawn’
mun	mun	‘month’
feeda	freyda	‘Friday’
baka	baka	‘back’
kai	fadon	‘fall’

#### **4.8 General considerations**

In this chapter I mentioned some phonological, morphological and syntactic information of the Ndyuka grammar. The main idea has been to demonstrate the importance of a linguistic analysis of the Ndyuka language by a Ndyuka representative. In fact this is the first time a member of the Ndyuka tribe has developed a linguistic study of the Ndyuka grammar in a linguistic perspective. Although the present sketch contemplates only general features and patterns of the Ndyuka grammar it will be very useful for Ndyuka teachers who have no linguistic familiarity with their native language. I expect to continue studying my mother tongue linguistically and present new results in near future.

## **Chapter V. Language policy in Suriname**

### **5.1 Linguistic diversity and language policy in Suriname**

Language policy probably started in Suriname from the moment Suriname became a Dutch colony in 1667. The language situation can be divided according to the following periods:

- The Europeans (Portuguese-Jews, British and Dutchmen) were all speaking their own language respectively Portuguese, English and Dutch. There were also some French speakers, but Dutch became the dominant language.
- In the seventeenth century the spoken Indigenous languages reported were from Caraib and Aruák genetic origin.
- The Africans came with the Europeans as slave. There is evidence that Africans were still speaking their native languages at least for two or three generations after their arrival in Suriname. Those were mainly languages from the genetic groups Kwa and Bantu. The Sranan tongo was the language developed out of English and African slaves in the early colonizing period of Suriname by the British. This language evolved as a Creole language with the contributions of Dutch and Portuguese, becoming the lingua franca of Suriname.
- At the Second World War period it got to be known as “Negro English”, as it was viewed as a sort of ‘broken’ English spoken by Africans.

### **5.2 Language and education policy in a Dutch empire**

Even with the abolition in 1863, the slaves were not completely free. They were obliged to work for ten more years on the plantations gaining a small compensation. Till the nineteenth century, the slaves were not allowed to speak, to read and to write in Dutch. They were liberated to learn Dutch only in 1844, and in 1855 they were allowed to participate in the Dutch writing system. As in 1876 Dutch became the language of instruction in education, the compulsory education had been set for children from seven to twelve years. This language policy did not include the education of the Maroons because the government was afraid that the Maroons would then move to the towns, as observed by H. Eersel (1997, p. 214-215) and by L. Gobardhan-Rambocus (2006, p. 134).

In fact, until 1863 there was not a specific language and cultural policy in Suriname. The colonial government did not appreciate other cultures so that the Maroon languages were not included in their language policies. This situation has changed with the arrival of the Protestant mission, whose goal was to convert people, for whom they needed to learn the languages of Suriname; including the languages of the Indigenous people and the languages of the slaves, the languages of the free black people, and the languages of the Maroons (see H. EERSEL, 1997, p. 211-212).

However, the Dutch colonial government never aimed at a multilingualism policy. On the contrary, they wanted to promote and create a Dutch Christianized national identity in Suriname. Education was viewed then as an instrument to develop this Dutch society. With the introduction of a compulsory education, the Dutch strengthened their dominant position in Surinamese society. Any element of African cultural origin had to be destroyed. The slaves could be imprisoned if they would practice their culture. In school, it was forbidden for children to speak their mother tongue, and parents were forced to teach their children in Dutch. Also, the churches were threatened with the suspension of subsidies if they continued to teach in Sranan tongo (see H. EERSEL, 1997, p. 215).

In reality, the Dutch dominant regime did not work at all, in spite of making several attempts to forbid the non-Dutch population from speaking their mother tongue and to practice their own culture.

### **5.3 The Mission and education in the interior of Suriname**

When the Dutch government introduced compulsory education in the country, it was not applicable to the Ndyuka people since they were geographically isolated from the coastal plain of Suriname<sup>34</sup>. Their distance from Paramaribo made it impossible to be part of the Dutch educational process, civil service and welfare system. In one of the articles of the peace treaty with the Ndyuka it was stated that they were free to live wherever they wanted as long as they had permission in advance from the government. However, their settlements and the nearest

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<sup>34</sup> The Ndyuka and other maroons society have always been in geographic isolation first of all because the treaty from 1760, forbidding them to surpass the geographic boundary imposed by the colonial government.



plantation should be at least 10 hours, which meant that they were forbidden to have any contact with the plantations<sup>35</sup>. For these reasons it was even more difficult for the Ndyuka to be part of the ongoing educational process.

After the abolition of slavery in July 1863, the Roman Catholic education was extended to the interior of Suriname. This was the beginning of formal education in the interior. The Mission and education governmental sector went hand in hand. They gave children instructions, teaching them how to read and sing, at the same time trying to Christianize them, as their main aim was Christianity (see H. EERSEL, 1997, p. 212-213).

The Missionaries played besides education also a role in the area of healthcare. Like education, healthcare was a way to convert people into Christianity.

In 1915, the first school was founded in Langa oekoe, a village in Cottica. Three other villages had to share it because there were not sufficient schools in the area. The students wanted to go to school, but the parents prevented the children from doing so because they wanted their children to help in farming as they used to. They did not see any benefits from Western education. Western education had no value in their village, viewed then as a waste of time. They could spend more time learning the skills they needed in their own environment which allowed them to live and survive rather than spending time on the education of the white men which would drive children away from their own culture. Parents believed that their children would leave for the city and that they would have no appreciation for their own culture and community. The school performance of the children was very poor according to Köbben (1979), and there was a lack of teaching materials in the village. This maybe could have changed the behavior of the parents about western education if there were reading material available. Another reason why education was not successful was because the Dutch education system was totally strange to them. They did not understand the words at all. They did not know these strange words in their society so they thought it was not useful in their community. There was a lot of resistance to send girls to school. Parents thought their daughters were better off to learn their culture to be a good and respectful woman than focus on western education that would not contribute in their upbringing (A. KÖBBEN, 1979, p. 160-165).

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<sup>35</sup> For the treaties between the Maroons and settlers we rely on Kambel, Ellen-Rose, and Fergus MacKay., *Rechten van Inheemse Volken En Marrons in Suriname* (2003, p. 31-60)

According to Mr. B. Eersteling (ELIZA, 2014) there is a classification of the development of education in the interior. It is divided into four periods, namely<sup>36</sup>:

- Evangelism or Gospel Education (1765-1850)
- *Boslandonderwijs* ‘Interior education’ (1850-1929)
- Restricted Lower Education (Bosland Akte) (1929-1969)
- 1969-present: declared by law to primary education

No schools were built in the interior and other rural areas of Suriname. If there were schools, they were only insufficient numbers of missionary schools. There was a divergence between quality of education provision in Paramaribo and the other areas. They had to work with larger groups of children in one class and were the ones who got a much lower salary in comparison with the teachers in the coastal area. The teachers were poorly trained, were not fully qualified to teach or were not qualified at all. To solve the shortage of teachers in the districts, local people were recruited and trained by the Moravian mission. The local teachers who were trained could possess a “Bosland Akte” This is a special document that an inhabitant of the district could get after finishing the training that was specially focused on education of the interior (GOBARDHAN-RAMBOCUS, 2001) .

According to H. Eersel (1997, p. 210), the linguistic situation of the spoken languages in Suriname since the mid-nineteenth century can be briefly described as the following:

- Dutch: the only official language and language used in basic education.
- Sranan tongo: the general contact language or lingua franca.
- The Asian group languages: Hakka or Keija (Chinese), Sarnami (Hindi), Surinamese Javanese.
- The Indigenous languages: various Caribbean and Aruak languages.
- Maroon languages: Saamaka, Ndyuka, Matawai, Aluku, Paamaka, Kwinti

According to Hein Eersel (1997, p. 219-220) there were discussions about multilingualism in education. It was previously discussed that the Surinamese children could at

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<sup>36</sup> F. Eliza (2014, p. 28, 29)

least get primary education in their native language, but unfortunately these plans were never implemented. In the sixties, a pedagogical institute for kindergarten teachers was established. Teachers had to teach children between four and eight years old. The school programme had two divisions: kindergarten and primary school. During the first two years (kindergarten), the language used in educating would be their mother tongue, while Dutch would be the language used during other activities such as games, singing sections, painting and other creative or recreation activities. However, this initiative partly failed, because there were no learning materials written in the mother tongue of the children.

There have been some Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and Ethnic movements<sup>37</sup> that sought to restore their own language and culture, but since independence in 1975, the Surinamese government has not introduced any new language policy (see H. EERSEL, 1997, p. 220).

According to Mr. Chin A Sen, Miss. Velanti, and Miss. Panka from the Ministry of Education and Development in Suriname (INTERVIEW, ELIZA, 2017), the government of this multi ethnic society should have paid more attention to Maroon education after the independence of Suriname in 1975, but the government went on with the same dominant Dutch policy and did not pay attention to language and education policies for minority groups.

#### **5.4 A description of the education structure of Suriname**

The MINOV is responsible for education in Suriname. Education in Suriname is provided by both state-run and private schools. Education is compulsory for children in the age of 7 till 12. An academic year runs from October until August.

The education system is divided into primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. There are several primary, secondary schools and tertiary institutions but there is only one university; the Anton de Kom University of Suriname. The university offers the following programmes: medical sciences, technological sciences, and social sciences that include

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<sup>37</sup> Sranan Akademiya; this academy was established in 1983 to restore the Sranan tongo which was a lot under pressure during the colonial language policy

economics, education, law, public administration, psychology, sociology, and business management. There are also research institutes with a variety of interests<sup>38</sup>.

Primary education is the Ordinary Lower Education (G.L.O.) or primary school. This education consists of public schools (O.S.) and private schools. The public schools are under the control and authority of the government. The Junior Secondary Education (VOJ) and Senior Secondary Education (VOC) are continuing education. Tertiary education is the higher education that includes; all courses at post-secondary level, for which admission is required at least at a VOC level or equivalent.

Over half of the primary schools are run by religious organizations such as Islamic, Hindu and Christian schools. These schools are partly subsidized by the government. The MINOV is responsible for the salary of the teachers however the recruitment and selection of the teachers is done by the religious organizations. These schools have the same learning materials just like the public primary schools since it is obligatory and the language of instruction is Dutch. The funding of these schools is as follow; 51 % is funded by the government, 48 % is financed by the religious organizations and 1 % offers private education for which tuition is paid (MINOV REPORT, 2004, p. 15-16).

Due to reformation of junior secondary vocational education that was introduced in 2012 in Suriname all secondary vocational schools are now known as Lower Vocational Education (LBO) divided in three study programmes<sup>39</sup>.

## **5.5 General considerations**

The Dutch colonial government tried to create a Dutch society but they were not successful. Before the introduction of compulsory education the non Dutch population did not have rights for education. The language and education policy was not focused on the various multi ethnic groups living in Suriname. Due to the Missionaries, education got more attention in Suriname. Suriname inherited the language and education policy from its Dutch colonizer.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.uvs.edu/>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.nieuws-suriname.nl/nieuwe-slagingsnormen-voor-het-lbo/>

## **Chapter VI. The power of the Ndyuka language in Diitabiki**

### **6.1 Preliminaries notes**

In this chapter I present the results of my research among the Ndyuka from Diitabiki. The research comprises field work notes on language used by children at home, at school and in the village, as well as interviews with teachers, parents, children and political (religious) leaders. The results of the research shows important aspects of Ndyuka language attitudes, believes as well as the situation of the native language in the multilingual setting imposed by the old Dutch policy in Suriname.

This is the first time that a research of this nature is conducted at Diitabiki. Its results give voice to the Diitabiki inhabitants to tell about a fundamental issue: the role, status and place of their native language in formal education, as of fundamental importance for the strengthening of Ndyuka language and culture.

### **6.2 Results of the research**

First of all it is important to highlight that the data obtained from pupils and teachers, as well as data obtained from parents are important (a) to indicate the difference between multilingualism at school and at home; and (b) to understand the opinions and experiences of children, teachers and inhabitants on multilingualism in school and at home.

The preparations of my research at Diitabiki had some obstacles. Although agreements with the traditional authority were not a problem, the Ministry of Regional Development of Suriname was not accessible to me initially. I had to wait several months for their support in regard to my transportation to the area, and for the permission to stay at their hosting house. I tried to contact them several times but without success. Other problems arose in the interior at the beginning of the school term (January), especially at the school in Diitabiki. The opening of school was delayed after Christmas holidays (December 2016), because the teachers who had returned to Paramaribo were deprived of transportation back to Diitabiki. This situation is not new as teachers in the interior always have this problem when they are supposed to return to Diitabiki after holidays. In addition to all these difficulties, there were strikes in the education sector in some schools in Paramaribo and at the Diitabiki school.

Fortunately, the Minister of the Regional Development decided to plan a visit to the interior, including Diitabiki, and I was granted permission to travel with him. Finally I was able to go to the village to conduct my research.

I did part of my research at the Granman Akontoe Velantie School in Diitabiki. This school has 305 pupils and 13 teachers. Not all pupils live in this village. In this area of the interior, children go to school by boat, because there is no other way (no infrastructure) to reach the school. Children come from the following villages to attend school in Diitabiki:

- Kisai
- Pikin piisii
- Sanbedumi
- Pikin kondee
- Luabi
- Poolo kaba
- Moi taki <sup>40</sup>

These villages are located at a radius of 3 km from Diitabiki.



**Figure 20. Pupils arriving by boat to Diitabiki “Dataa kondee”** Source: (ELIZA, 2017)

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<sup>40</sup> Although there is a school at Moitaki community, it is an old and damaged building.



**Figure 21. Pupils and teachers singing the national anthem and raising the flag before they start classes.** Source: (ELIZA, 2017).

As I have observed, teachers use more than one language during the classes. Beside Dutch which is the official language used by all teachers to communicate with the pupils, Sranan tongo and Ndyuka are also used, but as auxiliary languages. This reality has been confirmed by the results of the questionnaires.



**Figure 22. Pupils of the fifth grade** Source: (ELIZA, 2017)

Data obtained from the questionnaires:

**Table 18. Languages teachers use during classes**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Total of persons who use (different)language during classes</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Dutch</b>	11	45.8
<b>Sranan tongo</b>	6	25.0
<b>Ndyuka</b>	7	29.2
<b>Saamaka</b>	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	24	100.0

As shown by the data in the chart, the use of Dutch by the teachers corresponds to 45.8 % in the scale of use, followed by Ndyuka, 29.2 % and Sranan tongo, 25.0 %.

As to the question if attention had been paid to the subject multilingualism during training or retraining, the responses permitted the following gradation:

**Table 19. Attention to multilingualism during training or retraining**

<b>multilingual education as a need during training or retraining?</b>	<b>Total of persons</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Options:</b>		
<b>Not at all</b>	2	18.2
<b>Very little</b>	3	27.2
<b>Neutral</b>	2	18.2
<b>A lot</b>	3	27.2
<b>Very much</b>	1	9.1
<b>Total</b>	11	100.0



The table above shows that 27.2 % of the teachers admitted that the multilingual education was an important issue during their training. An equal number of teachers thought the subject was of no importance. A group representing 18.2 % of the teachers answered that the subject had little to no attention at all. Another group of the same percentage of 18.2 % was neutral.

### 6.2.1 The strength of the Ndyuka language

From what I have observed during my research, the Ndyuka language is central to the identity of the Ndyuka people. Ndyuka is used as a daily medium of communication. Ndyuka people hardly communicate with each other in another language. The Ndyuka in Diitabiki is used in the following social contexts:

- **Kuutu/ meetings:** Internal meetings in the village as well as meetings with outsiders
- **Group communications:** the members of the village communicate in Ndyuka with each other in all social contexts, at home, when they are fishing, hunting, making handicrafts, farming, doing chores at the river, during travels with the boat or during lunch or supper etc.
- **Traditional festivities in the village:** dancing, singing, playing the drums at the *booko de*, during the inauguration of a Gaanman, during rituals or festivities such as *puu a doo*.
- **Traditional religious ceremonies:** rituals at the *faakatiki*, rituals when someone dies or during healing ceremonies.
- **In the stores:** buying and selling goods in the stores.
- **Education:** Although 45.8% of instruction is conducted in Dutch, teachers regularly use the Ndyuka language as a medium of instruction during the classes, and children use it to communicate with each other during snack time and while playing on the schoolyard.

I interviewed 24 members of the Diitabiki village of the following ages; 0-7, 8-12, 13-30, 31-45, 46- 60, as well as respondents older than 60 years. From each one of these age groups, there were 4 respondents, two males and two females. And 100 % of the respondents have learned Ndyuka as their first language taught by their parents. The most common answer was “I have learned Ndyuka as my first language because my parents are Ndyuka”. Also the Ndyuka language is for them the easier and the most beautiful language compared to Dutch. The majority

of the interviewed individuals answered that Ndyuka is a beautiful language because it is their mother tongue. They do not like Dutch because it is a difficult language. Finally they pointed out that they can express themselves better by means of their mother tongue.

What is interesting is that 66.7 % of the men and women interviewed speak Dutch. The children 0 to 7 years old spoke no Dutch. Among the male individuals aged 46 years old and up, half of them speak Dutch. This is the opposite of the women group that cannot speak Dutch. Finally, the group of men and women in the age of 8-30 years old cannot speak Dutch.

In summary, most of the inhabitants of the village do not speak Dutch. Those who speak Dutch use this language to speak with the teachers of their children, occasionally with family members (children with their parents or aunt) or with someone they meet who can speak Dutch. One male respondent from the age group 31-45 of age says "I do not speak Dutch in the village, because no one speaks Dutch here, I do only when I go to school, then I communicate in Dutch with the teacher".

On the question if they can read and write in the Ndyuka language, 58.3 % of the men responded that they can write and read Ndyuka. By using social media, reading the bible and writing down notes. The reading and writing level of women is lower than the men (41.7%). As to the question "Which language should be introduced on school?" almost all the respondents answered Dutch, justifying that it is an important language that will be needed for further education (all the learning materials are in Dutch).

As to the question "What has to be done to preserve the language?" the majority of men and women think that people must teach their children by means of the Ndyuka language, if they want to keep their native language alive. Other ideas according to them are the need to record the language, write the language and develop books what may be implemented as a learning subject or a supporting subject in the future. Last but not least one of the respondents whom I had the honor to interview, the Gaanman of the Ndyuka; Gaanman Da Bono Velantie, observed:

"The Ndyuka language will never die as long as Ndyuka people speak the language and teach their children. What can happen is that the original state of the language may get lost. The pure state of the language is partly lost already. We see that it has got mixed with the Sranan tongo. To preserve the Ndyuka language, firstly do research about the language and write it down. Write it

down as much as possible. This is the best way to keep our mothertongue alive”.



**Figure 23. Together with the honorable Gaanman of the Ndyuka: Gaanman Da Bono Velantie in Diitabiki.** Source: F. Eliza (2017)

### **6.2.2 Opinions of teachers about multilingualism and education**

Answering this question, the majority of the teachers expressed their opinion that Dutch must be the language of instruction, however, they agree that there should be more attention paid to multilingualism in education. There are some teachers who are neutral or do not have an exact opinion about the combination of the use of the mother tongue and Dutch in education. In short, the majority of the teachers also think that it is up to parents to raise their children in whatever language they want, but according to them, pupils will do better in school if they speak Dutch during the lessons.

Five of the eleven teachers strongly agree that the pupils will have better grades if the parents speak Dutch with them. One of the teachers rejects this. He said: “If the parents did not go to school to learn Dutch and cannot speak the language, how will they speak Dutch with their children? How will they teach their children in Dutch? Children will speak the language their parents have taught them, and that language is their first language, their mother tongue language”

I have observed 10 families in order to see the interaction between children and their mother, father, siblings, grandmother and grandfather at home.

**Total of the families = 10**

**LN= Ndyuka    LD= Dutch**

**Table 20. Results of spoken languages of the families**

<b>Language of interaction:</b>	<b>only LN</b>	<b>only LD</b>	<b>Total of persons</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>LN=LD</b>	<b>More LN</b>	<b>More LD</b>	<b>Total of persons</b>
<b>1. between husband and wife</b>	8		8	72.7		1		
<b>2. mom and children</b>	8		8	72.7		2		
<b>3. father and children</b>	8		8	72.7		2		
<b>4. grandfather and grandchildren</b>	<b>10</b>		10	100				
<b>5. grandmother and grandchildren</b>	<b>10</b>		10	100				
<b>Language use during:</b>								
<b>6. the meals</b>	<b>10</b>		10	100				
<b>7. child's play</b>	9		9	90		1		
<b>8. traditional play</b>	10		10	100				
<b>Total</b>	73		73	100		5		

The interaction between husband and wife, mom and children, and father and children is 72.7 %. This means that the majority of the family that I interviewed communicates the most in Ndyuka with each other.

Communication between the grandparents and grand children are 100 % in Ndyuka. They do not speak or communicate with each other in other languages.

90 % of the children in the families speak their mother tongue (Ndyuka) while they are playing.

Interaction during the meals and traditional plays are 100 % in Ndyuka. This means that they communicate with each other only in their mother tongue.

There is more interaction between the mothers and their children in Dutch (40 %) than the interaction between fathers with their children (20 %). The language used by children in communication is Ndyuka.

### **6.2.3 Multilingualism in classrooms of the Gaanman Akontoe Velantie School**

What I have observed is that teachers constantly switch from Dutch to Ndyuka, the mother tongue of the children. It is not the norm to use other languages during the lessons in the education system of Suriname, but it is a solution for teachers to make themselves understandable to the children.

Teachers acknowledge that the environment where the children live has an effect on the language the children use during classes and they understand why there exists a language barrier among the children. Therefore, they know what approach is needed to meet the language needs of these children.

All teachers say: “I allow my pupils to use their mother tongue during classes” but they observed that when they correct the children they get embarrassed and retreat themselves.

Another teacher’s view is: “When the pupils speak Dutch, often it helps them to practice the language which offers them the ability to improve their participation in classroom and it helps to eliminate the language barrier”.

Teachers also believe that speaking Dutch will improve the results of the children and help prepare them for further education.

Teachers correct pupils constantly when they speak Dutch. As for them, they have to be motivated to speak. An interviewed teacher said: “I make sure when to correct them and how I correct them. If I do not take these things in consideration it may have a negative effect”. This is because the children easily feel embarrassed and do not dare to participate anymore in the learning activities.

Another teacher shared the opinion that: “I switch from Dutch to Sranan Tongo because I do not speak the mother tongue of the children. They do understand me because Sranan Tongo is similar to Ndyuka so the interaction between me and the pupils is not different from the teachers who speak Ndyuka with the pupils”

Some teachers are very strict when they teach. They do allow the children to use alternate languages very little; otherwise they will not learn the official language. This creates an opposite effect to a language policy promoting the use of the native language.

“Do not be too soft and pity them. These children are much more intelligent than you think, if you push them they will learn to speak Dutch”, says one of the teachers who teach in the fourth grade. “They know me as a very strict teacher, but using this strategy, it works for me and for the children. They try more often to speak Dutch and I see improvement.”

Four of the eleven teachers say that they allow their children very little to communicate in their mother tongue during classes with them. Another group of four teachers are neutral about this subject. They don't really care which language the pupils use when they speak to them. Finally, three among the eleven teachers say they allow their pupils to speak their mother tongue language a lot.

During the interviews all the teachers have acknowledged that code-switching frequently happens in their classroom. This language situation has become a habit. The teachers allow the pupils to answer in Ndyuka if they cannot express themselves in Dutch. One of the teachers of the sixth grade said: ‘Sometimes they know the answers, but because they know that they are not good at Dutch, they are afraid to make mistakes and they choose not to participate’. She also says that she tries to encourage them as much as possible by allowing them to express themselves by using the Ndyuka language more often. She notes that children are willing to participate more during the classes.

Some considerations teachers made about correcting pupils:

“I do not correct each mistake they made; they are soon inclined to get anxious”

“I always praise them even if they got the answer wrong or I praise them because they had the courage to try”

“My goal as teacher is to improve their performance but also improve their language skills, so that is why I don't focus too much on language switching. When I teach I say things in different ways to help them understand what I am talking about. Only when they don't get it I switch to

the Sranan tongo and switch immediately to Dutch again. This strategy works. They already have good knowledge of Dutch at this stage, so I do not have to switch from Dutch to Sranan tongo all the time.”

According to what I have observed teachers use code switching and code mixing during classes. One hundred percent of the teachers that I have interviewed responded:

“If I don’t use another language as an auxiliary, I won’t get the participation of the children; they do not always understand what I say if I only use Dutch and the results will not be good”.

The auxiliaries used in the classrooms are Ndyuka and Sranan tongo.

I have also investigated the background of the teachers as this might also have influence the educational process of the Ndyuka children. Five of the eleven teachers at the school are not from the Ndyuka ethnic group. Two of the teachers are from another Maroon group, the Saamaka. The other three teachers are Creole. The percentage of the teachers who use the Sranan Tongo as an auxiliary during the classes is 45.5%. One of the Creole teachers said: “Because Ndyuka is not my mother tongue language I speak Sranan tongo. This does not have any influence on the performance of the children; they understand Sranan tongo very well”.

The language children use inside and outside the classroom is Ndyuka. On the schoolyard we will not hear a word Dutch. What I have observed is that teachers do not correct the children during breaks as they do in the classrooms. This is in accordance with the observation made by one of the Ndyuka teacher:

“They are allowed to speak their mother tongue as much as they like outside the classrooms. Once the break is over, they know that they are not allowed to do that anymore. Then they have to speak Dutch. Only if they do not understand something they are allowed to speak their mother tongue”

The challenge for the teachers comes from the sociolinguistic context and the geographical location of the school. The teachers know that there are elements that affect the children’s behavior in classrooms. This depends on how much Ndyuka spoken in the surroundings of the children. Almost everybody in their environment speaks Ndyuka. There is no other language they share in common. Dutch is a foreign language to them. Therefore, the teachers know that they cannot impose any obligation on the children to speak Dutch every time

during the lessons. This would not work. According to the teachers, it is better to allow the children to use another language which is not the language of instruction at school. The children feel better speaking their own language, because they can fully express themselves.

I have observed that by the time the children are in the last grade, they communicate more often in Dutch with the teacher, who does not have to repeat him or herself too often in Dutch, besides the fact that the level of code switching is not high. I have also observed that the kindergarten teacher uses code switching a lot more than teachers from other grades.

This is exactly what Hein Eersel, a Sranan tongo linguist said in an interview, in February 2015, about the status and place of Ndyuka in the education system:

“If you want children to learn a foreign language successfully, you need to start with the little ones. Beginning with children from kindergarten because these children are in the phase where their native language is not entirely developed and thus not yet aware of their own language. The child is in the phase to learn the native language too. She does not know how to read yet. So if a foreign language is learned without falling back to the native language then the awareness of such a foreign language is not there yet, the child will not understand it. It becomes a chaotic language for the child. Code switching: Dutch- Ndyuka and vice versa is an important element that applies to the development of languages for the young child”.

He also said that when a child progresses and reaches higher classes, the foreign language develops better and the child gains more proficiency in the foreign language. From the sixth year of age on, his or her awareness grows with respect to the foreign language.

The kindergarten teacher uses code-switching most often. During the classes, I observed that kind of languages use. One conversation between teacher and pupil I have registered is illustrative of the code-switching at school:

- Teacher:** in Dutch: *Wie is een man* ‘who is a man’?  
Uses Ndyuka as an auxiliary: *Sama a wan man?*
- Pupils:** \*silence
- Teacher:** (repeats the question) first in Dutch and switches to Ndyuka
- Pupils:** the majority answers in Ndyuka: *Wan ppa* ‘a father’
- Teacher:** Says in Dutch: goed zo! ‘Very good!’



There are various reasons why they don't answer a question. These may include:

- They did not understand the teacher.
- They did not understand the question.
- They understood the teacher but could not express themselves in Dutch.
- They know the answer but do not dare to make mistakes because they cannot speak the language properly.

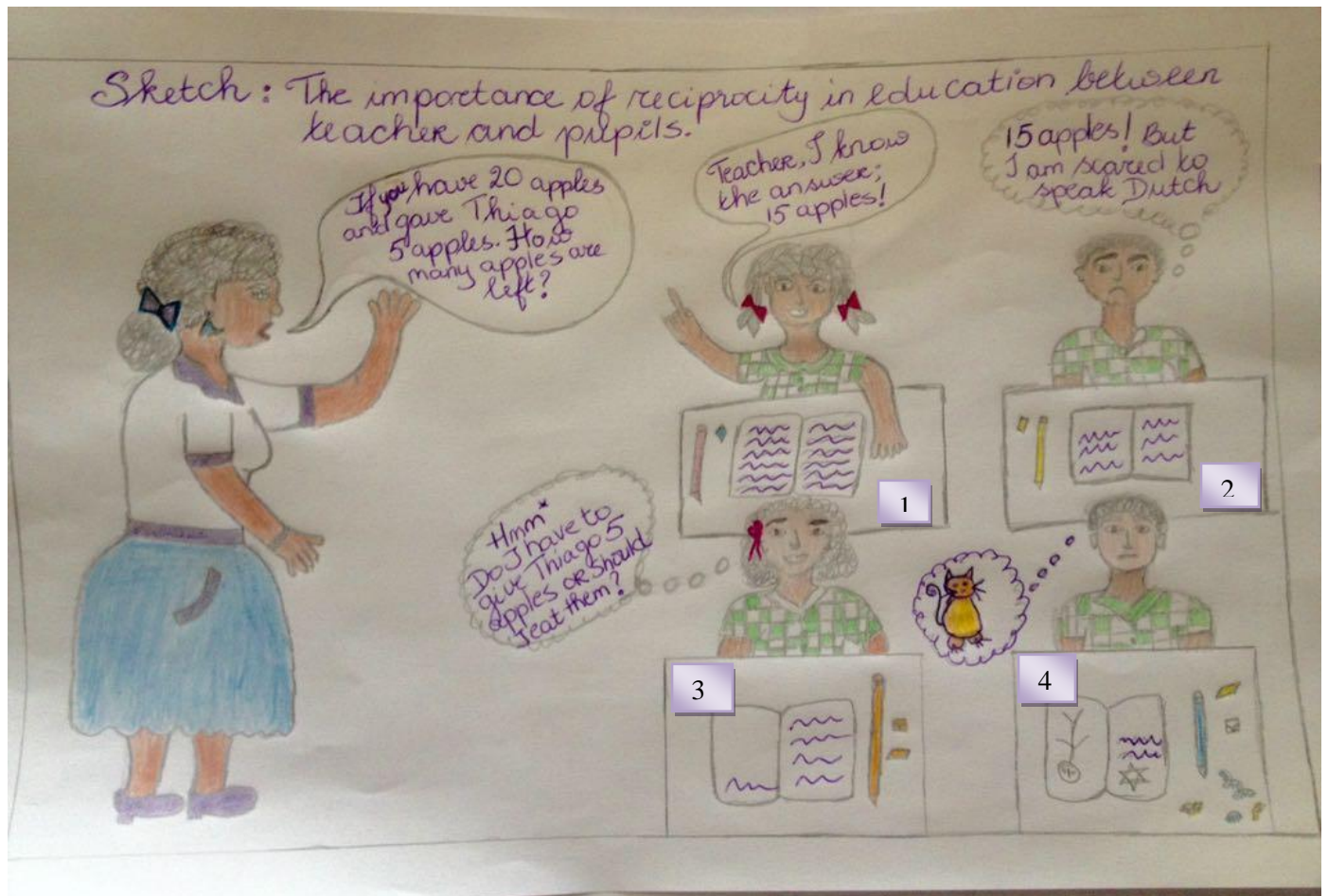
It is a challenge for teachers when they want to make sure that the pupils understand all the words, synonyms and concepts.

I remember when I went to the fifth grade teacher and children were busy in a spelling activity. This is still one of the hardest tasks for the pupils, as confirmed by a teacher who said:

“What I teach and discuss must be clear for the children. Otherwise I will miss the goal and then I have failed as a teacher. So at this subject I have to pay extra attention and translate the Dutch words so they know what they are writing down. If I do not translate, they will not know the meaning of the words and than their vocabulary will not improve. I often rephrase the sentence construction and try to use different definitions or synonyms. If you rephrase the sentences you then you reduce the chance to translate for them each time and then they understand better. I give them extra time at this subject to finish their work”.

### **6.2.3.1 The interaction between teachers and pupils**

According to Sabourin (2013, p. 301), to educate is to transmit rules and values, is to transfer and share knowledge. According to him, education also means ‘reciprocity’. He observed that education is not only a relationship of asymmetrical and unilateral gift from teacher to student or from parent to child. The learning and a self-construction process is created and strengthened by the interaction between the student, the teacher, the environment and other learners. The educational relationship is therefore a relationship of ternary reciprocity as defined by Temple (1998). So if the students cannot understand what the teacher is saying, there is no reciprocity between these two parties (SABOURIN, 2013, p. 301-302).



**Figure 23. Interaction between teachers and pupils drawn by F. Eliza, 2017.**

As I have observed in a class during my fieldwork, there were two children who understood Dutch and immediately answered the teacher in Dutch. I asked the teacher afterwards why these children have a lead on the other children and she said that because the girls' mother is a teacher and thus she speak Dutch at home with her family.

Reciprocity effect between the teacher and pupils represented in the drawing above, according to my observations and notes:

The first pupil (1) knows the answer. She is one of the pupils who have the lead in class. Here are some reasons for her outstanding participation in class:

- she has a tutor who helps her with homework;

- she practices by herself at;

Pupil (2) knows the correct answer but is scared to speak Dutch, because:

- he cannot speak Dutch very well;
- he is afraid to make mistakes;
- He is afraid to be laughed at, so he just keeps quiet and does not let the teacher know that he knows the answer;

Pupil (3) did not understand the teacher. She has doubts and does not know exactly what the question is about. This means that there is a chance that she will answer the question incorrectly.

Pupil (4) does not have a clue what the teacher said. He cannot understand or speak Dutch.

According to Hein Eersel (Interview, February, 2015) the domain of education in Suriname has to change if we want to keep away the language barrier for the childhood of the interior, and improve their learning performance. We need to make sure that there is a change in political policy, which must include a new status to children's native language. Before doing this, it must be ensured that:

- a language plan is designed and agreed upon by stakeholders;
- standardize the grammar of the various languages;
- spelling is adjusted and normalized for each of the languages;
- learning material must be designed in the language of the child;
- preparation of the language so that it can be used.

This is just some of the educational and psychological aspects that are necessary to institutionalize the various languages used by various groups in Suriname. The different classes must have their own educational material. Also, the language must be accredited. This is determined by the political language policy. A language council committee must be set up and efforts must be made to legally observe the various mother tongues of the respective ethnic groups of Suriname. This committee is required to implement the language. Finally, educational institutions must ensure that teachers are trained and supervised.

#### **6.2.4 Challenges at the Granman Akontoe Velantie School**

Just like other schools in the interior of Suriname, the Granman Akontoe Velantie school faces a lot of challenges that discourage children, parents and teachers. They face these problems every year. There is a huge gap between education in the rural areas and education in the urban areas. In the interior there is no development of secondary education. Children are obligated to move to the urban areas to continue their studies. For years, the government has not been able to meet up with the educational needs in the interior. In the following I mentioned some of the problems that the people of the community have:

##### **The Teaching/learning resources:**

- The actual teaching methodology is difficult for the children. Teachers are challenged every time. It is like they have to start all over again with a new method
- There is not enough teaching material available
- Lack of learning resources

##### **Physical infrastructure:**

- No child-friendly environment
- No safe drinking water and adequate sanitation
- No electricity
- Lack of transportation facilities for the teachers
- Lack of adequate infrastructure
- Lack of adequate provision for teachers

From the results I can conclude that education in the interior is not sufficiently adapted to the living conditions and needs of the local population.

### **6.3 General considerations**

The Ndyuka language is spoken and used by all the inhabitants of the village Diitabiki. There are interactions in this language between grandparents, parents, teachers and children. Multilingualism exists in the classrooms of the Granman Akontoe Velantie School. Although Dutch is the language of construction, the Ndyuka language is also used in classrooms. It is used by teachers as an auxiliary language. Children are also allowed to speak their mother tongue, the Ndyuka with the teachers during classes. This is very important to improve their learning process and the interaction between them and the teachers. Also, the problems are mentioned that the children and teachers of the Granman Akontoe Velantie School are facing.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this master thesis I have focused on the Ndyuka language and culture, showing how strong they are, having survived in spite of so many adversalities faced by the Ndyuka communities over the past three centuries.

My main concern here has been to describe aspects of Ndyuka language and culture to show how conservative they are, although highlighting fundamental aspects that have been lost or changed as a result of the increasing contact of the Ndyuka with the cities organized according to an occidental and globalizing world.

I have showed how many features of Ndyuka original culture have been maintained, from rituals of birth, passing by rituals of adulthood, matrimonial rituals, to the death ritual. I have also showed how the Ndyuka are organized socially, economically and politically, highlighting the links between all of their structuring with religion, which has its fundamental roots in Africa. Although based on different authors who have studied Ndyuka culture and social organization, I have relied on the fundamental knowledge of wise men and women of to the Ndyuka community, among them, my grandmother Loseta Ma Bika Eliza, my mother Cecilia Pinas, my aunt Ma A tan so Bow, the traditional leader; Kabiten Jesentoe Velanti, an elder of Diitabiki, and I have also counted on the Gaanman of the Ndyuka: Da Bono Velanti, which was a huge privilege.

I also presented some considerations on the Ndyuka language history, highlighting the main contributors to the early Sranan language from which Ndyuka and the other Maroon languages emerged. I emphasized the contribution of the Portuguese language that has been maintained by the new generations of Ndyuka speakers. I have also presented a sketch of the Ndyuka language, in order to show how important it is to know the Ndyuka language linguistically, as well as to stimulate the view that the teaching of the Ndyuka grammar at all levels of education should be a high priority. I also wanted to show by means of the linguistic study that to formulate linguistic policies and planning, we have first or simultaneously to develop linguistic studies of a given language.

Finally, I have presented the results of my research on multilingualism at school developed on a sociolinguistic perspective. The research which has been carried at the school of Diitabiki, at home, and in other places of the community, aimed to investigate languages use by the Ndyuka speakers. The results of this research show that Dutch has a higher status and role in

Ndyuka school, although teachers agree that it is only through the native language and Sranan tongo that it is possible to teach main concepts and ideas. Hopefully, the study confirmed that grandparents and grand children communicate with each other 100% in Ndyuka, and those young children speak the Ndyuka language. This fact holds great promise for the future of the Ndyuka language. My study confirms that student performance can be enhanced if local language and culture are factored in and utilized during formal classroom instruction, particularly of Maroon children. Consideration should be given to teaching Dutch as a second language thereby creating the foundation for Maroon children to develop sound bilingual skills that can facilitate their educational development in the future. The ideal is a full bilingualism and the co-officialization of the Maroon languages of Suriname.

As a final consideration, I recall that since 1953, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been encouraging mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education (UNESCO, 1953). Only on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/61/266 called upon Member States in order to "promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world".<sup>41</sup>

According to UNESCO *Strong Foundations Report* on early Childhood Care and Education (2007a), it is pointed out the overlooked advantages of multilingual education in the early years. Kosonen' view (2005) is that when opportunities are offered to children to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school, and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning (Benson, 2002). Mother tongue based education especially benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from rural communities, as claimed by Hovens (2002).

Several pilot projects have been implemented in Suriname by different organizations<sup>42</sup> committed to multilingualism in primary schools in rural areas, acknowledging the teaching of counting and language. Nevertheless, these pilot projects hardly have any continuity, and the only prevalent language in the education system is still Dutch. In reality, the majority of children in Suriname are not taught in their respective mother tongue.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/> accessed on 3/27/2017

<sup>42</sup> RUTU foundation, Stichting Okanisie Pikien, ITOS, Vereniging van Saramakkaanse gezagdragers en VIDS

Linguistically we see that the Ndyuka language and Sranan tongo have similarities. The fact that they have a very similar linguistic structure can be very helpful to show the importance of using Ndyuka in the early stages of alphabetization.

Why are native and nativized languages not conceived by governmental sectors as instrument of sustainability? The official definition of sustainable development comes from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The mission of this commission was to prepare visions and long-term strategies for sustainable development in the future in all parts of the world. Its committee, also known as the Brundtland Commission, proposed in 1987 the "Brundtland Report" in which "Sustainable Development" was defined as follows<sup>43</sup>:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

But this definition is only complete when one considers that the sustainability of traditional peoples who have their own native language cannot succeed if their respective native languages are not strengthened every day. Language and culture are inseparable, and if traditional societies hold a worldview in which man and nature must live in harmony, language must be preserved and its use strengthened.

Death or weakening of a language inevitably leads to the weakening of traditional knowledge, which has allowed man and nature to live in harmony. Language is also the strongest expression of identity which stimulates members of a community to maintain their dignity interacting in harmony with the environment they live in.

I hope this master thesis will draw the attention of the reader for the urgent need for action to promote relevant language and culture policies acknowledging the Maroons of Suriname.

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.unece.org/oes/nutshell/2004-2005/focus\\_sustainable\\_development.html](http://www.unece.org/oes/nutshell/2004-2005/focus_sustainable_development.html)



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## Annex 1. Questionnaire for teachers

<b>School</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Age</b>	
<b>Sex</b>	
<b>District</b>	
<b>Village</b>	
<b>Education</b>	

	<b>Dutch</b>	<b>Sranan tongo</b>	<b>Maroon languages (indicate which)</b>	<b>Indigenous language(indicate which)</b>	<b>Sarnami</b>	<b>Javanese</b>	<b>Other</b>
1. Language (s) teachers speaks home							
2. The ability to understand, speak, read and write the languages above)							
3. With whom do you speak the language (s) you know							
4. The language (s) you use during class							
5. The language you speak the best							

This section contains 8 questions that can be answered by making a cross on a five-point scale with the positions "not at all", "very little", "neutral," "many," and "a lot". These questions do not concern the views or ideas of the teachers but explicitly for their own practice as a teacher. These are the following questions:

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Many</b>	<b>A lot</b>
1. Do you consider the languages that your students speak (eg by providing additional explanation in the language of the students) when teaching?					
2. Do you allow students in your classes to speak other languages than Dutch to each other?					
3. Do you allow students in your classes to speak other languages than Dutch to you?					
5. Did they pay attention to multilingualism in classrooms during your education?					
6. Do you use languages other than Dutch as an auxiliary language during classes?					
7. Which language (s) do you use in particular?					

This part of the questionnaire for the teachers concerns their views. To find out, a series of statements has been included that teachers can respond by making a cross on a five-point scale with the positions "do not agree at all", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", "totally agree". The answers to these questions do not represent the teacher's practice, but their opinions on a number of aspects of the topic of multilingualism and education.

	<b>Dont agree at all</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Totally agree</b>
1. Parents should nurture their children in Dutch					
2. Parents should nurture their children in their native language					
3. Parents should nurture their children in the language the parents speak the best					
4. When parents speak Dutch with their children, they perform better at school					
5. When parents speak a different language than Dutch with their children, they don't perform well					
6. Should multilingualism get more attention during the training of teachers?					
7. Teachers must speak Dutch during classes					
8. Teachers should use other languages than Dutch during classes					

9. Pupils should speak Dutch during classes					
10. Pupils may use their native language during classes					
11. If pupils speak poor Dutch, they have a poor school performance.					
12. If pupils are educated in Dutch and their mother tongue they perform better					
13. If teachers use other languages as an auxiliary language in class, the performance of the pupils are better					



**Annex II. Questionnaire for inhabitants of Diitabiki. Source: Maher (2008)**

**Name of the respondent:**

---

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. In what language did you learn to speak first? Why?
2. Which language do you think is easier to speak? Ndyuka or Dutch? Why?
3. Which one do you think is more beautiful? Why?
4. Which language do you use more? Why?
5. With who do you have conversations in Ndyuka in the village? When does this happens?
6. With who do you have conversations in Dutch in the village? When does this happens?
7. Do you know how to write and read in Ndyuka? What do you read and write in Ndyuka?
8. Which language do you think should be the language of construction in schools? Why?
9. What language do you think the teachers should speak when they speak to the childrens? Why?
10. Do you think that your Ndyuka language will die? Yes, tell me why or No, why?
11. What do you think should be done to protect your language?

**Observations of the competences of the respondent:**

- How well does he or she understand, read, speak and write Dutch or Ndyuka?
- Does he or she speaks only Ndyuka?
- Does he or she speaks Dutch?
- Does he or she speaks Dutch and Ndyuka?

**Annex III. Questionnaire for families in Diitabiki. Source: Maher (2008)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of the family:** \_\_\_\_\_

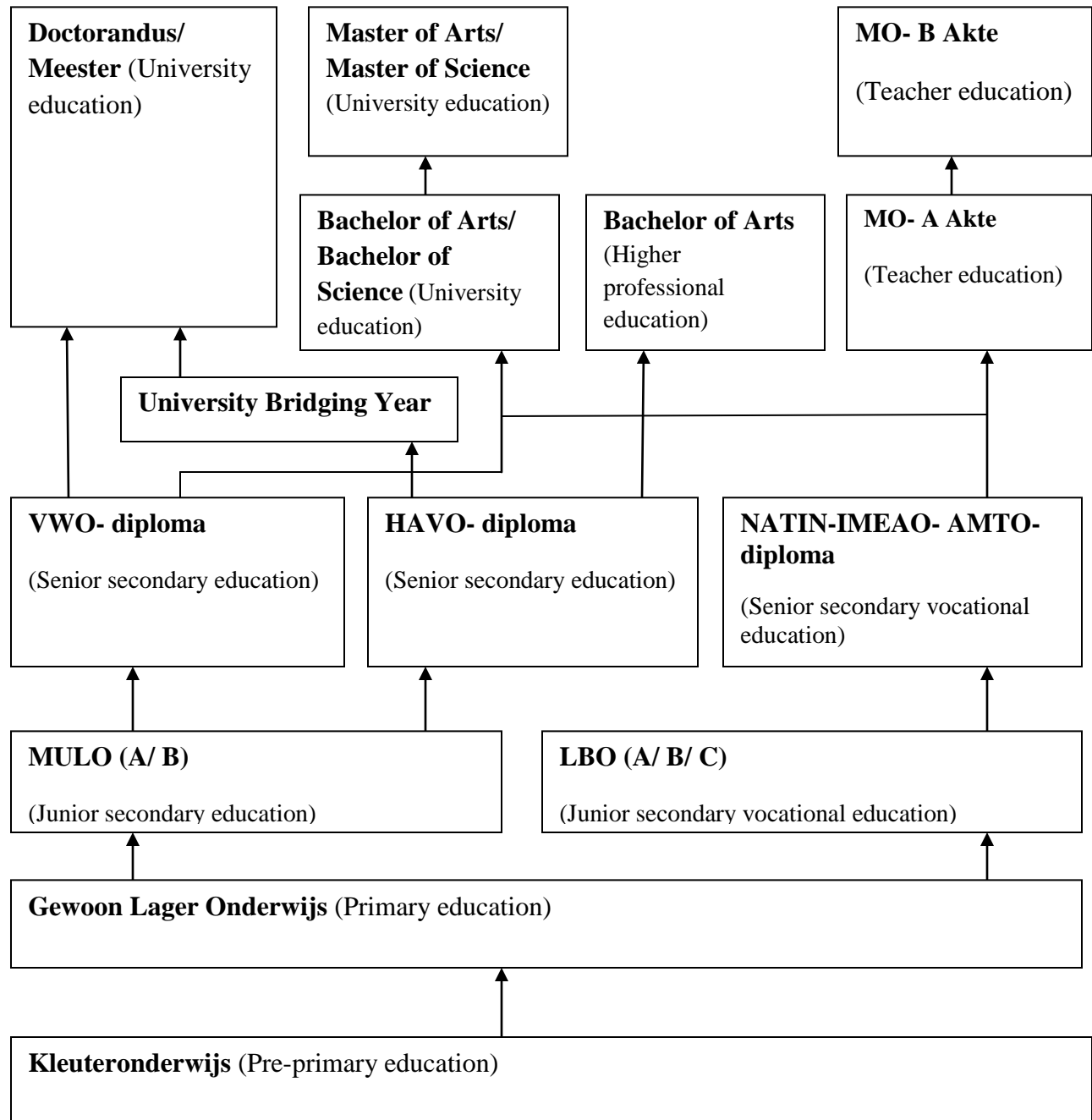
**Relationship with the family:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LN= Ndyuka**

**LD= Dutch**

	Only LN	Only LD	LN= LD	More LN	More LD
Language of interaction between husband and wife					
Language of interaction between mother and children					
Language of interaction between father and children					
Language of interaction between grandfather and grandchildren					
Language of interaction between grandmother and grand children					
Language that is used during the meals					
Language that is used when children are playing					
Language that is used during traditional plays					

**Annex IV. Education system of Suriname**



Source: EP Nuffic (2015, p. 3)

**Post graduate:** Doctorandus, Master of Arts/ Master of Science, MO- B Akte

**Undergraduate:** Bachelor of Arts/ Science, MO- A Akte