

## Trio's in Suriname and Brazil: a brief history

**Mirella Nankoe**

Institute for Graduate Studies and Research (IGSR), Anton de Kom University of Suriname

### Abstract

This article provides a historical overview of the Trio in Suriname and Brazil. The existing ethnographic descriptions of the Trio, range in scope from the records of early expedition members, anthropologists, socio-linguists to some extensive ethnographic studies. It also presents a brief sketch of the regional history of Amazonia and the Guiana's to give an impression of the diversity and density of the native habitat. Forging of alliances and network extension have long been important strategies for survival or attainment of certain positions. The arrival of the Europeans gave a new interpretation to the existing indigenous landscape. The article further elaborates on the interactions between indigenous groups, the relations of the Trio with the Europeans and the Maroons, encounters with the expedition members, and the Baptist mission, and processes that have and still contribute to and are crucial in determining the present-day status of the Trio.

**Key words:** Amazonian historiography, Trio history, Trio settlements, Tarëno, Tirïyo

### Introduction

The Trio (or *Tarëno* or *Tirïyo*) are a small indigenous tribe who live in the border area of Suriname and Brazil. In Brazil the group is generally known as Tirïyo. In Suriname they call themselves as *Tarëno*, whereas in French Guyana the ethnonym Tirio is commonly used. Although they are generally contextualized as Trio, the Trio group in Suriname consists of a conglomeration of analogous subgroups and distinct Amerindian groups. These subgroups and distinct groups may be generally regarded as 'a single unified group with a common culture and language for all intents and purposes' (Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 2; Carlin, 2004).

However, there still exist internal variations

at the level of vocabulary and in culture. Each group has assigned origins, customs, looks, and distinct bloodlines, and slightly different linguistic accents (Grotti, 2007; Fajardo Grupioni/Iepé, 2009:8). During the eighth Population and Housing Census of 2012, the General Bureau for Statistics registered 1,979 Trio in their native habitat distributed over 10 communities<sup>1</sup> or villages. This means that the Trio comprise only 10% of all indigenous people in Suriname.<sup>2</sup> There is no accurate data available on the number of Trio living in each village, because population statistics are made available at resort level and not at village level by the General Bureau of Statistics.

**Correspondence:** Mirella Nankoe, Institute for Graduate Studies and Research, Anton de Kom Universiteit of Suriname, Leysweg 86, Paramaribo, Suriname, Tel: 490900, E-mail: mirella\_nankoe@yahoo.com

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<sup>1</sup> The following communities have been identified as Trio villages: Kwamalasamutu, Palumeu, (Pelele) Tëpu, Alalapadu, Sipaliwini, Coeroeni, Lucie, Amatopo, Wanapan and Sandlanding.

<sup>2</sup> The total indigenous population in Suriname was 20,344 in 2012 (ABS, 2013)

Regarding the Trio population in Brazil, a total of 1,464 persons were registered in 2010 by the regional office of the Fundação Nacional de Saúde (Funasa) for the Population Census of 2010<sup>3</sup>. Thus in both countries the Trio constitute less than one percent of the total population, and they can be regarded as a minority group.<sup>4</sup> The mobility of the Trio also contributes to the difficulty of acquiring exact population numbers resulting in fluctuating population numbers in the villages. Overall however, the total Trio population in Suriname and Brazil can be estimated between 3,500 and 4,000 people.

#### **Amazonian historiography: the period before and after 1492**

In the study of indigenous tribes knowledge regarding the history of the people is a valuable asset. Comprehension of the past is fundamental to comprehension of the present. History provides an essential context for evaluating contemporary Trio society. The history of the indigenous people of the Americas does not commence in 1492, when Columbus set foot in what was presumed to be the New World. The historiography of the native people emerged only after European conquest. However, archeologist and anthropologist made a tremendous contribution to the reconstruction of Amazonian historiography. Amazonia<sup>5</sup> is understood as the region comprising the river basins of the Amazon and Orinoco and the Atlantic coast (Rival & Whitehead, 2001:1). According to Mann, for almost all of the last century, archeologists believed that the native people came to the Americas through the land bridge of Bering Strait about thirteen thousand years ago at the tail end of the last ice age. However,

archeological research in southern Chile in 1997 showed evidence of human habitation even before the ice-free corridor opened up (2006:17-18). Numerous indigenous groups populated the Americas, displaying an enormous variety of physical characteristics, cultural expressions, languages, lifestyles, and knowledge systems. Interaction between these groups occurred over large distances due to high mobility. Millions may have inhabited the greater Amazon region around 1500. Estimates differ from 1 to 11 million (Pinedo -Vasquez, Hecht & Padoch, 2012: 123). A dispute over the population rate of the Amazonian region before the invasion of the Europeans has been going on for a long time and is not apt to be easily resolved (Mann, 2006).

The native people lived in established chiefdoms and small family bands, as sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic hunter-gatherers. These indigenous societies interacted with each other and outsiders through trade, markets, warfare and trekking. The dense river system in the Amazon region facilitated contact among themselves.

In addition, there were also paths, often between the courses of the rivers, linking various regions with each other. The trade between various groups was largely based on the exchange of knowledge (immaterial goods) and raw material (material goods). These exchanges could lead to group alliances, but could also culminate in war. Certain Amazonian indigenous groups eventually established trade relations with the European settlers. Other groups such as the Trio, however, preferred to keep their distance and withdrew further into the dense tropical forests (Heemskerk & Delvoye 2007:13).

<sup>3</sup> Povos indígenas no Brasil: <http://pib.socioambiental.org/en/c/quadro-geral>

<sup>4</sup> The total population of Suriname and Brazil was respectively 541,638 (Census 2012 in ABS, 2013) and 190,732,694 (census 2012 in Menke, 2016: 21).

<sup>5</sup> Amazonia covers an area of 7,413,827 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 54% of the total area of eight countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela. These countries are members of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) aimed at promoting sustainable development of the Amazon Basin (UNEP/ACTO, 2009: 40)

Since the times of pre-Columbian occupations and more recently those of European settlers, Amazonia has been an area of cultural, social and biological diversity. Pre-Columbian occupation originated from different locations, varying from the eastern Andes and expanding to the north-east towards the Antilles (UNEP/ACTO, 2009: 45). Amazonian archaeologist<sup>6</sup> found similarities between pre-colonial and present-day Amazonian groups i.e. small populations and low demographic density, societies with few hierarchies, and sedentary agriculturalists (Mans, 2012; Versteeg & Bubberman, 1992; Versteeg, 2003). However, other archeological discoveries and ethnographic studies also indicate that Amazonian societies were dense populations, organized in complex political economic ways, and contained the capacity to significantly transform their natural environments. They might be considered as (agricultural) 'engineering societies' (Pinedo-Vasquez et al, 2012: 123). According to Versteeg (1992/2003) migration and settlements of indigenous groups in Amazonia seems to occur from the Orinoco and Amazon River and their tributaries the Casiquiare Canal and the Rio Negro to the Coastal areas along the Atlantic Ocean, whereby the Amazon River forms the east-west connection between the Andes and the Atlantic Ocean. However, contact was also and is still maintained through paths that connect the watershed of various rivers flowing southwards to the amazon and northwards to the Atlantic Ocean, e.g. the Paru River connects with the Corantijn River via the Sipaliwini savannah. The oldest archeological evidence of human occupation in the Guiana's has been found in the open savanna's, such as the Sipaliwini savannah in Suriname, where

stone tools and petroglyphs<sup>7</sup> were found. Inflammability was an important tool used in the savannah to alter the landscape for hunting. The discovery of similar grinding grooves and petroglyphs in other areas proves that prehistoric indigenous people have lived in the upper reaches of the Corantijn- and Marowijne basin, and the Wilhelmina Mountains amongst others (Bakker, Dalhuizen, Hassanhkan & Steeg, 1993: 11; Versteeg & Bubberman, 1992:16; Versteeg, 1998: 2). The Werephai caves near Kwamalasamutu contain the oldest and largest collection of petroglyphs found in Suriname, which indicates that the indigenous people lived near the Sipaliwini River for centuries. The caves were discovered on May 8, 2000 by the hunter *Kamainja Panashekung* (Schalkwijk, Nankoe & Cederboom, 2011: 5). Several versatile scientist and amateur explorers contributed to the knowledge of Suriname's indigenous prehistory from late nineteenth and the early twentieth century through extensive ethnographic records and archeological studies<sup>8</sup>.

It is thus obvious that the indigenous communities in the Amazonia have sustained themselves for many centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans through balanced and complex relations with the natural environment (hunting, fishing and agriculture) and with each other (social organization). Adaptation to their natural environment and to seasonal cycles and diversified exploitation of a wide range of natural resources maintained ecological balance.

This was also the case for the indigenous groups in Suriname, who for decades had led a nomadic and self-sufficient life as nomadic agriculturalists, hunters and gatherers.

<sup>6</sup> Amazonian archaeology deals with prehistoric human populations in their environment, notably native populations before the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492.

<sup>7</sup> It appears that the distribution of the petroglyphs occurred mainly near water, with exception of the Werephai and Sipaliwini savannah petroglyphs (Versteeg & Bubberman, 1998: 2)

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Schomburgk (1845), De Goeje (1906, 1908, 1928), Ahlbrinck (1929, 1956), Schmidt (1942), Geijkes (1952, 1957, 1970), Penard & Penard (1917), Hering, Ten Kate (1886, 1887, 1888, 1914/1917), Versteeg (1993, 1998, 2003) and Boomert (1980, 1981, 1983, 1993) amongst others (Versteeg, 1998: 13). For various aspects of archeological research and Amazonian development see also Mann, 2006; Pinedo-Vasquez et al, 2012.

Research has indicated that indigenous social organization and technology were capable of sustaining large, stable societies in Amazonia (see also Bunker, 1984). At present the total population of Amazonia is estimated at more than 30 million people (see also UNEP/ACTO, 2009).

### **European colonization in the Guiana's**

Evidently, the arrival of the Europeans with the consequent enslavement and the imposed requirements of world trade had, directly and indirectly, a huge impact on the ethnographic landscape of indigenous communities in the Americas with regard to their geographical position, magnitude and psychical well-being. Historiography indicates that the destabilization and decline of various indigenous populations resulted from non-native diseases and the demands for excessive and ultimately destructive exploitation. According to Hulsman approximately eighty to ninety percent of the Indigenous population in the America's disappeared between 1500 and 1700 due to European expansion and the consequent oppression (2009: 10).

Whitehead, however, argued that "in the history of Amazonia the arrival of the Europeans and their impact on the ethnographic landscape of the indigenous groups as being the prevalent assumption represents a fundamental historical disjuncture". He asserts that "the differential survival of different ethnic formations clearly implies that, in certain context, native patterns of behavior were determining factors in historical outcomes". Looking at the nature of historical transformation in native Amazonia, the nature of contact with particular reference to disease, changes in native ecology and settlement, warfare and regional trade systems should also be taken into account (Whitehead, 1993: 285-286).

The desire to colonize the America's was based on economic and geopolitical reasons. Industrial development in Europe required an urge for commodities. The Spanish, British, Portuguese, French and Dutch invaded South-America, in particular the Guiana's. The term Guiana's is used to refer to the colonial enclaves of British Guyana, Suriname and French-Guyana. It was the Spaniard, Alonso de Hojeda, who first sailed by the north-east coast of South America in 1499 (Bakker et al, 1993:19). In the course of the sixteenth century the Spanish, Portuguese and British were exploring the region for gold and silver and traded with the indigenous people along the coastal region of the Guiana's, but no attempts were made at permanent settlement. Eventually, temporary trading posts were established along the shores with the ultimate purpose of permanent settlement. These settlements did not withstand against the constant threat of the Portuguese in the proximity, as well as incursion from the Caribs. The first attempt at colonization of the Guiana's was made by the French in 1625, but conflicts with the natives, inexperience and inadequate food supply soon drove them from the area (Jagdew, 2014: 32; Schalkwijk, 2011: 77). Only from 1651 until 1667, more than a half century after the arrival of Columbus, Suriname was colonized by the British. In the wake of colonization came skilled English planters from Barbados with black slaves, whereby the plantation system was introduced. According to Schalkwijk, British failure in the Guiana's in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century mainly resulted from "the close proximity of the Spanish and Portuguese in the area, lack of interest from the most influential people, and lack of a vast number of potential settlers" (2011:71).

Initially, the Caribs were deployed to work on the plantations, which eventually led to conflicts between the colonizers and the natives. To insure the necessary peace in the colony, Lord Willoughby negotiated a treaty with the Caribs in 1652 who were thus protected from slavery. The Arawaks were excluded from the agreement (Schalkwijk, 2011: 217).

The English used divide and rule tactics amongst the tribes, which resulted in trade of imprisoned tribal enemies by the Caribs (See also Bakker et al, 1993: 21; Wekker, Molendijk & Vernooij, 1992: 11). The Dutch gained foothold in the Guiana's in the early seventeenth century thereby establishing trading posts in Essequibo, Demerara, Pomeroon and Berbice in Guyana (Hulsman, 2009). They controlled these colonies until the last decades of the eighteenth century.

In 1796 the English occupied these territories by force of arms and after successive conflicts and changes in control they bought it from the Dutch in 1814. In 1831, the English unified these colonies under the name of British Guyana (UNEP/ACTO, 2009: 46). Also in Cayenne a colony was established by the Dutch in 1656 until 1664. In 1667 the Dutch conquered the English post in Suriname. The colony was briefly recaptured by the English in 1667 causing damage to the plantations in an effort to reduce production capacity (Schalkwijk, 2011: 92). The colony was reconstructed by the Dutch in 1670. The Treaty of Breda (July 1667) put an end to the Anglo-Dutch war and, among other agreements, exchanged Suriname for New Amsterdam in North America (Bakker et al, 1993: 21; Menezes, 1992: 7).

Contacts generally determined the ultimate survival or destruction of various Amerindian groups, particularly in the coastal area between indigenous leaders and European settlers during the first centuries of colonization. The opportunities and threats of the colonial plantation economy were in the initial period largely determined by its relations with the Amerindians. Peace treaties with the Maroons and Amerindians were crucial for the colonial society and the plantation economy in order to attain its full development. The Dutch-Amerindian relations along the coast of the Guiana's were – although disastrous – not as catastrophic as those in the Andean region, where large groups of indigenous people did not survive Spanish dominance. When the Dutch conquered Suriname there were three indigenous tribes who already lived in the coastal area: the Arawaks (or Lokono), the Caribs (or Kali'na) and the Warao. The Dutch initially strived for friendship with and exerted themselves to foster good relations with both the Arawaks and Caribs.

They maintained good relations with the Amerindians, especially the Arawaks who seemed to have assisted the Dutch during the conquest of Suriname (Jagdew, 2014: 37; Schalkwijk, 2011: 217).

In 1678, however, Dutch-Amerindian relation degraded due to Amerindian and Maroon attacks on plantations, causing a near collapse of the colony. In 1684 all Amerindians were declared free persons in peace treaties, thereby putting an end to the animosity between the colonist and Amerindians (Schalkwijk, 2011: 218-219).

The Dutch officials in the Guiana territory, as well as the Directors of the West India Company acknowledge their reliance on the Amerindians and in various proclamations gave protection and privileges to the native tribes. In 1717 trade with the natives was forbidden (Schalkwijk, 2011: 104).

During this period the Trio remained far from the coastal regions where colonization took place. Thus they were not colonized.

### **Indigenous landscape in Suriname during colonization**

The number of indigenous people in Suriname prior to the arrival of the Europeans is estimated at approximately 70,000 (Bakker et al, 1993:11). This number was rapidly and drastically reduced due to defiance against the Europeans, slavery, internal wars, emigration and imported diseases.

In the seventeenth century the various indigenous people in Suriname lived in roughly the same areas as today, namely the Arawaks and the Caribs in the coastal area, the Wayana and Trio in the south. The Warao lived in the west, but are no longer present in Suriname (Scholtens, 1992: 70-71). Several other tribes mentioned in the ethnographic records of Suriname were primarily subgroups of the Trio and Wayana, and other distinct Amerindian groups.

These tribes were primarily located in the interior<sup>9</sup>. From the very beginning of the colonization of Suriname, England, and subsequently the Netherlands, used the so-called divide and conquer strategy by using and inciting the discord among the various indigenous people and Maroons and later among the Maroons themselves.

The Trio and Wayana did not share a history of battle with the Europeans as opposed to the

previously mentioned coastal indigenous tribes, who were already settled in the Guiana's prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The Trio did not live together with the Europeans, but maintained their distance. Contact with the Europeans, mainly through expeditions in the hinterland, and with Maroons however led to trade relations en some intermingling, but also to contagion due to diseases. The Trio and Wayana were less affected by the colonial powers due to their geographical location during the first centuries of colonization. They have probably settled in southern Suriname in the late seventeenth century from Brazil and lived geographically isolated compared to the coastal indigenous tribes of the Arawaks, Caribs and the Warao. The Trio had contacts with other indigenous tribes, but only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century they came in contact the Maroons and Europeans. These contacts are described in the following sections.

### **Contacts with the Maroons**

From about the eighteenth century onward, external contact was almost exclusively with the Bush Negroes, or Maroons (*Mekoro*) - runaway African slaves and their descendants- when the latter inhabited the middle reaches of the Suriname and Marowijne River. The Ndyuka maroons moved toward the Tapanahony around 1760 and their migration was accomplished by 1790. Before they reached the Tapanahony for the first time, the Trio had already lived in the lower reaches of this river known in the Trio language as the '*Arakapuri, Ariwe, Tutu and Kananaman Creek*' (see also Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 267-268; Koelewijn, 2003: 676). The Wayana and Aparai also inhabited the Tapanahony area. According to the literature<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See also Carlin & Boven, 2002; de Goeje, 1906; Heyde, 1992; Rivière, 1969

<sup>10</sup> Boven, 2001; Findlay, 2001; de Goeje, 1906; Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987; Koelewijn, 2003.

and oral narratives, the indigenous people fled the area in fear of the white people (*pananakiri*) prior to the arrival of the Ndyuka. Due to the reasonable distance between the Tapanahony and the coastal area it was likely that the Trio had made sporadic contacts with the Europeans and the hostile Caribs. Upon their return to the area they encountered the Ndyuka in their previous habitat, which caused the indigenous population to move back further south in the forest due to the transmission of deadly diseases (especially the 'coughing disease' or tuberculosis) and a dominating trading relationship by the Maroons.<sup>11</sup> However, the question arises why the Trio of the western region of Suriname at one point also withdrew further south despite no Maroons were living in that area.

It is presumed that the Trio of both the western region and the Tapanahony area maintained contact, whereby contagion occurred (See also Schmidt & Stahel, 1942: 46-47). Contact with the Maroons was preserved since they had the advantage of bringing trading goods in the territory. Hence, trading relations were forged between the Maroons and the indigenous people along the Tapanahony, the Upper Maroni and the Lawa rivers. This contact was of crucial importance to the Trio since trade with the Maroons provided them with highly valued manufactured goods, above all metal-cutting tools. In return the Trio provided them with hunting dogs, hammocks, spears and arrows. It seemed that initially the Trio women became trading partners with the Maroons, because the men were scared of them (Koelewijn, 2003: 680). Narratives reveal that incidental intermarriage also occurred between the Maroons and the Trio (Koelewijn, 2003: 642-643). According to Carlin and Boven

(2002: 25), the Maroons, Trio, Wayana and Caribs had developed a pidgin language that was based on the Ndyuka language with elements from the three indigenous languages in order to facilitate trading. This pidgin has now been replaced by the Sranantongo. In the course of time, relations between the Trio and the Maroons degraded due to the dominance of the latter. Schmidt recorded the following in his account: "*on the one hand the Trio hate the Bush negroes, by whom they are cheated out and who brought them the 'coughing disease', but on the other hand they cannot live without the means of exchange*" (Schmidt & Stahel, 1942: 34; see also page 20). Furthermore, the Maroons also seemed to have placed themselves as a buffer between the colonists and the Trio by nurturing the fear of the Trio for the white people in order to maintain their trade monopoly in the territory (See also Koelewijn, 2003: 709; Schmidt & Stahel, 1942). Thus so far the Trio had been trading for a number of decades with the Maroons further east on the Tapanahony, to the north of where they live today. Trade was and is still based on mutual trust and friendship since payment for goods could take up considerable time, hence the fact that the Trio highly valued friendship. According to Carlin and Boven "the institution of being someone's trading partner was a weighty responsibility since Trio do not treat friendship lightly" (2002: 26). At present the Trio from Palumeu and Tepoe remain trading partners with the Maroons. Although restricted to small-scale trading, it is still considered a supplement to those with a low income and trained hunting dogs remain valuable commodities (See also Heemskerk & Delvoye, 2007: 36).

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<sup>11</sup> Also fieldwork data Tëpu (2013) and Palemeu (2014) collected by the author.

### **Expeditions to Trio territory in Suriname and Brazil**

Although references to different tribes, including the Trio and various subgroups, appear from the seventeenth century and contact was probable, the first reported encounter with the Trio was by Robert Schomburgk, the Boundary Commissioner of Guyana.

He entered the watershed region occupied by the Trio, which he called 'Drio'<sup>12</sup>, through the Wanamu River near the Corantijn River in 1843 in search of the Pianoghotto tribe.

The Pianoghotto accompanied Schomburgk up the Kutari River to the Trio settlement (Schomburgk 1845: 85). Apart from their physical appearance and geographical location, Schomburgk did not provide an extensive account of the Trio. Subsequently the French explorer Jules Crevaux met a few Trio on the East-Paru during an expedition in 1878 (de Goeje, 1906: 2). Contacts with the Trio during the nineteenth century were sporadic. An increase in the number of expeditions in the beginning of the twentieth century into the region, from both the Brazilian and Surinamese side, resulted in more frequent account about the Trio.

Systematic contact with the Upland indigenous tribes, such as the Trio and Wayana, were initiated by scientific expeditions to the interior in the early 20th century. In the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three Dutch scientific expeditions reached the area, which led to an ethnographic and linguistic description of the region. In 1903, the Dutch cartographer Franssen Herderschee, along with the Dutch cartographer and cultural

anthropologist C.H. De Goeje, undertook the Gonini expedition with the purpose of mapping the Gonini River and the surrounding area. This expedition visited the villages of '*Jamaiké and Panapi*' at the Litani River.<sup>13</sup> The Tapanahony expedition in 1904, also led by Herderschee, was among the first to enter Trio territories in the Tapanahony river basin, encountering the villages of '*Intelewa, Pontoetoe and Toewoli*'<sup>14</sup> (de Goeje, 1906: 2). During these two expeditions the expedition members were able to make contact with the 'timid' Trio with the assistance of the Maroons and the Wayana (ibid: 6). The next contact was during the Toemoek Hoemak expedition in 1907, led by C.H. De Goeje with the purpose of exploring the area near the southern border of Suriname. The expedition members were not received with open arms; rather they were shunned by the indigenous people. The American anthropologist Farabee was part of yet another expedition, which visited different Indigenous tribes in Suriname, Guyana and Brazil between 1913 and 1916. In 1916 he crossed the region by the same route as Schomburgk (Janki, 2002:16; Meira, 1999:10). In 1937 De Goeje also took part in the expedition of Vice Admiral C. Kayser regarding the mapping of the southern border of Suriname.

During the expedition, that took place from 1935-1937, Admiral Kayser encountered the unknown nomadic Wama<sup>15</sup> tribe at the Upper-Oelemari river. As a result the Roman Catholic priest W. Ahlbrinck undertook an expedition in 1938 to the Lawa, Litanie and Oelemari rivers, to become acquainted with this indigenous tribe (Ahlbrinck, 1956).

<sup>12</sup> Schomburgk classified the Drios as a "sister tribe of the Pianoghotto" (Schomburgk 1845: 84), as it was this tribe who accompanied Schomburgk to the Trio.

<sup>13</sup> These were villages that seemed to be inhabited by the Wayana, who were also referred to as Ojana or Oajana by various expedition members (De Goeje, Geijkes and Schimdt).

<sup>14</sup> The latter turned out to be inhabited by Oepoeroei, yet the distinction between this tribe and the Wayana is not evident. De Goeje (1906: 2) states that the language and customs of the two tribes seemed to be corresponding. This probably was the Apará tribe, which resides in Brazil, but pay annual visits to the Wayana.

<sup>15</sup> In the literature this tribe is also mentioned as Wajarekoele, Akoerio or Akuriyo (Heyde, 1992:9; Kloos, 1997; Ahlbrinck 1956).

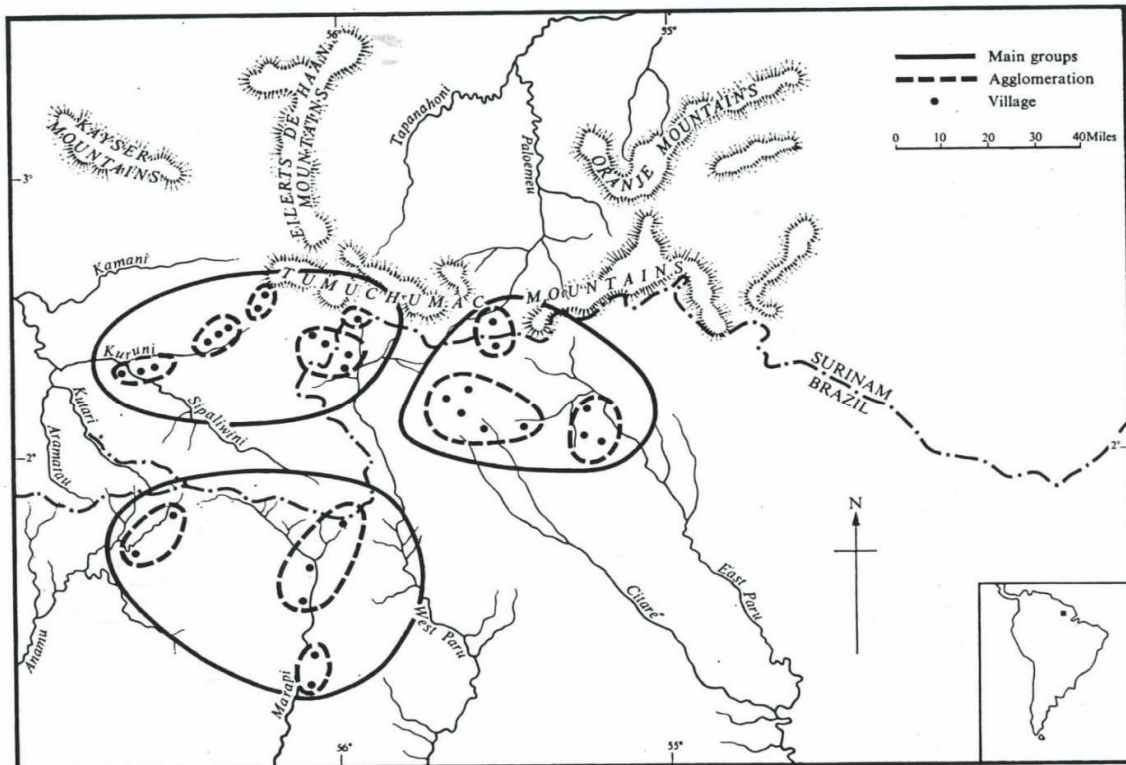


Lodewijk Schmidt was the first to describe the location of multiple Trio villages during the early 1940s. Schmidt made three journeys to nearly all Trio and Wayana territory near the border of Suriname and Brazil, registering and gathering very valuable ethnographic data from 1940-1942.

He registered twenty-one Trio villages in their native habitat in Suriname and Brazil during his journey (Schmidt & Stahel, 1942: 55-62). On one of his expeditions he was accompanied by Dr. Dirk Geijskes. In 1953 Geijskes, together with Prof. Dr. C.F. Bruijning, made

contact with the Wayana and Trio during a medical expedition to the southern border of Suriname where valuable museum and documentation material were collected.

In 1959 an expedition under the direction of Geijskes began in preparation for the airstrips at the Coeroeni River and the Kayser Mountains, also known as 'Operation Grasshopper' (see also Versteeg & Bubberman, 1998: 9). Based on Schmidt's data, Peter Rivière (1969) reproduced the geographic distribution of Trio villages in 1942.



MAP 2: The traditional distribution of Trio villages (after Schmidt, 1942).

Fig 1. Map 2 The traditional distribution of Trio villages (after Schidt, 1942)

Source: Riviere, P. (1969) Marriage amongst the Trio, p36

Various other explorers visited the Trio during the fifties and afterwards. In the seventies the editor in chief of the Surinamese evening paper '*de West*' visited the Trio and Wayana habitat during various expeditions. He recorded his findings in many articles, which were later compiled into a book (Findlay, 2011). The expeditions of De Goeje (*Tëkujenë*), Schmidt (*Simeti*), Geijskes (*Kesikesi*), and Findlay (*Pentëri*) are also recorded from oral tradition by Cees Koelewijn (See also Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 281-282, 285-289; Koelewijn, 2003: 714-716, 719-722).

Apart from these occasional encounters, the upland Indigenous groups continued to have minimal contact with Europeans for a long period. The various expeditions have contributed to the first collection of valuable geographic, ethnographic and linguistic data of the Trio and other indigenous tribes. Many villages, which were sketched during the expeditions on official maps of North-Brazil and the Southern Guiana's, do not exist at present (see also Wekker, Molendijk & Vernooij, 1992).<sup>16</sup> From the expedition reports the assumption can be made that the Trio lived on the banks of the Kuruni, Kutari, Wanamu, Tapanahony and Palumeu rivers prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

### **Missionary contact**

Until the sixties of the last century, the Trio lived in small, yet clustered 'villages' or extended bands consisting of between thirty or fifty people (Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 3). Leadership was principally in the hands of the family elder. The group built a small settlement of huts near a water source and maintained plots within walking distance of homes.

When the resources in the environs became scarce, agricultural plots were exhausted, or the leader passed away, the group simply moved to a new location at a considerable distance from the abandoned settlement. This way of life changed with the arrival of the Baptist missionaries in their habitat. Baptist missionary work in Suriname began in 1954, by the West Indies Mission (WIM). They began to show interest in the natives of the hinterland in the late fifties, while lobbying the Surinamese government to obtain permission to execute their activities amongst these natives. The sixties provided an opportunity for the West Indies Mission when the Surinamese government began to build airstrips in the hinterland. Four mission stations were founded in the interior: the first was near the Palumeu airstrip, followed by the second near the Alalapadu Creek in the Sipaliwini basin, the third at Lawa and the final one at the Sipaliwini airstrip.

The Trio in Brazil had also suffered population decline, which also urged the Trio to live in permanent settlements. Missionary activity has been disruptive in certain areas of society and culture. Religious conversion and transition in traditional settlement patterns brought about changes in their structure and culture which continue to the present day. For Rivière (1981: 2) the transition in settlement patterns was the most obvious effect of missionary activity. He further points out that the policies of the two missionary organizations differed on many points. The Roman Catholic mission in Brazil concentrated more on secular aspects and paid less attention to spiritual work. The Trio are well aware that missionary interference is mainly responsible for the changes in their belief system. They believe, however, that these changes were for the better.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews by the author with key persons in Suriname and Brazil also indicate that many of the ancestral villages do not exist anymore.

The pre-missionary period was described as a period of wicked behavior, warfare amongst tribes and practice of infanticide<sup>17</sup> (compilation of statements)<sup>18</sup>.

The Trio believe that they did not lose part of their being, but rather gained in becoming a better person. They also recognize the advantages which are derived from missionary activity and distinguish clearly between those resulting from evangelization, education, and medical care (Rivière 1981a). There has been and continue to be a gradual adaptation to changing circumstances due to contact with the outside world. The relationship between the Trio and the missionaries will be elaborated in another article.

### **Historic settlement of the Trio: Samuwaka**

The information for the present section originates from Trio oral history, existing literature and the aforementioned expeditions. The Trio have passed down their oral history over many generations, which is of great significance for apprehending their geographical movement and settlement pattern. Cees Koelewijn<sup>19</sup> and Rivière<sup>20</sup> made a very valuable contribution from Trio oral history by the Trio shaman Tëmenta. In the accounts there are recurring incidents, statements and details that are of interest and will be mentioned in this section. I agree with Mans (2012) who argues that the accounts should not be placed in one linear history.

He states that “it rather is transference of various contextual events which are continuously renegotiated and contribute to the existing historical landscape”. The oral history of the Trio goes back to Samuwaka (literally translated as ‘*Big Sand*’), which seemed to be the first large Trio settlement.

Boven asserts that Samuwaka seems to have preceded the Trio's first encounters with the Maroons and subsequent contacts with the Europeans (2001:17). She documented a short version of the history of Samuwaka based on narratives by the late Granman Pësaiphë and village leader Tëmenta. The narrative was also documented by Findlay, who likewise refers to Samuwaka in his accounts (2001: 1). Numerous stories from Tëmenta, documented by Cees Koelewijn (Koelewijn & Rivière 1987; Koelewijn 2003), also recount the events regarding Samuwaka. Certain additions and variations of the history provided by respondents complement the existing accounts. Samuwaka was situated in the Sipaliwini savanna close to a large rock named Kantani, south of the current border of Suriname with Brazil, and stretched out over several kilometers along a creek branching off the Western Paru River (Boven 2001:17). Oral history refers to several different (or related) tribes who were living together in Samuwaka and this place is considered to be their ancestral origin (Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 2).

<sup>17</sup> It is presumed that infanticide and cannibalism (as a result of warfare) were also administered to control the population due to their dependence of the nature. According to Schalkwijk (2007:31-32) infanticide was performed for different reasons: deformity of a child, disability of a child, preference of the father for a specific gender, if a man did not want many children, if a man was not sure if he was the procreator of the child, and the birth of twins. The latter was incomprehensible for the natives because they thought that one of the children was possessed by a spirit and because they did not know which one was possessed both of them were killed. Since the conversion of the Trio, infanticide is no longer practiced.

<sup>18</sup> Fielworkdata (Kwamalasamutu, Sipalwini and Alalapadu, 2011 & 2012), (Tepu, 2013) (Palemeu, 2014) collected by the author.

<sup>19</sup> Cees Koelewijn lived with his family in Tëpu from 1973 until 1981 and worked as a schoolteacher. During his residence in the village, he recorded the oral narratives of the Trio through former village captain Tëmenta. These oral narratives are compiled in two books; the first edition is published in English in collaboration with Peter Rivière. The second edition is published in the Dutch and Trio language.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Rivière conducted extensive research amongst the Trio regarding social organization especially in relation to marriage. In addition, he has published many articles on the ethnography of the Trio.

Based on oral tradition, we can assume that Samuwaka was not an actual village, but rather an agglomeration of villages with different tribes dispersed over a vast area of many Kilometers.<sup>21</sup> This assumption originates from the concept that native tribes traditionally valued their privacy and wielded a tradition of dispersion prior to their permanent settlement in the 1960 s. Pēsaihpē estimated the expanse of Samuwaka to equate the distance between Panapipa<sup>22</sup> and Alalapadu, i.e. circa 18 km (Findlay, 1976:1 in Mans 2012). However, respondents refer to Samuwaka as ‘pata’ which translate as a place or a village in the Trio language (see also Carlin, 2004). The gathering at and the dispersion from Samuwaka, as told by Tēmenta, is illustrated by the story of the big flood which was predicted by a Shaman because long ago people behaved badly and went astray (Koelewijn & Rivière 1987: 149-154; Koelewijn, 2003: 532-538).

The Pirëujana leader Maruwaikē decided to leave for the Kantani mountains after the shaman told them about the forthcoming catastrophe and the Aramajana and Maraso leaders followed him. The following fragment recounts how several tribes assembled at Samuwaka:

*“The shaman informed everybody. We want to let you know about the catastrophe that will overwhelm us. Where shall we gather together? This is the first time we come together, the first time we all assemble in one place. We are not the only ones who may perish, others will as well. We must go there, because if we don’t nobody will survive, and then people will become extinct and unable to regenerate themselves. So they went on their way, to Kantani.*

*They arrived at Samuwaka. There were many, many people, everybody had gone there After three days the catastrophe began. Not everybody was there. There were those who thought nothing would happen. They all perished and that was their own fault. There, on the Kantani they took emetics to cleanse their insides. They built houses there and also took food to the top of the Kantani. After the catastrophe people came down from the mountain and dispersed again. The Okomajana went to live in the mountains, others went elsewhere. Some did not want to go back. This story tells what happened to the people who originally lived together at Samuwaka but scattered when they were too many, when they came back to Samuwaka at the time of the flood”.* (Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 150-3)

The (sub) tribes that lived in Samuwaka according to the narratives were: Tareño, Sakëta, Tsikujana, Pirëujana, Okomajana, Aramajana, Maraso, Pijanakoto, and Akoerijo<sup>23</sup> (see also Koelewijn & Rivière 1987: 253; Findlay, 2011: 4-5, Koelewijn, 2003: 682).<sup>24</sup> The majority of Samuwaka’s inhabitants came from the area around the Paru, Marapi, Trombetas, Palemeu, Tapanahony and Marowijne rivers. Heretofore there already existed a network of social and trading relations among the different tribes who lived there. The oral history indicate that the Okomajana were mutual trading partners with the Akoerijo, who also intermarried, whilst the Trio were allies with the Pirëujana and Aramajana (Ibid).

<sup>21</sup> Boven (2001), Carlin & Boven (2002) & Findlay (2011) refer to Samuwaka as a village. However, reconstruction of oral and written accounts (Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987; Koelewijn, 2003) conveys the impression that Samuwaka was an agglomeration of villages dispersed over a vast area of many kilometers.

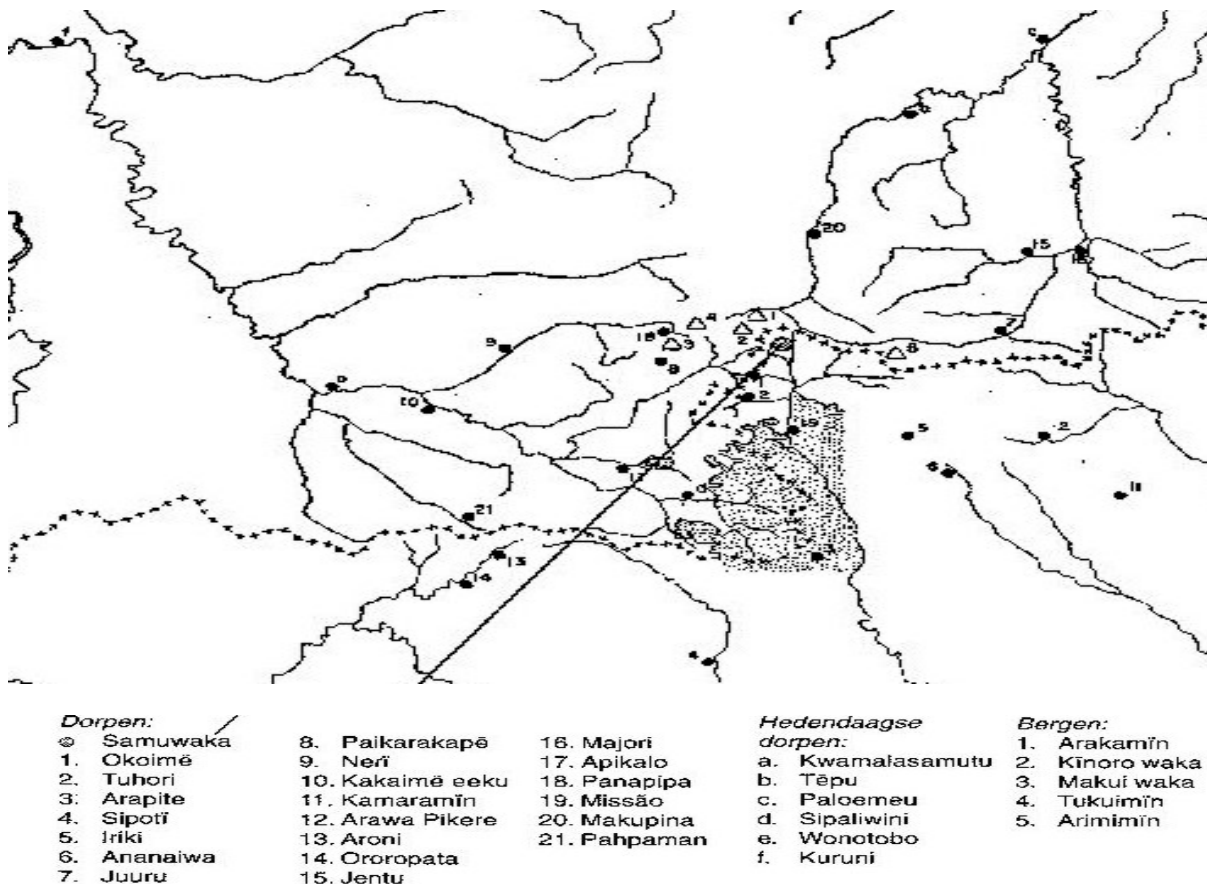
<sup>22</sup> In the oral history of the Trio Panapipa (which is translated as “flat leaves”) also seemed to be a large multi-tribal village.

<sup>23</sup> In the literature the term Akoerijo is also spelled as Akuriyo, Akoerio, Akurio and Akurijo.

<sup>24</sup> This section is also complemented with field notes from 2011, 2012 and 2014.

The history of Samuwaka was the contextual setting of the story of the young boy Aturai, who was kidnapped by the Akoerijo and eventually engaged in a fierce confrontation with the Akoerijo and Okomayana. Aturai became one of the prominent leaders of the Trio.<sup>25</sup> Other sources stated that Jakari was the tribal leader of all the tribes living in Samuwaka.<sup>26</sup> Other important tribal leaders from Samuwaka, who were mentioned, were: Paramuru, Apisi and Kurawaka (of the Trio tribe); Apaja, Pike, Jakepo and Sipi (of the Okomoyana tribe); and Okakoe and Joeroe (of the Pijanakoto tribe).

Living with a large population on one location was not sustainable. Moreover, the large settlement was difficult to defend against enemy attacks. As game and other forest resources were becoming sparse, the inhabitants left Samuwaka and dispersed to other rivers in Suriname and North Brazil, covering an area from the Corantijn River in the West as far as the Marowijne River in the East of Suriname and the East and West-Paru Rivers in the north of Brazil. Oral narratives also indicate that the settlement disintegrated due to inter-tribal wars.<sup>27</sup>



**Fig 2. Map of various Trio Villages**

Source: Boven (2001)

<sup>25</sup> For detailed information regarding the story of Aturai, see Koelewijn & Rivière, 1987: 253-261; Koelewijn, 2003: 682-694; Boven, 2001:18; Findlay, 2011: 1-3). The name Aturai is also mentioned by several informants in regard to Samuwaka, amongst which is the village chief Sede of Alalapadu (personal communication, December 2, 2011). Complemented with field notes (Kwamalasamutu, 2011/2012, Tēpu 2013 and Palumeu 2014)

<sup>26</sup> Pesoro, personal communication, August 5<sup>th</sup> 2014 (Palumeu).

<sup>27</sup> See also the research of Boven (2001), Koelewijn & Rivière (1987), Mans (2012), and Findlay (2011). Other relevant sources include interviews with key persons: chief Sede Pakudie (from Alalapadu in Suriname, and chief Jaroe from Maripa, Chief Tunahana Moesoeroe from Caichoerinha and Turakamen Muke Tiroyo, all from Brazil). This section was complemented with field notes from December 2011 (Kwamalasamutu), January 2012 (Kwamalasamutu), March 2013 (Tēpu), September 2013 (Macapa) and August 2014 (Palumeu).

After the dispersion from Samuwaka the whereabouts of the indigenous groups, in particular of the Trio, are indistinct. The dispersion covered nearly the south-west and central Suriname, among which the Kutari, Sipaliwini, Palumeu and Tapanahony rivers, and a part of northeast Brazil, among which the

Paru, Citaré and Marapi rivers. As was mentioned in the section regarding the expeditions to Trio territory, Schmidt (1942) registered twenty-one Trio villages in their native habitat in Suriname and Brazil during his journey. Below is an overview of these villages.

Suriname	Brazil
<b>Palumeu:</b> <i>Koetali-ëntu or Joeloe</i>	<b>West Paru:</b> <i>Okoimë/Piké</i> <i>Toeholi</i> <i>Toelapé</i>
<b>Sipaliwini:</b> <i>Inakpö or Letipö</i> <i>Paikalakapö or Akandé</i> <i>Panapikpan or Ojalé</i> <i>Malaka or Nelli</i> <i>Akame oekoe or Akakoe</i>	<b>Marapi:</b> <i>Alapité</i> <i>Omoelé</i> <i>Sipoti</i>
	<b>Citaré:</b> <i>Idiki or Malasoeane</i> <i>Tepa or Maliti</i> <i>Tawak or Takajana</i> <i>Alanaiwak or Pantakoe</i> <i>Waleke or Tepoempö</i> <i>Inawa or Amengai</i> <i>Pakolowa or Kalaliman</i> <i>Kamálatin or Siglai</i> <i>Alawara Pikele or Nawinawi</i>

\*The first name refers to the descriptive name of the village.

The second name refers to the village chief of that village.

Among the Trio it was common practice that a village was identified by the name of the village chief.

Source: Schmidt & Stahel (1942)

In 2009 the Amazon Conservation Team designed two geographical maps of the traditional lands of the Trio and Wayana in respectively south-west and central Suriname. This was done in collaboration with the local communities, and included mapping of occupied and unoccupied settlements. The documented habitat encompasses the Corantijn, Lucie, Kuruni, and Sipaliwini rivers and the Tapanahony-Palumeu river basin. The

maps indicate that their exodus from Samuwaka was neither the first nor the last time that the Trio had gathered and dispersed. Mataware, Paramphë, Panama<sup>28</sup>, and Mapuera in Brazil, and Makupina and Panapipa in Suriname are amongst the frequent places mentioned in oral accounts to which dispersion and from which migration between Suriname and Brazil

<sup>28</sup> Schomburgk (1845:83) asserts that the Pianoghottos referred to this River as the Wanamu River.

occurred.<sup>29</sup> Regarding Panapipa, Mans (2012) explains that it was the preceding village of Alalapadu. The Trio already started to fuse in Panapipa in 1942, which was situated northeast of Alalapadu. Schmidt (1942) and Rivière (1969) also refer to the village as “Panapikpan” and Panapipa (Meira, 1999). Thus, the Trio lived in small villages until 1960, after which they converged in more sedentary settlements.

### Conclusion:

Historiography indicates that numerous indigenous groups populated the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans, displaying an enormous variety of physical characteristics, cultural expressions, languages, lifestyles, and knowledge systems. Interaction between these groups occurred over large distances due to high mobility. This was also the case for the Trio, who lived in northeast Brazil, and southwest and central Suriname, and who traveled large distances through the borderland of these countries. Contact with other native tribes occurred through trade, warfare and intermarriage. This article gives an overview of the Trio's history through a sketch of their mobility, migration and settlement patterns and their relationship with other tribes and populations before and during the period of colonization. They also have a rich oral tradition which has been put into writing for the descendants, and which gives insight into their history and their way of life and thinking through mythology. Furthermore, it appears that the external relations with the Maroons, Europeans, and later the Baptist mission had a significant contribution in shaping the history of the Trio during the period of colonization.

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<sup>29</sup> Information derived from accounts: December 2011, January 2012 (Kwamalasamutu), March (Tëpu) and September 2013 (Macapa), August 2014 (Palemeu).

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