



MAROONS IN FRENCH GUIANA

**History, culture, demographics, and socioeconomic
development along the Maroni and Lawa Rivers.**

REPORT PRODUCED FOR TRIPPLE R ALLIANCE

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Aluku	One of the four main <i>bushinenge</i> groups (Aluku, Ndyuka,, Paamaka and Saamaka) that inhabit French Guiana. Villages and <i>goong kampus</i> of the Aluku are mainly found along the Lawa, as well as in the lower Maroni River.
Basia	Traditional authority position among the bushinenge; administrative assistant to a kabiten or gaanman.
Bilo-Ndyuka	Ndyuka whose traditional villages are situated along the lower Tapanahoni, between Poligoedoe and TjonTjon
Bushinenge	French Guiana term for maroons
Kabiten	Head of a <i>bushinenge</i> clan, often also thereby head of a village, or representative of the tribal group in a more ethnically diverse community.
Chweli	Blood oath or a ritual alliance-swear used between the <i>Bushinenge</i>
Commune	Level of administrative division in the Republic of France
Gendarme	A military component with jurisdiction in civil law enforcement in France
Gaanman	Paramount chief of a <i>bushinenge</i> group. All of the indigenous groups in Suriname also name their main tribal chief <i>gaanman</i> (<i>granman</i>)
Indigenous Peoples	First, original inhabitants of the American continent
Goong kampu	Place where <i>bushinenge</i> go to plant, hunt and collect forest product, typically somewhat removed from the traditional village. People may spend substantial time at their <i>goong kampu</i> , sometimes even more than in their original village. Some of the larger <i>goong kampus</i> have grown so large that they are now referred to as villages.
Lower Maroni	Maroni River from its mouth to the Hermina soula, just upstream from Apatou.
Maroni	Maroni River and its source rivers, including the Lawa and Litani
Maroons	People who were taken from Africa to work as slaves, and who escaped to establish independent, free communities – as well as their present-day dependents. Maroon communities have existed in virtually every country of the Americas, including the United States.
Marronage	The process of extricating oneself from slavery
Ndyuka	One of the four main <i>bushinenge</i> groups that inhabit French Guiana. Villages and <i>goong kampus</i> of the Ndyuka in French Guiana are mainly found in the area around the confluence of the Lawa and

	Tapanahoni rivers, including Ampoma, the Gakaba area, and the area around Grand Santi (incl. communities of Anakondee, Monfina and Dagoe-edé).
Opo-Ndyuka	Ndyuka whose traditional villages are situated along the upper Tapanahoni, from Sangamangsoesa to Gaanboli.
Paamaka	One of the four main <i>bushinenge</i> groups that inhabit French Guiana. Villages and <i>goong kampus</i> of the Paamaka in French Guiana are mainly found on the lower Maroni, across the River of the Suriname Paamaka villages such as Langatabiki.
Redi musu	A group of free black peoples who served in the Dutch army but escaped after the revolt in 1805. They are named after the red caps they wore as part of the Dutch military troops.
Saamaka	One of the four main <i>bushinenge</i> groups that inhabit French Guiana. The Saamaka do not have their own villages in French Guiana, but they dominate the population in certain neighbourhoods of French Guiana villages such as Kourou and Mana.
Sula	Rapids
Upper Maroni	Most Southern part of the Maroni River, where it is called Litani.
Wayana	Indigenous people populating both banks of the Lawa River, as well as the Tapanahoni River in Suriname. The Wayana traditionally have strong friendship bonds with the Aluku
Wisi	Witchcraft or black magic, part of the animist Afro-American religions of both the <i>bushinenge</i> and other people of African descent in French Guiana and Suriname

ACRONYMS

CAF	Caisse d'allocations familiales (Family Allocations Office)
FG	French Guiana
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation

USE OF LOCAL TERMINOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

In this report, we use local (French Guiana) names for certain groups of people, specific cultural practices, and geographic places. For example, we use the word *bushinenge* rather than the more international “maroons” or “*marrons noirs*”, because the French Guiana maroons today refer to themselves as *bushinenge*. We also say *gaanman* instead of paramount chief, because that is how the person is known in French Guiana (and Suriname).

Many of the geographic and other names came into use prior to them being part of a written language. When people, in a later stage, wrote down the names of peoples, places and events, they were spelled in different ways. These differences reflect differences between French and Dutch ways of spelling names, between different Peoples’ pronunciation of words, and – possibly- partly on the person who decided to write down certain names. For example, the rapids known as Peter Soungo¹, is known in Suriname as Pedro Sungu or Pedro Soengoe rapids. The creek known by French *bushinenge* as the Oulémali is known in Suriname as the Oelemarie or Ulemari. Below we provide a table with the terms and spelling variations we used, and alternative ways in which they were found elsewhere.

Used in this report	Alternative spellings or words for the same concept
Aluku	Boni
Beïman Creek	Beeiman Creek, Beyman Creek, Beeïman Creek, Beiman Creek
bushinenge	Bushi-Nengue, Maroons
chweli	Sweli
French Guiana	La Guyane
gaanman	Gaan man, granman
Hermina soula	Armina soula
kabiten	kapitein, captain
Lesse dede (rapids)	Lensidede
Maripasoula	Maripasoela
Ndyuka	Djuka, Djoeka, Okanisi, Aukaners
Oulémali	Oelemarie, Ulemari
Paamaka	Paramaka
Papaïchton	Papaiston
Peter soungou falls	Pedro sungo, Pedro soengoe
Saamaka	Saramaka

1 Literally: “Peter sank” – probably a place where a man’s canoe disappeared in the rapids

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document describes the history and present-day socioeconomic, demographic and geographic situation of *bushinenge* who live along the Maroni/Lawa Rivers in French Guiana. Maroons or -in French Guiana- *bushinenge*, are people who escaped slavery and established independent communities in the forested interior, and their descendants. *Bushinenge* represent an estimated 22 percent of the French Guiana population. They mainly belong to four groups: Aluku, Ndyuka, Saamaka and Paamaka. The Aluku are the only *bushinenge* group that established traditional villages in French Guiana, and that predominantly resides in French Guiana. All *bushinenge* in French Guiana are descendants of maroon groups who initially formed in Suriname.

In the late 18th century, the Aluku and Ndyuka from the lower Tapanahoni established friendly relations. One of the Ndyuka clans, the Dikan lo, settled for some time on the right bank of the present Beïman creek – near a contemporary Aluku settlement named Ingi Pule Chton. In the 1790s, relations between the Aluku and the Ndyuka become hostile and violent. In response to the growing hostility from the Ndyuka, the Aluku move further upstream the Lawa. By the early 19th century, marital relations between Aluku and Ndyuka help to normalize relations between these groups, though Aluku distrust of and resentment against the Ndyuka will never completely vanish.

In the late 19th century, it is established that the Lawa River is Aluku territory, while the Tapanahoni belong to the Ndyuka. These positions are challenged during the first gold rush in the Maroni area but the establishment of Ndyuka settlements along the Lawa remains forbidden for many more years.

In the 20th century, Saamaka, Ndyuka and Paamana increasingly find their way to French Guiana, either to work in the coastal area or to plant in the interior. In the late 1960s, the French government, seeking to more strongly integrate the interior regions, superimposes the French administrative system upon the traditional communities. Aluku communities also receive French government schools, clinics and gendarmeries, and French social subsidies. Suriname *bushinenge* migration to French Guiana intensifies after the 1960s, in response to different push and pull factors. Among others, economic hardship and ethnic violence against *bushinenge* in Suriname during the 1980s motivate massive out-migration.

In the past decades, French educated *bushinenge* have increasingly entered French Guiana's political arena, demanding a stronger say in development decisions that affect their traditional territories. While French Guiana indigenous peoples have vehemently spoken out against large-scale mining projects, *bushinenge* groups have been more ambiguous and less unanimous in their vision on gold mining. On the one hand, young university-educated *bushinenge* are calling for environmental preservation, and *bushinenge* groups feel that awarding concessions to mining multinationals takes their traditional home lands away. On the other hand, many *bushinenge* families directly or indirectly depend on small-scale gold mining for their livelihoods, and large-scale gold mining is perceived as another way to earn in income for local youth in the interior.

RESUME

Cette étude aborde l'histoire et la situation socioéconomique, démographique et géographique actuelle des Bushinenge qui vivent le long du fleuve Maroni/Lawa en Guyane française. Les Marrons ou -en Guyane française – Bushinenge, ainsi que leurs descendants, sont des populations qui ont fui l'esclavage pour s'établir en communautés indépendantes à l'intérieur du territoire dans la forêt. Les Bushinenge représentent environ 22 % de la population en Guyane française. Ils sont divisés en 4 groupes : Aluku, Ndyuka, Saamaka et Paamaka. Seuls les Aluku ont établi des villages traditionnels en Guyane française et y résident principalement. Toutefois, tous les Bushinenge de Guyane sont les descendants de groupes marrons qui se sont formés à l'origine au Suriname.

À la fin du 18^e siècle, les Aluku et les Ndyuka du Bas-Tapanahoni avaient établi des relations amicales. Un des clans ndyuka, le lo Dikan, s'était installé pendant une période sur la rive droite du Maroni, dans l'actuelle crique Beeïman – proche d'un autre site, occupé, lui, par les Aluku, et dénommé Ingi Pule Chton. Dans les années 1790, les relations se tendirent entre les Aluku et les Ndyuka et basculèrent dans la violence. Face à l'hostilité grandissante des Ndyuka, les Aluku s'éloignèrent en remontant vers l'amont du Lawa. Puis au début du 19^e siècle les relations finirent par s'apaiser entre les deux groupes, grâce aux relations matrimoniales entre Aluku et Ndyuka, même si la méfiance et le ressentiment des Aluku vis-à-vis des Ndyuka ne s'effacèrent jamais vraiment.

À la fin du 19^e siècle, il était alors reconnu que le Lawa était le territoire des Aluku alors que le Tapanahoni revenait aux Ndyuka. Cet état de fait fut mis à mal par le premier rush aurifère sur le Maroni mais l'installation des Ndyuka sur le Lawa resta interdite pour de nombreuses années encore.

Durant le 20^e siècle, Saamaka, Ndyuka et Paamaka furent de plus en plus nombreux à gagner la Guyane française, aussi bien pour travailler sur le littoral que pour cultiver des terres à l'intérieur. À la fin des années 60, le gouvernement français, souhaitant mieux intégrer l'intérieur au reste du territoire guyanais, y organisa son administration, se superposant aux structures traditionnelles existantes. La communauté aluku fut confrontée ainsi à l'administration française avec ses écoles, ses hôpitaux et ses forces de l'ordre, percevant également les aides sociales de la République française. Après les années 60, les migrations des Bushinenge du Suriname vers la Guyane française s'intensifièrent en raison de plusieurs facteurs. Parmi ceux-ci, les difficultés économiques et les violences ethniques des années 80 subies par les Bushinenge au Suriname provoquèrent une émigration massive.

Durant les dernières décennies, les Bushinenge, formés par le système éducatif français, ont intégré de plus en plus le paysage politique guyanais, revendiquant voix au chapitre sur les décisions en matière de développement qui touchent leurs territoires traditionnels. Alors que les Amérindiens de Guyane française se prononçaient avec virulence contre les projets miniers à grande échelle, la position des groupes bushinenge était plus ambiguë, moins claire sur la vision de l'exploitation aurifère. D'un côté, les jeunes générations bushinenge passées par l'enseignement supérieur demandent davantage de préservation de l'environnement, associé

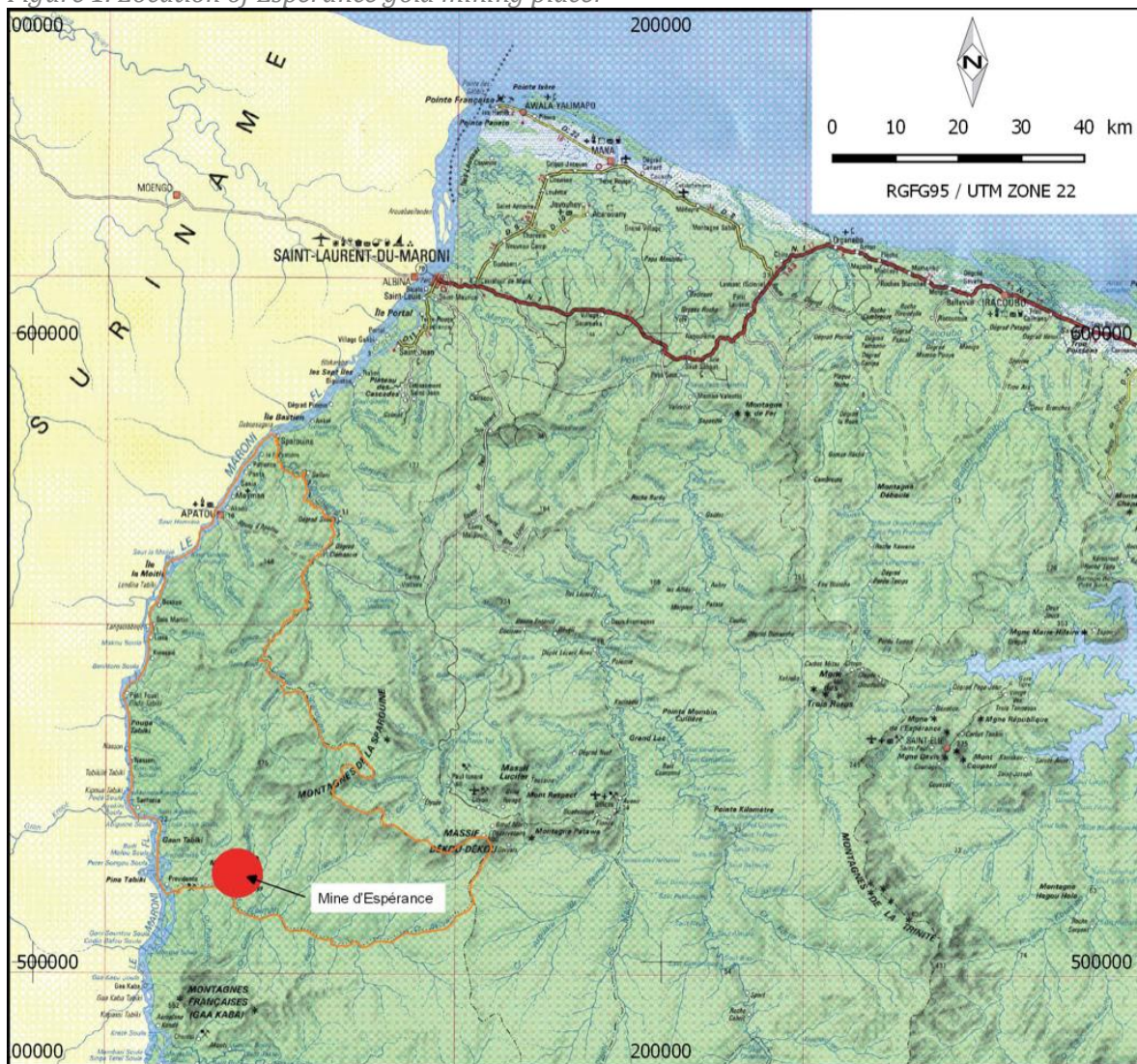
également au sentiment que l'attribution de grandes concessions minières contribue à la confiscation de terres considérées traditionnellement comme propriétés de ces communautés bushinenge. Mais de l'autre côté, de nombreuses familles bushinenge dépendent encore directement ou indirectement de l'économie aurifère pour leur subsistance et considèrent les grands projets miniers comme une solution potentielle de revenus pour la jeunesse de l'intérieur.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THIS STUDY

Newmont Mining Corporation (hereafter: “Newmont”) agreed to a partnership with the Compagnie Minière Espérance (CME). CME is a French company that is specialized in the exploitation of gold mining deposits, and operates exclusively in the French department of La Guyane (French Guiana), in South America. The Espérance mining property is situated in the area just north of the Beïman creek, roughly across the Maroni River from Newmont’s active gold mine at Merian, in neighbouring Suriname (Figure 1). Through its agreement with CME, Newmont expressed its intent to further explore the prospective Esperance gold discovery. Newmont is entitled to earn up to a 70 percent interest in the property through multi-year investments.

Figure 1. Location of Espérance gold mining placer



In March 2019, Newmont commissioned the present study as part of its general efforts to better understand the history and sociocultural context of the populations who are living nearest to the proposed concession area.

This report focusses on the *bushinenge* or maroon groups who populate the East banks of the Maroni in French Guiana. To provide a better understanding of the history and contemporary context of these groups, the analysis includes information on the past and present of *bushinenge* groups in other parts of French Guiana as well. Figure 2 shows the study area.

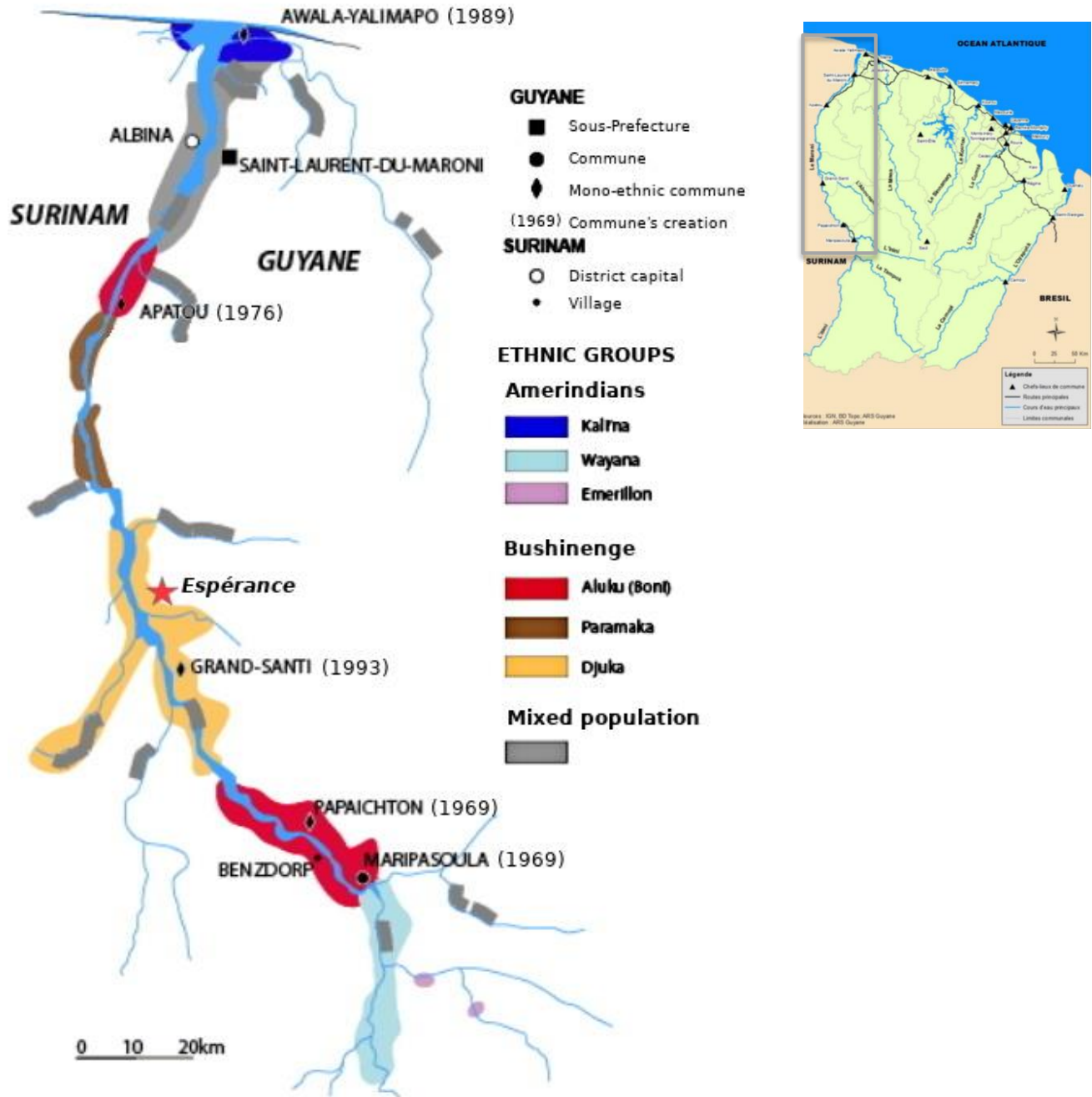
1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured according to the following sections:

- Chapter 2 provides basic background information about the *bushinenge*, including an explanation of key terminology, which helps understand the subsequent chapters. This chapter also discusses demographics and the location of the *bushinenge* Populations along the Maroni and Lawa Rivers.
- Chapters 3 and 4 describe the history of the *bushinenge* along the Maroni. It starts, in Chapter 3, with the period of marronage, when the ancestors of the present-day *bushinenge* fled from Suriname plantations. Chapter 3 also describes the establishment of more organized groups, as well as relations between them, up to the first gold rush in the late 19th - early 20th century. Chapter 4 describes *bushinenge* history after the first gold rush, including the French efforts to stronger integrate *bushinenge* communities into mainstream French society, and the more recent migratory movements of Suriname maroons to French Guiana. This section ends with observations of the growing self-awareness of Indigenous and *bushinenge* groups in French Guiana, as tribal people with special rights under international law.
- Chapter 5 analyses *bushinenge* involvement in present Artisanal and Small-scale gold mining activity in French Guiana. Understanding such involvement, either as gold miners or as service providers and land bosses, is important because it shapes local people's interests in specific interior areas, and the possible impacts they might experience from the establishment of a formal mine. This chapter also discusses the vision of *bushinenge*, as well as Amerindian groups, on large-scale mining.
- The conclusions synthesize the main findings

Figure 2. French Guiana with distribution of ethnic groups along the Maroni

Ethnic groups' distribution along the Maroni



Source: J. Domont, USTL-TVES, 2018, based on Atlas de la Guyane, 2008, and Pierre Grenand, 2001²

2 <http://travelocity.canalblog.com/archives/2018/04/01/36284296.html>

2 BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

2.1 BUSHINENGE

Maroons, in French Guiana referred to as *bushinenge*, are the descendants of African people who were made to slaves in the New World, and who ran away to establish independent communities. In this report, we will use the term maroons for the loose bands that had just escaped slavery (*marronage*) and moved around in the forest, without a defined socio-political structure or geographic location. We use the term *bushinenge* to refer to their descendants, who form the African-descent tribal groups in present day French Guiana and Suriname.

All four *bushinenge* groups that inhabit French Guiana today in significant numbers initially established themselves in the 17th and 18th centuries in Suriname. They are the Aluku, Ndyuka, Saamaka and Paamaka. Suriname also hosts Kwinti and Matawai Maroons, but apart from some scattered individuals, these *bushinenge* groups do not have a notable presence in French Guiana (Price and Price, 2003). The Aluku are the only *bushinenge* who are -as a tribal group- considered French, with most of their members being born as French citizens and most of its traditional leadership living in French Guiana.

2.2 TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY STRUCTURE

Traditionally, the head of a Maroon tribal group is the paramount chief or *gaanman*. The *gaanman* is both a political and a spiritual leader; he is the most important person in resolving internal disputes, but also in dealing with the outside world and the supernatural world. Each tribal group (i.e. Ndyuka, Aluku, Saamaka) is divided in a number of *lo* or clans, who are matrilineal-related people who trace their ancestry to one common (real or fictive) ancestress (Hoogbergen, 1990). The ancestors of a *lo* are typically believed to have run away from the same plantation (De Groot, 1977). The Ndyuka have twelve *lo*³, the Saamaka also twelve, the Paamaka four, the Aluku seven.

Traditionally, a *bushinenge* individual derives his social place in the tribal group, and his rights to land and resources, to his clan membership, and that of his parents. Each clan is entitled to certain plots of land, which not necessarily form one continuous area. Typically, land belongs to the *lo* that first cleared it for agriculture or settlement. *Lo*-based territorial boundaries are generally based on natural borders such as rivers, creeks and mountains (ACT, 2010). Clans are divided in matrilineages (*bee*) that trace their kinship relations to a common clan mother, often several generations back. The Aluku, however, do not make a distinction between *lo* and *bee*; the clan is not composed of a number of matrilineages. Each *bee* is a *lo* at the same time

3 The Ndyuka also refer to themselves as Den Tuwalufu (The Twelve), because at the time of formation of the Nási (tribal group, or Gaan-lo) by the end of the 18th century (1758-1759) there were twelve *lo* that formed the Ndyuka or Okanisi society with one common leader, the *gaanman*. The *lo* of the *gaanman* is often named as a neutral, 13th *lo*.

(Hoogbergen, 1989). For the groups who do make this distinction, the lands of the *lo* are subsequently subdivided in areas where each *bee* can plant. Other land uses such as collecting forest products and hunting tend to take place in the entire area allocated to the *lo*.

The *Gaanman* of each tribal group is assisted by a council of elders, *ede-kabiten* (*hoofd-kapiteins*; head of one or more *lo*) and *kabiten* (*kapiteins*; head of a *bee*). Most villages have two or three kapiteins. Each village and the lands around it are claimed by a clan; though some villages host more than one clan and some clans live in more than one village. The *gaanman* and *kabiten* are assisted by administrative assistants, the *basia*.

The political offices of the *gaanman* and the *kabiten* are hereditary via the matrilineal line. For example, the son of the deceased *gaanman's* (*kabiten's*) eldest sister, or the son of the mother's brother may qualify for succession. Because skills, power, and specific achievements play a role as well, succession is not straightforward (De Groot, 1975; Hoogbergen, 1990; both cited in ACT 2010). Traditional authority positions are appointments for life, and are only under very unusual circumstances terminated prematurely.

The French authorities have proposed to the traditional authorities to change this system to one of democratically elected leaders. This proposition has been accepted in some communities, particularly those that are new and may be less traditional. Nevertheless, also here, the system of "election" is not individual and confidential, as in the French elections. Having an "election" does not take away the necessity to reach consensus, which requires lengthy discussions. A main difference with the traditional system of acquiring leadership positions, is that in the modern system, identifying a village leader requires fewer lengthy rituals, so it is much faster and, in the eyes of the young generation, more efficient.

2.3 NUMBER OF BUSHINENGE IN PRESENT DAY FRENCH GUIANA

In 2015, French Guiana counted 259,865 persons (INSEE, 2015). Because the French national census does not ask about ethnicity, it does not provide data on the number of *bushinenge* in French Guiana. In 2002, Price estimated the French Guiana population at 37,200 persons, among whom 29,800 persons in the coastal region, and 7,400 in the interior⁴. This figure represented approximately 20 percent of the population of Guyane. The natural growth rate for French Guiana as a whole was 2.7%, but a much higher rate of 4.2% was recorded in the interior Maroon communities of Apatou, Grand Santi and Maripasoula. Taking these figures, and using a rate 3.45% natural increase (average interior-national), the estimated rounded Maroon population numbers in 2015 Guyane are estimated as listed in Table 1 below. A total of 20 percent *bushinenge* in the total population of French Guiana seems a reasonable estimate⁵.

4 Only counting persons of two *bushinenge* parents, but including persons living in La Guyane clandestinely

5 More recently, Price (2019) provided a new estimate of one out of every three inhabitants of French Guiana persons being of Maroon descent (33%), for a total of almost 100,000 *bushinenge* in this department of France. (<https://www.guyaweb.com/actualites/news/societe/en-guyane-un-habitant-sur-trois-est->

Table 1 *Bushinenge* population numbers

<i>Bushinenge</i>	N	% of FG population	% of <i>bushinenge</i> population in FG
Total French Guiana	57.800	22,2%	100%
French Guiana coastal	46.300	17,8%	80%
French Guiana interior	11.500	4,4%	20%
Saamaka	22.500	8,7%	38,9%
Ndyuka	21.800	8,4%	37,7%
Aluku	9.200	3,5%	15,9%
Paamaka	4.400	1,7%	7,6%

2.4 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF *BUSHINENGE* ALONG THE MARONI AND LAWÁ

The Aluku are the only *bushinenge* group that established traditional villages (*konde*) on French river islands and on the French banks of the Maroni. Indeed, up to the 1990s, the Aluku were the only *bushinenge* group that had actual villages in French Guiana. Nevertheless, already some decades earlier, families of other *bushinenge* groups occasionally cut agricultural plots on the French river banks, particularly the *bilo*-Ndyuka⁶. Because such plots can be at some distance from the home village, families built –initially rather simple- huts near their agricultural field, which allowed them to stay for some days in a row. Such a place would be referred to as *goong kampus*. Sometimes families went for months in a row to their *goong kampus* and built a more permanent house there.

Especially after the political turmoil and economic recession of the 1980s in Suriname, *bushinenge goong kampus* in French Guiana grew and some new settlements came to house larger numbers of inhabitants than the traditional villages in Suriname. More established *goong kampus* also may have one or more traditional authority figures. Still, a *goong kampus* that has grown into a permanent settlement will not have the same historic and spiritual significance as a traditional village. For funeral rites and other important ceremonies, for example, people may still go back to their traditional village. Figure 2 shows the approximate location where *bushinenge* from different ethnic groups live along the Maroni.

bushinenge/). This growing share of *bushinenge* in the French Guiana population is illustrated with the observation that approximately 40% of the students of University of Guyane are from the Maroni.

6 Ndyuka society is divided in two segments, the *belo* Ndyuka from the lower Tapanahoni, between Poligoedoe and TjonTjon, and the *opo* Ndyuka, from the Sangamangsoesa to Gaanboli. Historically, there has been quite some rivalry between these groups, among others with regard to the right to deliver the *gaanman*.

3 HISTORY OF MARRONAGE TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY

3.1 AREA OF MARRONAGE

From the last quarter of the 17th century, the Dutch colony of Suriname flourishes thanks to its numerous plantations around Paramaribo and along the Suriname, Cottica and Commewijne rivers. This wealth is largely based on a workforce of people who are taken from Africa to work as slaves. During the 18th century, the brutal treatment of enslaved people incited revolt and escape into the forest. The present *bushinenge* populations are the descendants of those who escaped, the maroons.

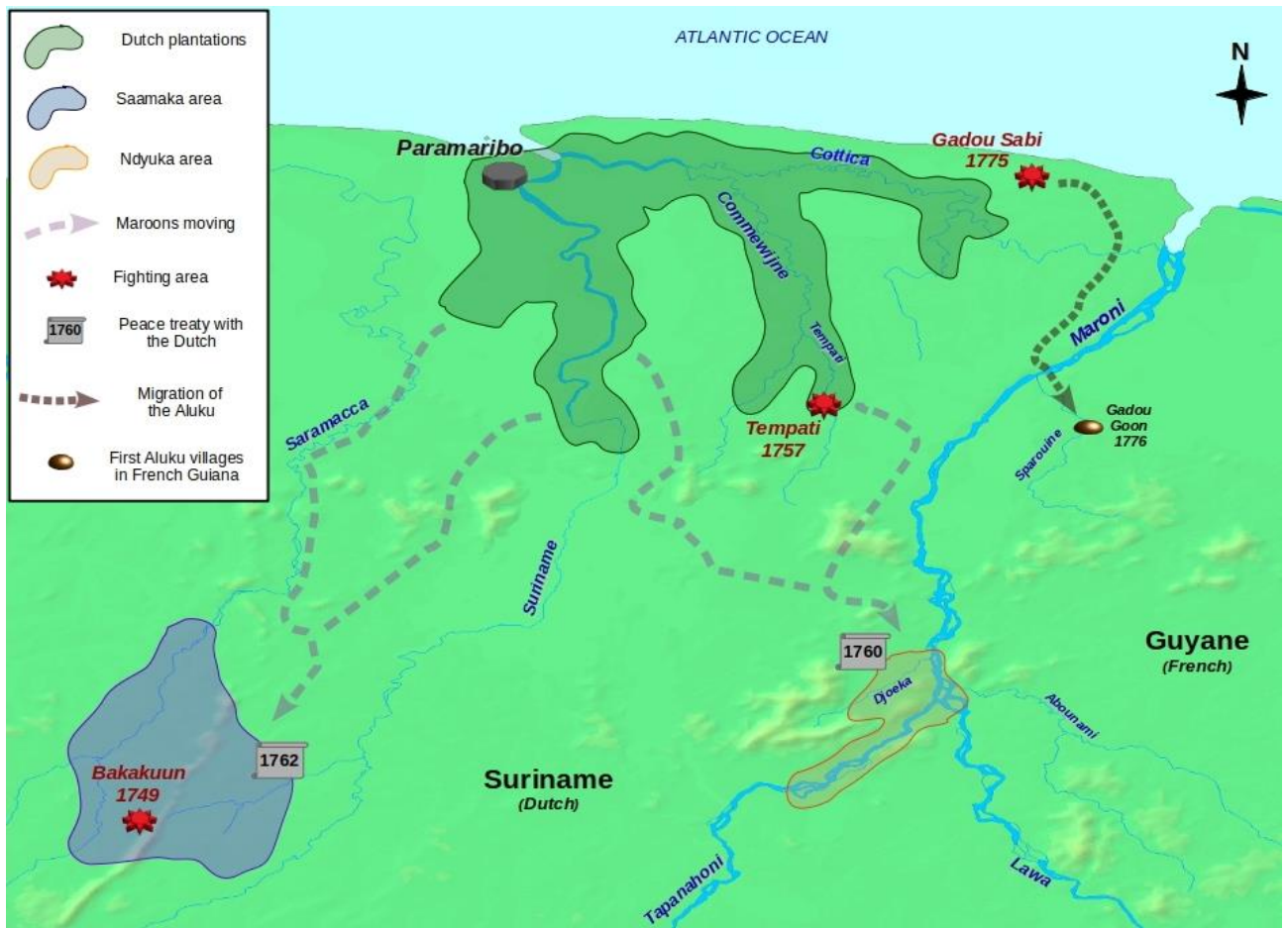
The first organized maroon group is probably established by the end of the 17th century, on the upper Saramaca River. The group plunders the plantations, killing several owners and liberating the slaves. They become known as the Saamaka (Saramaka) rebels. Not much later, the Ndyuka maroon group, which probably formed in the 1720's, occupy an area from the Suriname River to the Djoeka creek, a tributary of the left bank of the Maroni River. In 1757, a large revolt led by the Ndyuka on the Tempati creek presses the Dutch authorities to sign a peace treaty, in 1760. In this treaty, the government of Suriname recognizes the independence of the Ndyuka and commits to giving them a tribute every year. For their part, the Ndyuka accept the demand to move to the south-east of Suriname, and settle on the Tapanahoni. The Ndyuka also commit to returning every newly escaped maroon who seeks refuge in the Ndyuka territory. At the time, the Ndyuka population is estimated around 1600 people. In 1762, a similar treaty is signed with the Saamaka (De Groot, 1977, Hoogbergen 1990; Price, 2003).

In the late 1760s, a couple of smaller maroon bands attack plantations around the Cottica River. In response, between 1772 and 1775, the Dutch lead a real war against whom they call the Cottica rebels, the name under which the Aluku were initially known. In August 1775, their principal settlement, Gadou sabi, is discovered and destroyed. The maroons withdraw to the east. They cross the Maroni River to the French banks and, in 1776, found new settlements in the Sparouine creek. About 500 peoples stay in five villages, under leadership of the main chief, *Gaanman Boni*⁷. In 1783, they leave Sparouine creek to move upstream of the first rapids in the Maroni, around *Boni Doro* area and the village of *Aroku*, where they will stay until 1789-90 (Hoogbergen, 2008 ; Moomou, 2013). Figures 3 and 4 shows these early migration routes and settlements of the Aluku in the 18th and 19th centuries.

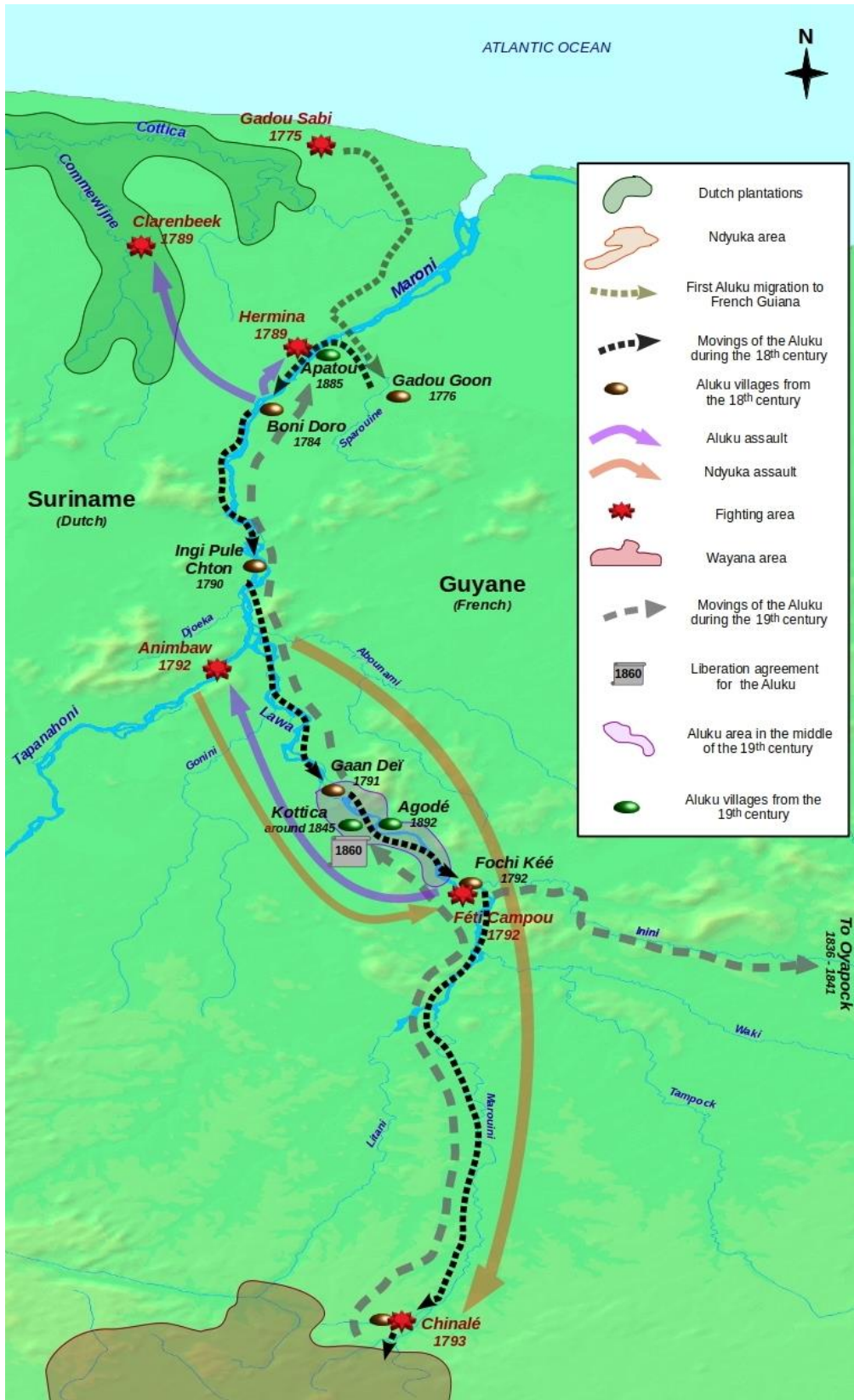
7

A still-used alternative name for the Aluku is the Boni.

Figure 3. Marronage and establishment of maroon groups in Suriname, late 17th century – 18th century.



Migration routes and settlements of the Aluku, late 18th century – 19th century



3.2 MAROONS AND AMERINDIANS ALONG THE MARONI IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

In the early 17th century, the Kaliña Indigenous people occupied the entire stretch of the Maroni River, from the mouth of the river to the Litani-Oulémalı confluence. Their population at the time may have numbered approximately 6000 individuals (Hurault, 1972). In 1610, the English Harcourt-Fisher report mentions three large villages on the upper Maroni: *Tauparamune* at the confluence of the Lawa and Tapanahoni Rivers, *Moreshego*, in the area of present-day Papaïchton-Maripasoula and *Aretonene* which is on the Litani, near the confluence of Oulemalı creek. In addition, a lot of other different Indigenous ethnic groups inhabit upper Maroni (Bellardie, 2011).

When first the Ndyuka, and later the Aluku settled along the Maroni River, the area had already lost the largest share of its original Indigenous population. Contact with Europeans had been disastrous, like everywhere in the Americas. Diseases imported from Europe and Africa, to which the Indigenous groups did not have any resistance, causes a rapid demographic collapse. By the middle of the 18th century, only the Teko remained in the upper Maroni. They had come from central French Guiana and settled between the Inini creek and the Lawa, near the first islands upstream from present-day Maripasoula. The Aramiso and the Kaikusian Indigenous groups, very weakened already, established themselves along the Tampock and Waki creeks. In this same period, the Wayana begin their migration from Yari to the upper Marouini creek (Bellardie 2011). By the 1770's, the Kaliña, decimated in numbers, have withdrawn to the lower Maroni, downstream from Sparouine creek (present Bastien island). Here they live in two villages, housing approximately 150 persons.

The relationships between the *bushinenge* and the Indigenous peoples are a bit tortuous at this time. In the 18th century, the Kaliña captured and killed several maroons. But around 1780, when the Aluku entered the Maroni, they seem to have taken blood-oaths or *chwéli* with the Kaliña. In 1782, the Dutch accuse the Kaliña of giving weapons to the Aluku. Yet then, in April 1789, a group of Kaliña complain to the French authorities that, after a deadly encounter into the forest, the Aluku have taken several Kaliña hostage.

Later, during the 1830-40s, the Kaliña strongly reject an attempt of Ndyuka *gaanman* Beyman, to place the Kaliña under his domination, using the *chwéli*. Nevertheless, around 1850, the village of Bigiston is a mixed-village, on the right banks of the Maroni about ten miles upstream Albina, where Ndjuka and Kaliña live together (Collomb, 2000).

3.3 EARLY COLONIAL TREATIES WITH MAROON GROUPS IN 18TH CENTURY

The Dutch 1760s treaties with the Ndyuka and the Saamaka give these groups the right to occupy their living areas in the interior. They are considered as free, with autonomy in their social, political and land management. The Dutch give them a tribute every year, composed of weapons and other daily use items. On their turn, the "pacified" maroon groups accept the presence of a colonial government representative in their area; the *posthouder*. The task of this

posthouser was to keep daily records of, and inform the Dutch about, what was happening in the area. Through their respective treaties, The Ndyuka and Saamaka commit to not protecting and hosting any new maroons, and to contributing to the capture of new maroons for a financial reward. These treaties will be renegotiated in 1809 and 1837 (De Groot, 1977). This 1837 version will remain valid until the abolition of slavery in Surinam, in 1863. The Dutch are not willing to sign a similar peace agreement with the Aluku.

Between 1780 and 1786, after invasion of the Aluku into the Maroni, the French authorities make an effort to establish a relationship with them. They offer an agreement to the Aluku, which would oblige the Aluku to move to the lower Mana River, where they would be free but under the colonial authority and having to pay a tax. The spirit of this proposal is very different from the treaties offered by the Dutch to the Ndyuka and Saamaka. The Aluku reject this proposal, because they refuse to live once more under the control of a colonial authority that endorses slavery (Hurault 1960, Moomou 2013).

3.4 RELATIONS BETWEEN ALUKU AND NDYUKA ALONG THE MARONI IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

As of 1779, Aluku and Ndyuka establish relations, conclude marital unions, and engage in regular *chweli* (blood oath) ceremonies. The fact that the Dikan *lo* (clan) is part of both the Aluku and the Ndyuka also creates a form of cohesion between them. The Dikan *lo* provided the first Ndyuka *gaanman* (1759-1766), and provided all *gaanmans* of the Aluku till 1967. At the time, around 1790, the Ndyuka section of the Dikan *lo*, had one or more *goong kampu(s)* around the present Beïman creek, on the right bank of the Maroni.

The geopolitical context changes around 1790-91. Ndyuka *gaanman* Pambu dies and a few weeks after, *kapiten* Kwamina Adjubi, the main chief of the Ndyuka Dikan *lo*, also passes away. A succession dispute to fulfil the *gaanman* function among the Ndyuka follows. The young generation of Ndyuka from the upper Tapanahoni, the *Oponenge* (or: *opo* Ndyuka), with *kapiten* Bambi as their leader, ultimately win the internal struggle against the *bilonenge* (*bilo*- Ndyuka). (Hoogbergen, 1990 ; Jolivet, 2008). With the transfer of Ndyuka *gaanmanship* to the *opo* group, the Aluku loose an important ally.

Around this same period, the Aluku move to the *Peter Sounbou* rapids, after the destruction of their village of *Aroku* by Dutch army. This new Aluku settlement, known as *Ingi Pule Chton*, is located not far from the Ndyuka Dikan *goong kampu* along the Beïman creek. The Ndyuka Dikan *lo* had its principal settlement in the lower-Tapanahoni, called Benanu. Yet establishment of a *goong kampu* along the Beeïman creek was a way to meet and keep in touch with the Dikan from the Aluku, away from the critical looks of the other Ndyuka *lo*, especially those from the upper Tapanahoni River, the *opo*-Ndyuka (Jean Moomou, historian (PhD), pers. com. May 2019).

The nearby Aluku settlement is a thorn in the eyes of the Dutch, who, referring to their 1760 peace treaty, place pressure on the Ndyuka to gain their support in the fight against the Aluku.

In October 1791, in order to maintain the alliance with the Dutch, new *gaanman* Toni and the *opo* Ndyuka, send a delegation to Paramaribo, promising to deliver the Aluku to the Dutch (Hoogbergen, 2008).

In response to the growing hostility from the *opo* Ndyuka, the Aluku move far away along the Lawa, and settle upstream near the *Lesse dede* great rapid, at the present Abattis Kotika. Nevertheless, relationships with the Ndyuka grow bitterer. In 1792, violent confrontations between the Ndyuka and the Aluku end with the death of Boni, the *gaanman* of the Aluku, at the Chinale creek. He is killed by a Ndyuka expedition in February 1793. In 1802, in spite of Paramaribo authorities' pressures to continue the fight against the Aluku, the Ndyuka do not give in anymore, considering this conflict over. Being decimated to fewer than 150 persons, the Aluku are confined to the upper Marouini, near the living area of the Wayana Indigenous peoples, with whom they establish strong relations till present days (Chapuis, 2003).

In 1809, the Dutch, in an update of the 1760s treaty, officially assign the Nduka the job of guardians of the Maroni. The Aluku are thereby considered to be under Ndyuka supervision and forbidden to travel downstream of the Lawa-Tapanahoni confluence. The Ndyuka allocate the job of supervising the Lawa-Tapanahoni confluence to the *redi musu*, a group of free black peoples who worked for the Dutch military troops but escaped after a revolt in 1805. The *redi musu*, initially with about 80 persons, take refuge in two places: along the Maroni near the *Peter soun gou* rapid and at the confluence Lawa-Tapanahoni, along the *Poligoudou* great rapid. They close a deal with the Ndyuka, who promise not to deliver them the Dutch. On their turn, the *redi musu* are tasked with supervision of Aluku activities from the upstream, as well as of other people, who enter the area from downstream. These *redi musu* are believed to be, along with other small dissident groups from the Aluku, ancestors of the present Paamaka *bushinenge* group (Jolivet, 2008).

In the early 19th century, past and contemporary marital relations between Aluku and Ndyuka⁸ help to normalize relations between them, though Aluku resentment against the Ndyuka will never die completely, until the present day. The Aluku settle back along the Lawa, near the Inini creek during (1815-1825) and upstream from Abatti Kottica (~1830). They take part in several funeral ceremonies for Ndyuka traditional authorities during this period (Hoogbergen, 2008).

In 1837, the Ndyuka re-negotiate the peace treaty with the Dutch, which confirms the Ndyuka's role as Maroni supervisor. In this period, Ndyuka *gaanman* Beyman imposes his authority on the Aluku by using a large number of *chweli* and increasing *wisi* (witchcraft/black magic) accusations. Some of the Aluku try to move to the Oyapock river during 1836-1841, but their migration stops tragically with the death of the Aluku *gaanman* Gongo. He is killed by French soldiers thinking that they protect the Oyapock French plantations from dangerous maroons (Hurault, 1960 ; Hoogbergen 2008, Moomou, 2013).

8 Mostly with the *belo* Ndyuka, who have traditionally been both socially and geographically closer to the Aluku.

3.5 COLONIAL GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS MAROONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Until the Suriname abolition of slavery, in 1863, the Dutch consider the Aluku as dangerous maroons who must stay under the domination of the Ndyuka. The French see this differently. When the Aluku try to settle in the Oyapock, slavery existed (again) in the French colonies⁹. In November 1836, an agreement signed by the governors of French Guiana and Suriname, mentions that the Aluku must be confined in the area where they are under supervision of the Ndyuka, but clarifies that the right bank of the Maroni is French and that all French people are free to move along the river, without any opposition from the Ndyuka (Bellardie 2006).

A final precision changes life for the Aluku in 1860, twelve years after the French abolition of slavery. Loggers who settled in the lower Maroni since the 1850's establish relations with the Aluku. The Ndyuka are opposed to this, pointing at the treaty signed with the Dutch. In response, French authorities take the Aluku side and oblige the Ndyuka to sign an agreement to protect free navigation on the Maroni. From that moment, the Aluku are recognized under French protection and are free of Ndyuka supervision. During subsequent French-Dutch negotiations about the borders of their colonies along the Maroni, the Aluku are designated as French people on the Maroni, while the Ndyuka on the other side of the river are considered Dutch. The Aluku living area thus becomes part of the French claim in the border area (Bellardie 1997, 2001, 2006).

For their part, the Dutch use the 1860's agreement to weaken the Ndyuka position by ending their supervisory role. After the Suriname abolition of slavery (1863), the Dutch request part of the Ndyuka to migrate to the coast to work, and thus help secure economic development of the colony. Ndyuka migration to the coastal area will indeed happen but later, in the early 20th century, with the settlement of many Ndyuka in the Cottica area (around present-day Moengo) where they will work much in lumber and balata.

Thus, during the last quarter of the 19th century, the Dutch and French colonial governments use the Ndyuka and the Aluku in their respective claims in the Dutch-French border dispute. On their turn, these *bushinenge* groups use this situation to strengthen their own position: The Aluku establish that the Ndyuka cannot enter the Lawa and vice versa, the Ndyuka declare the Tapanahoni closed for the Aluku, excepted for travel to attend funeral ceremonies and individual cases of, for example, marriage. This geographic division was for the Aluku also a way to preserve their autonomy and prevent assimilation by the more numerous Ndyuka (Bellardie, 2001).

3.6 ALUKU AND NDYUKA INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIRST GOLD RUSHES (~1875-1910)

The territorial dispute between the Dutch and the French colonial governments also is played out during the first gold rush in the Maroni area. From the 1870's, the number of active gold

9 Revolutionary France abolished slavery throughout its empire in 1794, but it was restored in 1802 by Napoleon as part of a program to ensure sovereignty over its colonies. The French colonies re-abolished slavery in 1848.

concessions on the French side increases. Around 1875, mining activities spread along the lower Maroni, up to the Abounami area. Then, in 1886, gold mining begins to boom on the left banks of the Lawa River, just upstream of the Aluku villages (present Benzdorp area). Hundreds of gold miners arrive from the coast and invade the area, upsetting Aluku daily life. Aluku *gaanman* Anato seeks financial gain from the gold miners by giving them a right to work a gold placers in exchange for “royalties”, though without legal right to do so from colonial authorities. In this way, the *gaanman* asserts Aluku authority over these lands, which they consider their property (Bellardie, 2001).

Exploiting the gold placers in the French Guiana (and Suriname) interior requires an extensive logistic operation. The Ndyuka and Aluku with their streamlined pirogues (dugout canoes) are masters in river navigation, with detailed knowledge of the numerous strong rapids (*soula*). Four weeks are needed for an Aluku four boatmen crew to bring miners and goods from St Laurent du Maroni to the Lawa’s gold placers, only using paddles and *takari*, a long wooden pole.

During the early 1880’s, usually only a few Aluku pirogues come to St Laurent, while there are some dozens of Ndyuka ones. But the flood of gold miners upon the Lawa suddenly changes power relations in boat traffic. The Ndyuka try to partly take over the business of providing mining logistics, despite the traditional prohibition to enter into the Lawa, as Aluku area. In April 1888, there are several clashes between Aluku and Ndyuka near the old Grand-Santi, on the right bank of the Maroni (Lawa), upstream of the Lawa-Tapanahoni confluence. The Ndyuka, in their efforts to stop navigation to the Lawa gold placers, are accused of attacking an Aluku pirogue chartered by French miners. Around the same time, Ndyuka *gaanman* Océisie accuses the Aluku and Saramaka of conspiring against the Ndyuka by inciting a boycott of Ndyuka boatmen by the French authorities (Bellardie 1994, Moomou 2013).

During the first gold rush, several Saamaka provide river transport for expeditions to the interior as well, but they are not real competitors of the Aluku and Ndyuka on the Maroni. Since about the 1860s and 1870s, Saramaka maroons have been traveling as temporary labour migrants to French Guiana as well. They, however, do not establish communities along the Maroni River and are not as such competing for the same territory. Nevertheless, during the 1901 Inini gold rush, the Aluku will request the French authorities to close the Maroni for Saramaka transport! It proves impossible to stop the Ndyuka though. Slowly, taking advantage of their numeric dominance, the Ndyuka succeed in entering the Lawa and Inini with their boats. Still, the establishment of Ndyuka settlements along the Lawa remains forbidden (Moomou 2013).

4 FRENCH GUIANA *BUSHINENGE* IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

4.1 AFTER THE FIRST GOLD RUSH TO THE 1960s: CONTINUED RELATIVE ISOLATION

After the first gold rush declined in the early 20th century, the Aluku had to find new sources of revenue to continue the level of income and purchase of coastal goods they had become used to (Bilby, 1990). This led to economic diversification, and by the 1950s, many adult Aluku men worked as labourers in forestry projects; as boatmen transporting freight and passengers; as guides and labourers for French expeditions to the interior, and as fishermen. In addition, some continued to work independently as gold miners and balata bleeders. The introduction of larger numbers of outboard motors soon reduced travel effort and time, and further facilitated Aluku contact with the coastal area and the French national administration (ibid).

Nevertheless, up to the 1960s, the traditional Aluku communities changed little. The French government seldom intervened directly in internal affairs of the Aluku, and mostly dealt with their communities through the *gaanman* and his *kabitens*. Some of these *kabiten* lived in St. Laurent as representatives of the *gaanman* in the coastal area. French presence in the Aluku territory was limited to a small number of gendarmes, missionaries, medical staff and other officials, based in the Creole villages of Maripasoula, since 1949 (Bilby, 1990). While it was common for Aluku men to temporarily work in the coastal area, generally for 4-6 months at a time, hardly any Aluku families migrated permanently to Cayenne or other coastal communities (ibid.).

Meanwhile, from the mid-1950s, Ndyuka from the lower Tapanahony river (*bilo*) start establishing agricultural camps on the French Banks of the Lawa river, in agreement with the Aluku. This development is an expansion of the historic presence of the *bilo*-Ndyuka in the area around the Lawa-Tapanahoni confluence. Aluku *gaanman* Difu (†1967), for example, gave the Ndyuka of the village of Tabiki permission to clear land for agriculture along the Gonini Creek (ACT, 2010). A map from the 1950s shows Ndyuka *goong kampus* from inhabitants of the Tapanahoni villages of Manlobi, Benanu and Tabiki on the French banks of the Lawa River, just upstream from the confluence with the Tapanahoni, near the present-day Grand Santi. Some Ndyuka families spend considerable amounts of time there, only to return to their home village along the Tapanahoni for funeral rites and other cultural events.

At the same time, French Guiana continues to be a popular temporary work location for Saamaka *bushinenge* from Suriname (Price and Price, 2003). After the gold rush, these Saamaka labour migrants in French Guiana start to engage more actively in forestry and balata bleeding.

4.2 1969 TO 1990s: PERIOD OF “FRANCISATION”

In the late 1960s, French Guyana politicians began to look for ways to more strongly integrate the interior, both as a way to win votes (by awarding the population French citizenship) and promote economic development of the interior (Bilby, 1990). In 1969, the interior region was divided in five French communes. The traditional Aluku territory was divided in the communes

of Maripasoula and Grand-Santi-Papaïchton, and another division was created with the establishment of Apatou in 1976.

Upon the establishment of communes in the traditional Aluku living area, the French government superimposed its administrative system upon the traditional socio-political structure, mirroring the governance structure in metropolitan France. In this new system, the Aluku communities became governed by a *maire* (mayor), his *adjoints* (deputies) and a *conseil municipal* (municipal council). This administrative structure was symbolic for a simultaneous policy of francization, which included the rapid expansion of French government schools, clinics and gendarmeries in traditional Aluku communities (Bilby, 1990). The Aluku *granman* was appointed the first *maire* of the commune of Grand-Santi-Papaïchton¹⁰.

The new Aluku communes received a substantial administrative budget, resulting in an unprecedented influx of money into *bushinenge* (and Indigenous) communities. In a rapid process of naturalization, the Aluku were issued *cartes d'identité* (identity cards). New paid administrative positions were instituted, and virtually the entire Aluku population, now formally French citizens, became eligible for generous French social subsidies, known as *allocations familiales*, such as retirement benefits, child benefits, and welfare payments, through the *Caisse d'allocations familiales* (Family Allocations Office, or CAF). In addition, the rights and privileges of French citizenship included free schooling and medical care, the right to vote in local and national (French) elections, and the rights to travel beyond the borders of French Guiana like any other French passport holder (Bilby, 1990).

Initially only the Aluku *bushinenge* became French citizens and thereby eligible for social benefits. However, with the Suriname Civil war (1986-1992, see below) and subsequent progressive occupation of Grand-Santi by *bilo*-Ndyuka, and the creation of Grand Santi as a separate commune by scission from Papaïchton (1993), the Ndyuka increasingly gained access to French citizenship and related benefits. This trend was further aided by the French regulation of "right of land", by which those born in French Guiana had the right to become French.

4.3 RELATION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES AND STATE AUTHORITIES

When French state politicians superimposed the metropolitan administrative structure upon the communes, they did not integrate the traditional authority structures (Bilby, 1990). As a consequence, *bushinenge* communities of the Maroni and Lawa Rivers are now subject to two parallel socio-political systems; the French government system and the traditional tribal system with its *gaanman*, *kabitens* and *basias*. In general terms, the *bushinenge* governments take care of sociocultural *bushinenge* issues; family and clan feuds, religious and spiritual ceremonies, and issues related to the tribal entity. The French government takes care of

10 Grand Santi is not an original Ndyuka or Aluku village; it was established by the French as French administrative centre, just like Maripasoula

administrative matters, provision of public services, and other issues related to commune governance. Yet there is regular overlap or even conflict between these spheres of influence.

For example, when a public building like a school is being built, a *bushinenge* person or family may come forward with a land claim, based on previous use of this land for subsistence agriculture. Such a person/family may request compensation, also when no official documents exist to confirm property ownership.

4.4 CONTINUED MIGRATION OF SURINAME *BUSHINENGE* TO FRENCH GUIANA

Suriname *bushinenge* (Ndyuka, Saamaka and to a lesser extent Paamaka) migration to French Guiana intensified after the 1960s, in response to different push and pull factors. On the one hand, Suriname's staggering economy and ethnic violence against *bushinenge* during the 1980s motivated substantial out-migration, with French Guiana being a logical destination given its proximity and existing ties. On the other hand, enhanced economic opportunities in French Guiana, including higher wages, jobs, and access to social benefits, worked as a magnet. A number of events have been of particular importance in steering these migratory movements.

In the mid-20th century, construction of the *Centre Spacial Guyanais* in Kourou drew many Suriname *bushinenge* to French Guiana. In 1968, at its zenith, the Kourou space centre employed about 3,000 persons, among whom one fifth were *bushinenge* (Bilby, 1990). The Saamaka dominated the *bushinenge* work force, but also substantial numbers of Ndyuka and Aluku were among them. Many Aluku left since, often moving on to Cayenne, but the Saamaka stayed, and their numbers have continued to expand. In 2003, an estimated 4,000 Saamaka, 1,000 Ndyuka, 500 Aluku and a handful of Paamaka lived in Kourou, each group with its own *kabiten(s)* (Price and Price, 2003).

After Suriname gained independence from the Netherlands in 1975, its economy went into recession. At the same time, as described above, the Aluku communes received substantial French funds. The financial opportunities just across the border attracted Ndyuka labour migrants willing to take over the jobs that Aluku were no longer willing to perform, such as the arduous work of cargo transport between the coast and the interior (*fuyasi*). Ndyuka boatmen quickly seized the opportunity and by the mid-1980s, there was no single Aluku boat crew left on the Lawa River (Bilby, 1990). Ndyuka individuals also resold merchandise from the Paramaribo and Albina (SUR) in the Aluku communes, managed concession stands, and as the gold sector revived, began working gold in the Aluku territory. In the late 1980s, old tensions surfaced again as the Ndyuka showed little regard for Aluku territorial claims and repetitively violated their Aluku rules and regulations.

Ndyuka labour migrants not only were active in the interior, they also established themselves in St. Laurent. During a 1984 census of *bushinenge* in St. Laurent, Bilby (1990) found that more than half of them were Ndyuka (52%), 19 percent Saamaka, 17 percent Paamaka, and 12 percent Aluku.

Apart from entering French Guiana as labour migrants, many *bilo*-Ndyuka had established agricultural plots on the Eastern (French) shores of the Maroni and Lawa Rivers some decades

earlier (ACT, 2010). Similarly, in the late 1900s, Paamaka had established agricultural plots and camps on the French banks of the Maroni River¹¹. Nevertheless, in the 20th century up to the interior war (1986-1992) in Suriname, all Ndyuka and Paamaka permanent villages were located in Suriname.

In the perception of the Aluku, the border between the Ndyuka and the Aluku is still the confluence of the Lawa and the Tapanahoni rivers. In their view, the entire Lawa river—locally named *Aluku liba* (Aluku river)—is theirs, starting from the Poligoedoe falls up to where the Wayana indigenous peoples live (ACT, 2010). The traditional system to demarcate one's area is to establish camps along the borders, yet because the Aluku are not populous, they have not been able to do so. The Ndyuka, contrariwise, are with so many that they are slowly taking in more and more of the traditional Aluku territory. Hence, when looking at today's settlement patterns, the area around Grand Santi is Ndyuka territory. In a 2010 ACT report, the Aluku *gaanman* Adoichini is very clear about the status of the Ndyuka, that is, the Aluku perception thereof:

We lent the land to the Ndyuka so that they can eat, but we never sold it to them. The ancestors gave the Ndyuka permission to plant there, but now they are claiming everything; they are greedy The Ndyuka argue to us that the Lawa is their backyard (*baka goon*), saying that where you are is your property. ... [But] we will not sit down with the Ndyuka to divide the river. At the Lawa river they do not have their (traditional) hunting grounds. They have their own river; they are from the Tapanahoni. (Granman Adoichini, Maripasoela, 10 February 2009)

The Ndyuka, on their turn, argue that the Aluku never occupied the lower Lawa River.

In 1986, in Suriname, an armed conflict broke out between the Suriname military government and maroon insurgents, organized in the "Jungle Commando". Even though many maroons did not or only half-heartedly support the armed struggle, military reprisals targeted all maroons. Especially the Ndyuka from the Marowijne area, the home base of the leader of the Jungle commando, became victims of military hostilities. In a particularly tragic incident, military shot dead 39 villagers, among whom many women and children, from the Ndyuka village of Moiwana (near Moengo). Immediately after this incident, Ndyuka from the lower Marowijne area massively fled abroad. At least 5 thousand maroons—mostly Ndyuka—crossed the border into French Guiana, where the French authorities established refugee camps in and around St. Laurent (Polime and Thoden van Velzen, 1988)¹². In 2003, Price and Price estimated the *bushinenge* population in St. Laurent at 13,500 individuals (of 24,000 inhabitants), among whom more than half were estimated to be Ndyuka. In this year, the Aluku, Saamaka and

11 Until the late 19th century, the Paamaka lived along the Paamaka creek. Only after the abolition of slavery (1863) they established themselves on the islands in the Maroni River, and some decades later also on the Suriname mainland (~mid-20th century). Many Ndyuka though, consider the entire Suriname banks of the Maroni River theirs.

12 Price and Price talk about 10,000 Ndyuka and some thousands of Saamaka

Paamaka all had one kabiten in St. Laurent, but the Ndyuka had seven! (Price and Price, 2003). After the civil war, close to 1200 Ndyuka refugees were welcomed and provided with documents by the *maire* of Mana, who gave them a piece of land at Charvain (Price and Price 2003). In 2003, approximately 1600 Ndyuka lived at Charvein, which with an own Ndyuka *kabiten*.

In addition to the *bushinenge* who were received in refugee camps, many *bilo*-Ndyuka made their *goong kampus* on the French shores of the Lawa and Maroni Rivers to their permanent homes (ACT, 2010). So did nearly half of the Paamaka, as the southern part of their tribal area, and the roads leading there, were located in and near the areas where fighting was frequent and particularly harsh (Schalkwijk, 2018). In 1987, Granman Foster of the Paamaka even requested the French government to award French nationality to the Paamaka who had moved there. As French integration policies intensified and it became economically more attractive to be French, there was little incentive for these Ndyuka and Paamaka to return to their villages in Suriname, where much infrastructure had been destroyed.

4.5 CULTURAL IDENTITY AND GROWING SELF-AWARENESS

By the end of the 1980s, the first generation of Aluku who completed secondary school enter the political arena. They demand better integration in French Guiana and say over their own development. Groups of politically active Aluku join French Guianese political parties, with a general division along geographic and clan lines: the Aluku of Maripasoula predominantly support the *Parti socialiste guyanais (PSG)*, a left-wing party, while Aluku of Papaïchton mostly join the *Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)*, a right-wing party. This general political divide marks the traditional division between the *Kawina-lo* on the one hand, and the *Lapé* and *Yakubi -lo* on the other hand. These latter two clans (*Lapé* and *Yakubi lo*) contested *gaanman* Tolinga's authority during the 1980s as both *gaanman* and mayor at the same time. Instead, they preferred a division of power. These different perspectives did not cause a break within the Aluku, they were just different viewpoints.

In this same period, a large share of the *Yakubi-lo* from Kotica¹³ and *Lapé-lo* from Loka move to Maripasoula. A political consequence of this demographic shift is the election of the first Aluku mayor for Maripasoula, A. Abienso, in 1989. Soon, Aluku also take place in the regional assemblies, *Conseil régional* and *Conseil général*, thus giving voice to local concerns.

After *gaanman* Tolinga's death in 1991, internal strife results into the appointment of two Aluku *gaanman*, Doudou at Papaïchton¹⁴ and Adochini (legal name; Joachim Joseph) at

¹³ Kotica is the ancient capital from the Aluku during the 19th century, situated on the left bank of the Lawa, a few kilometers downstream of Papaïchton.

¹⁴ Papaïchton is the traditional capital and seat of the *gaanman* of the Aluku

Maripasoula¹⁵. This internal conflict weakened the position of the traditional authorities. At this moment (May 2019), there is no single Aluku *gaanman*. Since Gaanman Doudou († 2014) and Gaanman Adochini († 2017) passed away, no new Aluku *gaanman* has been installed as of yet.

Simultaneously, Aluku youth who have attended higher education are less inclined to abide by the traditional rules of the group. Even though the Aluku continue to maintain a strong cultural identity, a young generations of Aluku seek to carve out a place for themselves into the republican context of French Guiana.

In March 2017, during social protests, the Aluku and -by extension- all *Bushinenge* from the Maroni, express their development vision. They demand enhanced recognition of cultural specificities such as language and traditional authority structures, but simultaneously a structural plan for improving public infrastructures along the Maroni and equal access to public services. In 2017, the election of deputy L. Adam, with an Aluku mother and a Ndyuka father, symbolizes the integration of these ideas into the French administrative structures. In response to cultural demands, the *Préfecture de Guyane* creates the *Grand conseil coutumier* (Grand Council of traditional authorities), which includes both *bushinenge* and Indigenous traditional authorities. The aims of this Grand Council are to better take traditional cultural rules into account in political decision-making, and allow *bushinenge* and Indigenous groups to express their views on social and economic projects, like a large scale mining project.

5 BUSHINENGE AND GOLD MINING IN FRENCH GUIANA

5.1 SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING SECTOR IN FRENCH GUIANA

From about 1880 to about 1910, French Guiana experienced its first gold rush (Longin, 2016). As described above, the *bushinenge* were not much involved in the mining activities at the time¹⁶, but the Aluku and Ndyuka did play an instrumental role as providers of pirogue-transportation for people and supplies across the rapids of the Maroni and Lawa Rivers. Boatmen (*piroquiers*) earned good money in those days. Moreover, several Aluku *granman* demanded gold tax from passing gold miners.

Yet in the early 20th century, gold mining activities in French Guiana withered, and by the 1930s, virtually all placers had been abandoned and the Antillian work force had left the region (Longin, 2016). By the middle of the 20th century, hardly any gold was mined in French Guiana (Taubira-Delannon, 2000).

15 Since Gaanman Doudou († 2014) and Gaanman Adochini (legal name; Joachim Joseph, † 2017) passed away, no new Aluku *gaanman* has been installed as of yet (May 2019).

16 The work force during this first gold rush consisted primarily of Antillians; people from St. Lucia and Martinique.

In the 1970s, after abandonment of the gold standard, the world price of gold started to rise and continued -with some relapses- to increase for the next four decades. This event sparked a world-wide increase in informal gold mining. French Guiana joined this trend in the late 1980s (Orru, 2001). This time, the Aluku played a pivotal role in inciting the gold rush (Longin, 2016). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Aluku entrepreneurs in the gold sector actively recruited gold miners from Brazil, where the gold rush had started two decades earlier. In the early 1990s, these Brazilian *garimpeiros* were confronted with more stringent restrictions on small-scale gold mining and an increasing scarcity of easily exploitable deposits in their home country (Heemskerk, 2011). They began to massively cross the border with French Guiana, where French entrepreneurs welcomed their mining skills and knowledge.

The Brazilian miners introduced hydraulic equipment and pumps as well as general technological progress and a new system of social and working relations in the gold fields (Orru, 1998). The technological changes and professionalization of small-scale gold mining stimulated the development of gold extraction especially for small-scale producers. What followed was an explosion of clandestine mining activity.

5.2 WHO ARE INVOLVED

In French Guiana, mining operators are classified in three categories: international mining companies, small and middle size enterprises (PME, *Petites et Moyennes Entreprises*) and small-scale miners (*orpailleurs*). This typology is based on a combination of different criteria; type of deposits exploited, production methods and economic structure of the company.

In 2015, 39 mining titles (concessions, exploitation licenses and exclusive research permits) were valid in Guyana, 20% of which were for exploration (Thomassin et al., 2017). The entire formal mining sector in French Guiana employed 550 workers (Thomassin et al., 2017). These were probably all employed by PME, as no international mining firms are active in French Guiana as of yet. Counting also service providers, about 1,000 persons may be working legally in small and medium scale gold mining and the direct service economy (e.g. cooks, ATV and pirogue transport providers). Legal small-scale gold miners have to comply with ever more stringent French regulations and invest considerably to meet the legal standards. After the ban on the use of mercury in small-sale gold mining in 2006, for example, they turned to shaking tables and centrifuges. The environmental code also requires the rehabilitation of the mined sites, often through replanting.

In the late 1990s, the mine operators/owners were primarily French nationals; Creoles along the Oyapock, and Aluku *bushinenge* along the Maroni river (Orru, 1998). Particularly in the regions of their traditional villages, the Aluku consider the gold serves as part of their traditional resource rights and up to about the year 2000, quite some Aluku worked as mine operators (Orru, 1998). Yet by 2010 they had become rare, for different reasons. In the first place, several Aluku stopped the arduous mining work, turning to other means to earn money from gold mining instead, such as demanding land-based gold taxes from foreign gold miners. Secondly, in preparing creation of the Park Amazonien Guyane (PAG), the French authorities

asked the last French operators (Aluku) to withdraw from the area (Longin, 2016). Furthermore, stricter legal requirements, which were implemented in 2004/5, made it virtually impossible for many local people to join the legal mining force (Heemskerk, 2011).

Soon after withdrawal of the Aluku, but particularly from 2005-2007, the gold zones of the French territory of the upper Maroni were invaded by a wave of illegal miners, almost exclusively Brazilian (Heemskerk, 2011). Nowadays, more than 90 percent of the small-scale gold mining work force may be Brazilian migrants (Douine, 2018). In addition, the small-scale gold mining work force consists of smaller numbers of Suriname *bushinenge*, Guyanese and others.

The fact that also tribal authorities of the Aluku are working as mine operators and employing illegal workers, has created problems between the tribal and national authorities. Moreover, several tribal authorities from Maripasoula and Papaïchton have started gold-mining related businesses on the Suriname banks of the Lawa River. For example, Aluku individuals have developed facilities for Chinese and Brazilian traders and have accommodated gold mining barges. In such cases, the foreign entrepreneurs and gold miners often “rent” a piece of traditional clan land or river to build a store, establish a hotel/bar/brothel, or place their mining barge.

Other Aluku denounce these practices. The commercial centre “Albina 2”¹⁷ across the river in front of Maripasoula, which is virtually exclusively populated by Chinese and Brazilians working in the gold sector, is situated at an ancient cemetery from the 18th century, with consent of some *kabitens*. When, in 2016, the sacred tree of Papaïchton fell down, the traditional explanation was that this incidence was a sign of the ancestors who were angry about the violation of traditional rules by those seeking a gain in gold mining. More downstream, the Abounami creek is devastated by illegal mining activity from mostly Brazilians and some Ndyuka. The Ndyuka who live in the Ndyuka settlement near the mouth of the creek now have suffer from very turbid water in their surroundings.

It is difficult to estimate the number of small-scale gold miners –*orpailleurs*– in French Guiana, or the amount of gold they produce. The most common estimates state that there are about 5,000-10,000 informal and undocumented small-scale gold miners in French Guiana, extracting 8 to 10 tonnes of gold annually (Douine, 2018; Heemskerk, 2011; Thomassin et al., 2017). Meanwhile legal operations have extracted between 1-2 tonnes of gold annually in recent years (Thomassin et al., 2017). In 2018, the French military program against illegal gold mining, operation Harpie, destroyed 765 illegal small-scale gold mining sites in the French Guiana forest. The effects of these actions appear short-lived.

17 This location is also named “Peruano” or “Ronaldo”, after the Peruvian man named Ronaldo who first settled here.

5.3 LARGE-SCALE MINING AND BUSHINENGE/AMERINDIANS POSITIONS

During the 2000s, growing sensitivity to environmental problems in French Guiana mobilized citizens against several planned large-scale mining projects. *Bushinenge* and indigenous peoples have large interests in these developments because of the place of gold in their history and their living areas. In political discussions, the *bushinenge* tend to be favourable to gold extraction as a means of income generation. A lot of Aluku and Ndjuka families directly or indirectly depend on gold mining for their livelihoods, being part of the mining logistics or actual (illegal) exploitation. Given the high level of unemployment in the Maroni area, large-scale mining is perceived as a source of labour for the largely young population. On the other hand, a young generation of university-educated *bushinenge* is calling for environmental preservation, which is difficult to combine with mining projects. Moreover, from a cultural perspective, some *bushinenge* feel that awarding concessions to mining multinationals takes land away from *bushinenge* societies.

This last argument is central in Indigenous rhetoric about large-scale mining. Indigenous NGOs, like *Jeunesse autochtone de Guyane*, have strong international ties, including to the United Nations which condemned France last year for violation of Indigenous rights. Since 1984, self-awareness has been growing in French Guiana indigenous communities, especially among the Kaliña. This latter group is on the forefront in the opposition to every form of mining in French Guiana. The Kaliña, as the first inhabitants of French Guiana, consider the territory as theirs. Land rights are an essential element for Indigenous people in their struggle for their own cultural identity. The arrival of Europeans, and by extension large-scale mining projects, is perceived as confiscation of the Indigenous traditional home lands. Archaeological pre-Columbian artefacts are increasingly used to support the claim of Indigenous peoples to the lands now constituting French Guiana. In the perception of many indigenous peoples, gold destroys their societies, starting with the ancient history of Eldorado and now continuing with illegal gold mining, which especially affects the Wayana. Gold mining activities have destroyed hunting and fishing grounds, polluted natural water bodies, and caused mercury contamination of people and natural resources.

Even though native rights are not recognized as such by the French State, Indigenous people can –as every other citizen- take a case to court. In this context, Indigenous peoples may use France’s position in international climate/environmental treaties to oppose to every form of mining projects.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Mining multinational Newmont recently gained interests in the Esperance property, which is situated along Beeiman creek, a tributary of the Maroni River, in French Guiana. In order for the company to better comprehend the human history and sociocultural conditions of this area, this report describes the populations that traditionally occupied the French banks of the Maroni River, evaluates what ethnic groups might have territorial claims to the concession lands, and

assesses relations between the different *bushinenge* and Indigenous ethnic groups in Western French Guiana. In addition, this document analyses involvement in, and opinions of, gold mining –large and small- among *bushinenge* and Indigenous groups in French Guiana. Our main conclusions are synthesized below.

No single ethnic groups has a clear, exclusive claim to property rights in the target area.

Historic data suggest that in pre-Columbian times, the Kaliña Indigenous peoples populated and used the shores of the Maroni River, including areas near or in the target area. These people were decimated in numbers upon arrival of the colonial occupants, and their present living area is much further north, along the Maroni River mouth. In the 18th century, when first the Ndyuka and then the Aluku Maroons passed through the target area, there were no Indigenous peoples left here. Historical records suggest that in the late 18th century, the *bilo*-Ndyuka Dikan clan settled along the Beiman creek. In this same period, the Aluku established a settlement named *Ingi Pule Chton* nearby, but this place was abandoned some years later in response to hostilities by *opo*-Ndyuka. More recently, since the mid-20th century, *bilo*-Ndyuka families from Suriname began establishing agricultural lands on the French banks of the Maroni River, including near the mouth of the Beeiman creek. In the late 20th century, when Suriname experienced a period of political violence and economic recession, many of these families settled permanently in French Guiana. The Ndyuka settlements are closest to the Esperance concession, though none are situated in the concession area.

The Aluku are the only group of *bushinenge* who are, as a group, considered to be a French Guianese group, with the majority of its population and leadership living in French Guiana.

The Aluku have historically sided with the French, whereas the Ndyuka and Saamaka closed agreements with the Dutch colonial government. The Aluku also are the only *bushinenge* group who established permanent historic villages in French Guiana, under protection of the French. Nowadays, members and traditional leaders of the other Ndyuka, Paamaka and Saamaka groups have settled permanently in French Guiana and established communities in this French *department*, but the majority of their tribal groups remain in Suriname. Due to their sheer numbers, the Ndyuka *bushinenge* now outnumber Aluku by at least two to one in French Guiana.

The Aluku established friendly relations with their Indigenous neighbours –mainly Wayana along the lawa, but the relationship with the Ndyuka has historically been hostile and remains complicated.

Aluku oral history is filled with stories about how the Wayana helped them survive in the forest, and relations between these groups are filled with friendship and respect – despite cultural differences. The Aluku, Ndyuka and Paamaka are culturally closely related. They speak mutually intelligible dialects of the same language, cultural expressions such as music and rituals are quite similar, and intermarriage is common. Nevertheless, the Aluku never forgot that the Ndyuka betrayed their ancestors, colluded with the colonial troops against Boni and his people, and for long treated the Aluku as subject people. Moreover, both the Paamaka and the Aluku feel that the Ndyuka, who are much more numerous (in a ratio of 5 to 1 with either group), increasingly occupy areas that they consider part of their traditional and cultural homeland.

The French Guiana small-scale gold mining populations is dominated by Brazilian *garimpeiros*, with smaller numbers of Suriname Ndyuka, other foreigners, and French Guiana people including Aluku. The Aluku have a long history of involvement in gold mining in French Guiana. They were transport providers and land lords during the first gold rush (~1880-1910) and played an important role in inciting the boom in modern small-scale gold mining activity along the Lawa River. Especially during the late 1980s and 1990s, many Aluku worked as gold miners and equipment owners – welcoming Brazilian gold miners to help modernize their operations.

Today, the legal small and medium gold mining sector in French Guiana employs only about 1000 individuals, while an estimated 5,000-10,000 persons work illegally in small-scale gold mining. About 90 percent of the illegal small-scale gold mining work force consists of Brazilian *garimpeiros*. Very few Aluku continue to be directly involved as gold miners, though some individuals benefit financially from nearby mining activities by providing auxiliary services and by demanding “gold tax” from gold miners and mining service providers (e.g. shop owners) operating on their traditional homelands. Small numbers of Ndyuka, probably mostly those coming from Suriname, also earn a living in the French Guiana illegal small-scale gold mining sector.

While French Guiana indigenous people have taken a strong stance against gold mining, the opinion of *bushinenge* groups -notably the Aluku- has been more ambiguous. In past decades Indigenous and *bushinenge* groups have gained a stronger awareness of their special cultural heritage and identity within French society. They have become politically active, and are increasingly demanding a stronger voice in development decisions that affect their communities, including mining projects. Particularly indigenous NGOs have spoken out strongly against any form of mining in French Guiana. The Kaliña, as native inhabitants of French Guiana, are on the forefront of such protests, seeking to protect indigenous culture and the environment they depend upon. They are aligned with young, university-educated *bushinenge*, who are calling for environmental preservation. Apart from environmental arguments, some *bushinenge* feel that awarding concessions to mining multinationals takes land away from their *bushinenge* communities. On the other hand, even though few Aluku still work as gold miners, many Aluku families continue to earn indirectly from mining activities on the lands along the Lawa.

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