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Where is home?

Changing conceptions of the homeland in the Surinamese-Javanese diaspora

Rosemarijn Hoefte and Hariëtte Mingoen

Abstract

In 1890 the first Javanese indentured labourers arrived in Suriname to work on the colony's plantations. In total almost 30,000 indentured and free immigrants arrived in this small Caribbean colony. Fifty years later, at the end of the migration period, they formed more than one fifth of the population. Consequently, they constituted a substantial community which had to adapt to a different socio-cultural environment but, at the same time, managed to keep in touch with their homeland. The Javanese thus shaped their own cultural expressions and traditions in Suriname.

We attempt to analyse the processes of identity formation, adaptation, and re-creation of culture by examining the worlds which the migrants created by looking at four distinct time periods. The first two (1930s and 1950s) focus on the Surinamese-Javanese population's connections with Suriname and Indonesia, the latter two (1970s and the present century) on Suriname and the Netherlands. The migration of Javanese from Suriname to the Netherlands around Suriname's independence in 1975 has in effect produced a third homeland. In terms of identity, the Surinamese Javanese themselves now identify strongly with Suriname as they proudly point out "*Ik ben een Javaan uit Suriname*" (I am a Javanese from Suriname).

Keywords

Suriname; Java; Indonesia; the Netherlands; migration; identity formation; culture.

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Suriname is a unique case in the history of the Javanese diaspora from several perspectives (Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel 2018). Firstly, Javanese labourers in this Caribbean colony constituted a substantial community which managed to keep in touch with the homeland. Secondly, since the 1950s the socio-cultural and political emancipation of the remaining group has resulted in a Surinamese-Javanese presence in all occupational groups and residential areas (Ad de Bruijne and Aart Schalkwijk 2005). Finally, the migration of Javanese from Suriname to the Netherlands around 1975 has *de facto* produced a third homeland. As a transnational community the approximately 100,000 Surinamese Javanese identify mainly with Suriname and the Netherlands, but this does not mean that Javanese culture has lost its significance. Indonesia as the ancestral home continues to be highly respected and is becoming even closer on account of more frequent and cheaper travel options and the continuous development of digital communication technologies.

The main question in this article is, how did and do these Javanese migrants manage to construct a home away from home, whether in Suriname or latterly in the Netherlands? The trauma of loss and homesickness exacerbated by the initial marginalization in Suriname, meant that the memories and myths of Java as well as the hope of returning remained vivid for a long time. The Javanese moral, cultural, social, and spiritual connections characterized the lives of the Javanese migrants in Suriname. At the same time, a re-creation of a culture and the formation of a collective identity took place.[1] Even though the circumstances in the Netherlands are different, these values and connections to both Suriname and Indonesia are still important to the Surinamese Javanese living in the land of the former colonizer.

We present four snapshots to discuss these efforts to construct a new home over the course of time in one or more of the new places of settlement. We look specifically at how Javanese values and culture have played a role in the history of the Surinamese-Javanese community. Therefore, we track the continuities and evolutions in the ways Surinamese Javanese have identified themselves and related to each other, to their homeland(s) and to others in their host country. Given the importance of the first phases of settlement in this process, the first two snapshots are more extensive than the latter two. These snapshots are:

the 1930s: A time of nationalist sentiments, religious discord, and a new Javanese immigration plan;

the 1950s: a period of political emancipation and socio-political conflicts, leading to return migration to Indonesia;

[1] The concept of "identity" has generated great attention and many publications. Here we define identity as a set of socio-cultural, psychological, and personal characteristics by which an individual is considered part of a group. Identity formation involves the perceived need to draw borderlines. In these processes, traditions, structures of power, institutions, and networks play decisive roles. On identity and identity formation see, for example, Florian Coulmas 2019; Thomas Hylland Eriksen 2002; Michael Allen Fox 2016; Andreas Wimmer 2013.

the 1970s: A stage of socio-cultural emancipation, new political conflicts, and emigration to the Netherlands;

the twenty-first century: A phase of integration in Surinamese or Dutch society.

Before we move to these snapshots, we shall briefly describe the arrival of the Javanese indentured labourers from the last decade of the nineteenth century.

On 9 August 1890 the first Javanese migrants arrived in Suriname[2] to work as indentured labourers on Mariënburg, the colony's largest plantation.[3] The plantation's owner was the Dutch NHM (Nederlandse Handel-Maatschappij; Dutch Trading Company); it was one of the many global colonial possessions of this powerful company. It was actually the NHM which organized this first transport of Javanese indentureds. Later the governments in the colonial capitals of Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and Paramaribo would take over the organization of this migration of contract labourers.

The government and the planters recruited these temporary workers to replace the formerly enslaved plantation workers after the abolition of slavery in 1863 and the end of apprenticeship (called State Supervision in Suriname) in 1873.[4] Against all expectations, the majority of these workers turned out not to be temporary at all. Slightly less than 80 percent of the almost 33,000 Javanese who arrived between 1890 and 1939 did not return to their homeland but stayed, for many reasons, in Suriname after their contract had ended. One reason was government policy: by the late nineteenth century time-expired immigrants were already entitled to receive a plot of land and a small amount of money in exchange for their free return passage. As a consequence, the colonial government began to shift its focus from large-scale agriculture to smallholdings farmed by Javanese and Hindostani settlers.

Once the Javanese had left their *desa*s and towns, they had to grapple with new experiences and new people at the waiting depot, onboard the ship and on the Surinamese plantations. Inevitably this would lead to self-searching and debates among the migrants themselves, but also between Javanese migrants and other ethnic groups in Suriname, the Hindostani, the Afro-Surinamese, and

[2] Suriname, located in northern South America, was a Dutch plantation colony. After the abolition of slavery in 1863 Asian contract workers were imported to provide the remaining estates with labour. With the arrival of the indentured workers the population consisted of Afro-Surinamese, British Indians or Hindustani (called Hindostani in Suriname), Javanese, Chinese, Native Americans and smaller groups of Europeans, and Lebanese or Syrians. According to the first census in 1921, about half the population was of Afro-Surinamese descent, while the 30,530 British Indians constituted 27.5 percent and the 18,529 Javanese 16.7 percent of the population.

[3] For an English-language history of contract labour in Suriname, and on plantation Mariënburg in particular, see Hoefte 1998; for a history of Javanese immigration see Joseph Ismael 1949; and for a cultural-political history of the Surinamese Javanese up to independence see Parsudi Suparlan 1995.

[4] See Hoefte (Forthcoming) on the abolition of slavery and its immediate aftermath in the Dutch Caribbean.

the Chinese in particular. The system of living and working in an ethnically mixed environment on the often isolated plantations contributed to the strengthening of the migrants' Javanese identity and their socio-cultural connections. The fact that immigrants originated from different areas with the amalgamation of several cultures and languages into one "Javanese" culture and language also served to reinforce this ethnic identity. Adaptation to a new environment did not preclude the preservation of the Javanese way of life ranging from language, to cuisine and music and dance. In other words, these complex processes centred on shared memories and socio-cultural conceptions, cultural expressions, collective self-understanding, and ethnic and social solidarity (see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper 2000).

Since most migrants brought little more than their memories, cultural expressions such as music, dance, and theatre could alleviate the daily hardship in their new, forbidding surroundings. They relied on the recollection of sounds and stories to perform in the new land. The most striking example of this cultural transfer and creation is gamelan. Javanese immigrants of the first generation assembled gamelan instruments with material found in Suriname, such as iron from discarded oil barrels and train rails which were hammered, moulded and tuned to the desired tones and sounds (Hoefte 1990: 21).[5] Ethnologist and musicologist G.D. van Wengen (1975), relying on the earlier descriptions of ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst (1934), concludes that the gamelan of the Javanese in Suriname resembles a prototype which is found in the border area between Central and East Java. This is not surprising, given that a sizeable number of Javanese migrants originated from this area.

This gamelan prototype served for decades to accompany performing arts, such as *wayang kulit* (shadow theatre with leather puppets), *wayang wong* (theatre based on the Panji tales) and *ludruk* (free-style, humoristic folk theatre), classical dances, *tayub* (feast with music, songs, and dances), and *jaran kepang* (hobby-horse dance which ends with dancers getting in trance).

Even when the Javanese did not return home, the connections with Java remained and became more political in nature in the wake of developments in the Netherlands East Indies, but also because of growing ethnic and nationalistic sentiments within the Surinamese-Javanese community.

Snapshot 1

The 1930s: A time of nationalist sentiments, religious discord, and a new Javanese immigration plan

The first more or less formal organization among Javanese migrants in Suriname about which we know was a rotating bank system (known in Javanese as *arisan*). On Plantation Mariënburg, every Saturday afternoon, after the week's payment of wages, a fixed amount had to be deposited and the whole sum was raffled, so that one person would win a sizeable amount

[5] The NHM provided Plantation Mariënburg with a full gamelan set from the Netherlands East Indies.

of money. In 1918 growing ethnic solidarity and nationalist sentiments resulted in the formation of the union Tjintoko Muljo (Elevated in the midst of Destitution). Its first leader was the Mariënburg *mandur*[6] Partodihardjo, but this league was heavily influenced by Dutch officials. The colonial government supported ethnic self-organizations, with the proviso that this took place within colonial structures. Similar to other immigrant self-organizations in Suriname, daily living conditions dominated the agenda. Within five years its membership had increased to 900. Later Partodihardjo also established a foundation to finance expenses related to births, illnesses, and burials among its members (Hoefte 1998: 180).

These first immigrant organizations did not have a religious character, but this would soon change when politics and religion in Java and also in Suriname became more entwined. After World War I, the Javanese increasingly expressed their growing Indonesian nationalist sentiments: the modernist Muslim organization Sarekat Islam (SI, the Islamic Union, founded in Java in 1911) and the Indonesian nationalist leader Soekarno also enjoyed support in Suriname. Traditionally migrants in Suriname could keep abreast of developments in their homeland from newly arrived immigrants and publications imported from Java. The arrival of SI members after World War I also ignited nationalist sentiments among some Javanese in Suriname.

In Java the organization promoted the social and economic progress of the rural population, emphasizing Javanese identity.[7] After 1917 SI radicalized and became openly critical of the colonial government. More militant followers split SI into the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party), founded in 1920, and later the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian National Party).[8] This pro-independence PNI party, advocating harmony between nationalism, religion, and socialism to achieve the goal of a united Indonesia, was founded by Soekarno in 1927. The PNI became increasingly popular after the disintegration of SI in the early 1920s and the crushing of the PKI after its failed rebellion of 1926. The colonial authorities anxiously watched the PNI's growing following and arrested Soekarno and other PNI leaders in December 1929. At his trial in 1930, Soekarno gave a series of speeches attacking colonialism and imperialism. These received wide press coverage and, in response to pressure from more liberal individuals in the Netherlands and the Netherlands East Indies, in December 1931 Soekarno was released from prison early. By then he had become a well-known figure throughout Indonesia as well as in Suriname.

[6] The Malay term *mandur* (overseer) was common in Suriname at the time.

[7] SI's most influential leader, Tjokroaminoto, tried to merge Islam and European political ideologies, such as socialism. For example, in 1919 SI took on the "sinful capitalism" (*kapitalisme jang berdosa*) of the sugar industry. The plantation owners had a very poor reputation, even among Dutch colonial officials (Kees van Dijk 2007: 533-536).

[8] On Sarekat Islam and subsequent political developments see Van Dijk 2007; Peter Lowensteyn 2021; J.T. Petrus Blumberger (1987: 55-89).

Religion and politics among the Javanese in Suriname were likewise intertwined. Most Javanese – often known as *wong Islam* (Muslims), *wong Agami Jawi* (people adhering to Javanese religion), or more pejoratively *abangan* (nominal Muslims) – had incorporated many pre-Islamic Javanese traditions and mystical notions into their religious practice. Known as *Kejawèn*, it combined elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, and animism. The souls and the spirits played a key role and communication with them, maintained through offerings of food, flowers, or tobacco formed an essential part of life. For this group, in both Suriname and in Java, Islam was part of the "Javanese sociocultural system" (Suparlan 1995: 140). Life's milestones such as birth, circumcision, marriage, and death, or other important social occasions were commemorated with a *slametan*, a ritual meal. In both Suriname and Java only a small minority of mostly elderly men – *santri* (learned or religious men) – observed their religious duties diligently.[9]

Religion was the corner-stone of Perkumpulan Islam Indonesia (PII, Indonesian Islamic Organization). Its goal was to "unite the Indonesian Muslims in Suriname and to look after their religious and social interests". The PII had the official blessing of the governor and counted 500, mostly rural, members in 1934. Tellingly, a large painting of Soekarno adorned the office. Despite the prosecution of Soekarno in Java, the Surinamese chief of police did not label the PII dangerous.[10] In the period 1933-1935 the most important PII project was the building of the Nabawi Mosque in the capital Paramaribo. The worshippers in this mosque would face east towards the Kaaba in Mecca, while most Javanese followed the custom of their homeland and faced west during prayer. The PII, however, was "refined in dealing with traditionalists [west worshippers]".[11] The choice of the direction of prayer (*qibla*) also stood for a choice between traditional Javanese culture, which included non-Muslim rituals such as *sajèn* (food offerings to the ancestors) and *slametan* ritual meals in religious observations (west), and the religiously orthodox worshippers, who strove to ban what they defined as non-Islamic ceremonies (east).[12]

Ultimately, the choice revolved around the question "who is a real Muslim?" "Real" Muslims "should strictly follow Islamic teachings as written in the Koran. They should pray toward the East, the actual direction of Mecca" (Suparlan 1995: 141). Moreover, according to Suparlan (1995: 140), the east worshippers "saw the practice of Islam by the Surinamese Javanese as having been corrupted by belief in spirits and deities. They also observed that many Javanese [...] indulged in behavior strongly prohibited by Islamic law:

[9] They lived according to the Muslim guidelines and were familiar with the Qur'an which they recited in Arabic. In Suriname, *santri* were the main source of religious information.

[10] National Archives, The Hague, Kabinet Geheim 1887-1951, vol. 53 no. 4, 29-5-1934.

[11] Suparlan (1995: 225). We use the terms east and west worshippers as this is how these groups refer to themselves in Suriname. Suparlan uses "reformists" and "traditionalists", respectively, to identify these groups.

[12] For more on the historical relations between Muslims of Javanese descent and with Muslims of Indian roots, see Hoefte 2015. For more on the importance of *qibla* calculation in Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia see, for example, Philipp Bruckmayr (2018: 160-255).

drinking, gambling, concubinage, adultery". In the 1920s and 1930s, newly arrived immigrants emphasized the importance of the five pillars of Islam and rejected the rituals and offerings and other cultural expressions observed by the "traditionalists" (Suparlan 1995: 140-154). This difference between east (*wong ngadep ngetan*) and west worshippers (*wong ngadep ngulon*) divided the Javanese community as it also represented a conflict between reform-minded and traditionalist Javanese. This conflict within the Javanese community would only intensify with the advent of universal suffrage in 1948 and the subsequent formation of political parties.

The arrival of new immigrants therefore had more than a demographic impact on the Surinamese-Javanese community. In the late 1920s and 1930s, the authorities in Suriname began to recruit free Javanese smallholders who quite literally lived in the shadow of the plantations: they worked on the estates only when the management needed extra hands. Fewer labourers were required now that scarcely any plantations were left and the newly arrived Javanese formed in effect a reserve labour force. Matters only got worse as a result of the worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s, among whose effects was mass unemployment.

The final stage in Javanese immigration was the Welter-Kielstra Plan, named after the colonial minister and the governor of Suriname, respectively. Its architect was Suriname Governor J.C. Kielstra, who had two goals in mind when he designed this grand project in 1937: firstly, the formation of a permanent smallholding population and the further development of a labour reserve for the remaining plantations. The second aim was to "Indinize" (*verindischen;* as in the Netherlands East Indies) or more precisely "Javanize" the colony by relocating 100,000 people from Java to Suriname over a ten-year period and to have them cultivate rice for both domestic consumption and export on new rental plots provided by the government. The colonists would settle in *desa* (villages), complete with their own religious and civil leadership, including a *kaum* (religious leader) and a *lurah* (village leader), who would be responsible for maintaining the material, financial, and legal order. The use of Malay and Javanese terms reinforced this idea of Javanization.[13]

This policy was an extension of earlier migration programmes, but Governor Kielstra moved beyond purely economic interests by adding a socio-cultural element. He emphasized the importance of community and self-reliance, harmony, and the maintenance of local customs. As in Java, not the individual interests of the colonists but the communal interests of a tightly managed group were to prevail. The inhabitants of the five *desa* had fewer rights than individual smallholders and were dependent on the *lurah* for the

[13] For oral testimonies on the position of the *lurah*, see, for example, interviews with Soeki(djan) Irodikromo, this informant describes the last *lurah* of Koewarasan (Djasmadi, Hoefte, and Mingoen 2010: 28–29) and with Ngadimin Saridjo by Amorisa Wiratri and Ayumi Malamassam, translated by Hariëtte Mingoen, 17-3-2010. He describes Leiding Vijf, southwest of Paramaribo (see javanenindiaspora.nl). See also the memoirs of Reinier Kromopawiro (2017: 80) writing about the *desa* leadership in Bakkie or Reynsdorp in the district of Commewijne. In this exceptional case the *lurah* was not a Javanese but a Hindostani man.

distribution of land. This settlement plan was based on Kielstra's political philosophy which had been formed during his earlier career as a civil servant in the Netherlands East Indies. His pluralist and conservative ideas were based on an "organic" ideology which valued existing differences between the different populations on their own merits. Local customs and traditions, including the administration of justice, should play a prominent role in the Netherlands East Indies as well as Suriname (Hoefte 2011: 198-199; Hans Ramsoedh 1990). His plans therefore further undermined existing policies aimed at assimilation based on one language, one law, and one Christian culture. The immigrants and their self-organizations had already been doing so for decades, but now official policy also permanently reversed the existing approach. In 1939, a first group of 990 Javanese moved to Suriname under the Welter-Kielstra Plan; World War II prevented any further execution of this official attempt at social engineering.

Kielstra's ideology was also visible in his conservative education policies. Again, socio-cultural and economic arguments became intertwined. He promoted the diversification of education based on "existing cultural differences" to suit the needs of different population groups (J.C. Kielstra 1927: 190). This ideological argument had a strong economic component: education was not seen as an avenue for social mobility but rather as a mode to maintain and strengthen a society based on smallholder agriculture. Consequently, Javanese, as were Hindostani, pupils were trained to become peasants and should be taught not to look down on manual or agricultural labour.

Summing up, in his socio-cultural policies, Kielstra respected existing ethnic values, traditions, cultural expressions, and non-Christian religions. The governor's policies ran into strong opposition, among the urban Afro-Surinamese population in particular. His critics accused him of "divide-and-rule" strategies. The pre-war light-coloured elite of mixed African descent, and to a lesser degree the small middle class, adamantly objected to the liquidation of the assimilation idea. These groups feared that Christianity would be undermined, that the unity of law (meaning that the same law applied to all population groups) would be broken and that the Asian groups would increase their cultural and political influence. To achieve the latter, Kielstra had appointed Hindostani men to the colonial parliament to represent the interests of the Hindostani and Javanese. The introduction of the so-called Asian Marriage Law in 1940 was the straw which broke the camel's back. This new regulation legitimized Javanese and Hindostani marriages if solemnized in accordance with the Muslim or Hindu religion. Consequently, it cracked the unity of the law, undermined Christian churches and added to the self-confidence of the Javanese and Hindostani in general and their religious leaders in particular. Again, Kielstra was not alone in undermining the assimilationist ideal and the marriage law was a case in point: as early as 1913 an immigrant organization had requested the recognition of weddings conducted according to Hindu or Muslim rites. Kielstra was the first to act upon it in his zeal to recognize ethnic and religious differences.

Snapshot 2

The 1950s: A period of political emancipation and socio-political conflicts, leading to return migration to Indonesia

World War II engendered profound social, economic, and political changes in Suriname. It was a time of economic growth, more employment opportunities, and urbanization. Politically, Suriname behaved as a colony loyal to the Dutch government in exile in London. Yet the economic boom, coupled with the decreased involvement of the Dutch administration, stimulated nationalist feelings among the light-coloured, educated population of mixed African descent. The goal was to move towards more autonomy within the existing political structure. Boosting nationalist sentiments even further were the unpopularity of Governor Kielstra, at least among the elite; the Atlantic Charter championing the right of self-determination for colonies; and a speech given by Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands in December 1942 proposing the creation of a commonwealth of the Netherlands, the Netherlands East Indies, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles, with autonomy for each overseas territory. This was (partially) realized in 1954, after the independence of Indonesia, when Suriname and the six combined Antillean islands became autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

With the promise of universal suffrage, dozens of political parties were formed, but none had an ideological basis. Soon specific ethnic and religious interests led to fragmentation and regrouping and a number of ethnic-religious parties were founded. In the Surinamese-Javanese community Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia (KTPI, Indonesian Peasants' Union) later renamed Kerukunan Tulodo Prenatan Inggil (For Unity and Togetherness) emerged as the main political party (see below). The formation of these political parties makes Suriname the only place in the Javanese diaspora in which people with a Javanese or Indonesian background have secured a place in the political arena of their new homeland. The main goal of all parties was to guard the interests of the own population group, leading to patron-client relationships between politicians and their voters. These personal socio-political networks are partially the result of the character of colonial institutions. Throughout the colonial period, the state prioritized the maintenance of law and order and economic exploitation, and did not pay much attention to the well-being of its subjects. Consequently, trust in the state and its institutions was low, while personal relationships were of material value (Ward Berenschot Forthcoming). Since the 1950s elected politicians have been able to provide their constituents with civil service jobs, housing, scholarships, licences or land.[14]

The first electoral tests came after the introduction of universal suffrage (in 1948) with general elections in 1949 and 1951. In the twentieth century, no party ever held a majority, so coalitions between parties were always necessary. Cooperation between Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani political leaders

[14] After World War II the government, financed by bauxite revenues and Dutch development funds, became the largest employer.

broadened their support. This so-called *verbroederingspolitiek* (fraternization politics) enabled the urban Afro-Surinamese NPS (Nationale Partij Suriname, National Party Suriname) and the Hindostani VHP (Verenigde Hindoestaanse Partij; United Hindostani Party, later renamed the Vooruitstrevende Hervormingspartij, Progressive Reform Party), a few years later in conjunction with the KTPI, to dominate politics from 1958 to 1967. Fraternization politics focused on the emancipation of the Afro-Surinamese working class and on that of the Javanese and Hindostani (Ramsoedh 2001: 96). This class- and ethnic based emancipation was based on patronage: an increasing number of Javanese (and Hindostani) joined the expanding ranks of the civil service.

Historian Hans Ramsoedh (2001: 91-92) has observed that the Surinamese political system based on person-oriented networks was and is unstable, as personal feuds can lead to secession and the founding of new parties, with the inevitable result of more political fragmentation. Such was the case of the Javanese. In the post-war years the Javanese openly expressed their bitterness and feeling that they were being treated unfairly. They blamed the government for favouring other population groups, the urban Afro-Surinamese in particular, and deceiving and subordinating the Javanese (F.E.R. Derveld 1982; Ismael 1950; Kadi Kartokromo 1996; Suparlan 1995). In fact, the limited socio-economic participation of the Javanese was largely the result of a lack of education: in the districts outside the capital, where between 80 and 90 percent of the Javanese lived, the majority of inhabitants were illiterate. Lack of funding and the use of Dutch, a language few Javanese pupils understood at the time, as the medium of instruction disqualified education in the Javanese community from being the vehicle for upward mobility it had been for other groups (Klaas Breunissen 2001: 166; S.L. Gobardhan-Rambocus 2001: 381, 486; Fons Grasveld and Klaas Breunissen 1990: 30). As a result, in the immediate post-war years, before the general franchise, there was a total of only one Javanese teacher and two assistant teachers, four police officers and three nurses, plus a limited number of lower-level civil servants and *lurah*s.[15]

The Javanese resentment manifested itself in two ways: demands for socio-economic advancement in Suriname or turning their backs on Suriname by returning to the homeland. The Persatuan Indonesia (Association of Indonesians), founded in 1946, set out to organize this return to Indonesia. The organization demanded that the government grant a free passage, including to those who had already given up their right of free return.[16] Meanwhile, the decolonization process in Indonesia also influenced developments in Paramaribo. In 1947 the Pergerakan Bangsa Indonesia Suriname (PBIS, Movement of the Indonesian People in Suriname) had been founded in reaction to the conclusion of the Linggadjati Agreement a few months earlier, whose

[15] Before the introduction of universal suffrage, voting was based on taxes and education. Only sixty-two Javanese were eligible to vote on the basis of a stipulation of an income of more than 800 Suriname guilders or an education beyond the primary school level.

[16] In September 1947 the *Tabian*, carrying 769 people, was the last ship to transport repatriating former contract labourers free of charge.

terms included the Netherlands agreeing to recognize Republican rule over Java, Sumatra, and Madura.[17] However, the main goal of the PBIS was to improve the position of the Javanese in Suriname itself. This desire did not lessen its members' respect for Indonesia. As one informant said about his father: "He was the PBIS representative in Vreeland. On 17 August [Indonesian Independence Day], he always hoisted the *merah-putih* [red-white, Indonesian flag] and he always attached *melati* [jasmine] to the flag".[18]

In the same period, the proposed introduction of universal voting rights initiated heated debates among all population groups in Suriname. The light-coloured establishment opted for a gradual introduction. The newspaper *De West*, for example, spoke out against universal suffrage at this point in time because in Suriname "more than half of the population consists of Asians who for the most part do not think and feel Western".[19] According to former Suriname Governor and President Johan Ferrier, Afro-Surinamese male politicians feared that Javanese and Hindostani women would simply follow their husband's choice. Ferrier also remembers that a popular politician of African descent, Wim Bos Verschuur, openly warned that giving the vote to illiterate people was equal to "handing a knife to a monkey" (John Jansen van Galen 2005: 49). In short, the opposition to universal suffrage was based not only on a reluctance to share power, but was also racist, misogynist, and classist. Not surprisingly, most parties with an Asian constituency demanded immediate rights to increase their support. The PBIS was an exception, as the movement feared populist manipulations. This stance posed Persatuan Indonesia (since 1947 KTPI) a direct challenge and initiated a power struggle between the two parties which exceeded the bounds of politics. A discussion of Javanese politics in Suriname is beyond the scope of this article; here we limit ourselves to discussing the impact of political strife on the community. The KTPI and the PBIS not only had contrasting political goals, their constituencies, approaches and leadership styles also differed. The KTPI played the nostalgia card by appealing to traditional Javanese values and a longing for Java, while the PBIS focused on improving the situation of the Javanese in Suriname by demanding more energetic policy programmes. Most KTPI supporters were west worshippers, while PBIS adherents were a mix of east and west worshippers and Christians. The PBIS, for example, questioned the frequent organization of *tayub* and large *slametan*, wanting to restrict them to commemorations of life's milestones by fielding the argument that the money would be better spent on education or business ventures to improve the socio-economic position of the Javanese. Many compatriots, however, regarded the PBIS stance as censure of principal Javanese cultural expressions (see Illustration 1).

[17] On Surinamese-Javanese politics see Breunissen 2001; Derveld 1982; Kartokromo 2006, 2008, [2012], [2014]; Meel 2018; and Suparlan 1995.
[18] Antonius Dasimin Senawi, interview by Amorisa Wiratri and Ayumi Malamassam, translated by Mingoen, 9-4-2010 (javanenindiaspora.nl).
[19] *De West* 17-3-1947.

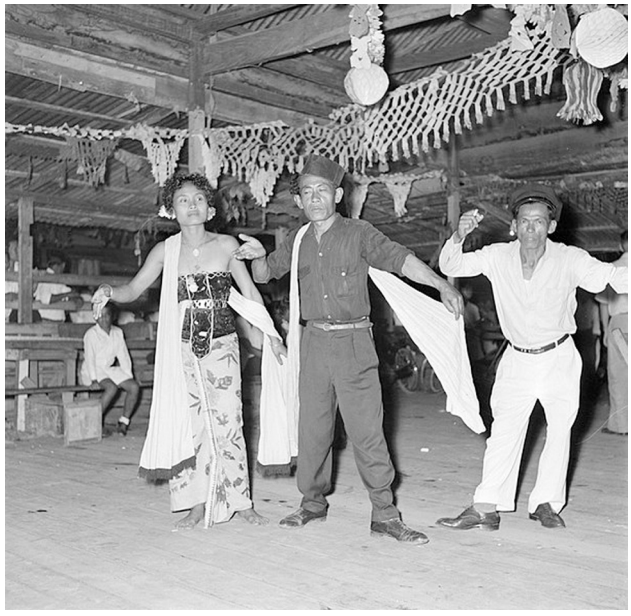

Illustration 1. Dancers at a Javanese party in Paramaribo, 1955. (Collection of Van de Poll, Nationaal Archief, bestanddeelnummer 252-2585; Wikimedia Commons).

Iding Soemita (KTPI) and Salikin Hardjo (PBIS), who briefly contested the leadership of the Javanese community, epitomized this political and cultural-religious split. Iding Soemita was a Sundanese born in West Java in 1908 who came to Suriname as a seventeen-year-old contract worker. Later he became a hospital aide on Plantation Mariënburg and a shopkeeper in Paramaribo. He was not well educated, his knowledge of Dutch was minimal, but his emotional speeches in Javanese, and his mystic aura captivated his followers. His message of returning to Java (*mulih Ndjawa*) was extremely popular.[20] Salikin Hardjo, also born in Java in 1910, followed his parents to Suriname. His father was a contract labourer in the emerging Surinamese bauxite industry. Before entering politics, he was a typesetter, office clerk, and an undercover reporter on, for example, social abuses on plantations.[21] The KTPI, Soemita in particular, was the clear winner in the first general elections. Even though this result spelled the end of the PBIS as a political party, it did not stop the inter-Javanese feuding. It even divided families as recounted by an informant who supported the PBIS and who repatriated to Indonesia: "I was no longer in contact with my parents and brothers in Suriname. Actually, we had already broken off communication there, as they had joined the other

[20] For an inside, admiring account, see Kartokromo (2006: 52-60); for his account of the KTPI at that time see pp. 61-64. He speaks of a *mulih Ndjawa* syndrome, which prevented the (political) integration of the Javanese (Kartokromo 2006: 16). Kartokromo has been politically active for decades, also as KTPI secretary.

[21] For information on Iding Soemita and Hardjo (who died in 2001) see Chan E.S. Choenni 2009; the four publications by Kartokromo (2006, 2008, [2012], [2014]); Meel (2018: 245-250); and Breunissen 2001, which includes Hardjo's autobiography.

party, the KTPI. Party politics were very confrontational back then".[22] Militant organizations with warlike names such as Banteng Hitam (Black Bull) added physical violence to the mix.[23] In his case study of political development in the Surinamese-Javanese town of Tamanredjo, F.E.R. Derveld (1982: 42) notes that during this time a number of PBIS followers left for ethnically mixed areas.

Besides a return to Java, the choice between Indonesian or Dutch nationality also divided the community. After the Netherlands finally recognized the Republic of Indonesia in 1949, the Surinamese Javanese had two years to choose between the two options. The first meant the loss of the right to vote in Suriname. The KTPI recommended that its followers become Indonesians, yet its kingpin, Soemita, took Dutch citizenship. He argued that this decision would help him to protect the interests of the KTPI membership. In PBIS circles the reverse happened, with its leader Hardjo choosing Indonesian nationality while most followers opted for Dutch citizenship.[24] In short, in these years of growing political awareness and socio-cultural disagreements the many options and opinions divided the small community.

Surprisingly the PBIS rather than the KTPI organized a return to Indonesia. Some KTPI members sold their possessions to buy *kartu idjo* (green cards) for a passage to Indonesia. Others stopped sowing and planting on the assumption that they would soon depart. However, the much anticipated KTPI ship never materialized. Suparlan (1995: 234) observes that the "victims of the scam" saw that, "some KTPI leaders had become prosperous. Although they knew where their money had gone, they did not pursue the matter". Why, contrary to its former position, did the PBIS organize the return to Indonesia? At least part of the answer lies in the feelings of unease and intimidation current among its followers. On 1 May 1951, Salikin Hardjo and Johannes Kariodimedjo, a respected Javanese Christian politician, founded Yayasan Tanah Air (Back to the Fatherland). Their goal was to build a *desa* including agricultural cooperatives in Indonesia. Soon more than 2,000 families joined; members saved for their own voyage as well as paying for a delegation of eight men to negotiate with the government in Jakarta. Although President Soekarno received this delegation twice, in March 1953 the Indonesian government informed another three-man delegation that it would accommodate repatriation to Sumatra, not Java.

Despite this hitch, back in Suriname the PBIS leaders went ahead and selected 316 families or 1,018 individuals, including approximately 100 Christians, for the first voyage to the east.[25] Wanting to set up the village as

[22] Samingat, interview by Amorisa Wiratri and Ayumi Malamassam, translated by Mingoen, 14-3-2010 (javanenindiaspora.nl).

[23] See Kartokromo (2006: 27, 54) for a KTPI account on these organizations. These groups were probably named after similar groups (*banteng*) in Indonesia. See, for example, David Van Reybrouck (2020: 227).

[24] Eventually, an increasing number of Surinamese Javanese became Dutch citizens but, in 1973, two years before Suriname's independence, 20 percent of the 58,863 Surinamese Javanese were still Indonesian citizens (Derveld 1982: 22).

[25] This percentage of Christians is considerably higher than the 3 per cent of Javanese in Suriname

quickly as possible, the leadership gave preference to skilled workers rather than farmers. More than half of the return migrants had been born in Suriname. Whereas, homesickness drove the older generation, the younger migrants looked for opportunities in building a new nation. The repatriation divided families physically. Financial obstacles also meant that only a few family members could join the first group; other relatives were expected to follow later. The plan was that individuals repatriating on the next ship would co-pay the passage of the first group. These pioneers would then repay them to finance the second trip. Sent off by revellers celebrating this triumph of the PBIS, the migrants aboard the *Langkoeas* departed Paramaribo on 5 January, 1954, arriving in Sumatra a month later.

The original enthusiasm soon evaporated as the reception in Sumatra was rather chilly and conditions in the new village of Tongar were more primitive than in Suriname. Disappointment and mistrust took over. Geographically isolated, Tongar was not suited to mechanized agriculture. Within one year many, especially those without an agricultural background, left for cities like Medan, Pekanbaru, and Jakarta in search of work. Financial disputes also plagued Tongar. Kariodimedjo left for Medan as he felt threatened by Hardjo supporters.[26] In short, Tongar was an economic failure and the atmosphere was poisoned.[27] Word of this reached Suriname and a second voyage would never eventuate. In fact a number of the *Langkoeas* migrants returned to Suriname. The final blow to Tongar was a civil war in the western part of Sumatra between 1957 and 1959. Only the elderly and some smallholders remained in Tongar. This repatriation to Indonesia had repercussions in Suriname as many competent individuals, often local leaders, had migrated thereby decapitating numerous organizations (Derveld 1982: 43; Ismail in Djasmadi, Hoefte, and Mingoen 2010: 41).

Snapshot 3

The 1970s: A stage of socio-cultural emancipation, new political conflicts, and emigration to the Netherlands

With the virtual elimination of the PBIS, the KTPI and its authoritarian leader, Iding Soemita, controlled Javanese politics until 1967.[28] Nevertheless, this

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who were Christians at the time. The total number of migrants was less than 3 per cent of the total Surinamese-Javanese population of approximately 36,000 in 1950 (Hoefte 2013: 108).

[26] Religious tensions between Muslims and Christians allegedly led to Kariodimedjo's departure (J. Wongsodikromo-Flier 2009: 51). See also Breunissen (2001: 86-89) on religious tensions in Tongar.

[27] The main bone of contention was the ownership of the land: did it belong to the migrants and their offspring or to the Yayasan Tanah Air, read Salikin Hardjo. Hardjo apparently considered himself to be a *lurah* who could distribute land freely. He had also allegedly sold land to third parties and pocketed the money. In his memoirs, published in Indonesian in 1989 and Dutch in 2001, Salikin Hardjo blames outsiders for all of Tongar's problems (Breunissen 2001: 200-211). See also Hardjo's daughter, Haryanti's, version of the conflicts in Djasmadi, Hoefte and Mingoen (2010: 13-22).

[28] See the four volumes by Kartokromo. In 1969 the PBIS as an organization collapsed after the death of its leader Sadikoen Djojoprajitno, a board member since 1947.

dominance was eroding, as "a lack of administrative talent and intellectual cadre" and persistent rumours of corruption undermined the party's national influence and the trust of its followers (Meel 2011: 101). Internal disagreements caused Soemita to lose power. In 1966, dissenters formed a new party, the Sarekat Rakyat Indonesia (SRI, Union of Indonesians). It promoted socio-economic progress and more urban perspectives, in this mirroring the PBIS (Derveld 1982: 44-46; Suparlan 1995: 237-240). This appealed to the upwardly mobile younger generations of urban Javanese, whose lifestyle and outlook differed from Soemita's core constituency of smallholders in the districts.

In 1972 Iding Soemita passed the mantle to his son Willy, who quickly revamped the KTPI by opening the door to younger or better educated members (Kartokromo 2014: 29). The somewhat aloof and non-charismatic Willy was a rather reluctant successor, but he soon shook things up with his unpopular support for Suriname's independence. His position divided the Javanese community, as many Surinamese feared independence, Afro-Surinamese domination in particular.[29] Riding on this anxiety, Willy Soemita's main rival, the flamboyant parliamentarian Paul Slamet Somohardjo, threatened to fly thousands of Javanese to the Netherlands if the Dutch handed over sovereignty in Suriname. In these uncertain times an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Surinamese Javanese left Suriname for the Netherlands.[30] Just as twenty years earlier, the Javanese community was divided on the question of whether to stay in or leave Suriname. Willy Soemita and Paul Somohardjo were the new protagonists in this re-enactment.[31] The Atlantic Ocean was a new division within the Suriname Javanese population.

Willy Soemita and Paul Slamet Somohardjo, as the leaders of their respective parties, continued to dominate Surinamese-Javanese politics for decades. Despite their different tactics and style, both men wanted to overcome the stereotype of the "meek" and "backward" Javanese while still respecting Javanese values. The cultural-religious emancipation of the various populations which had begun after World War II continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Important factors in this emancipation were urbanization

[29] Javanese and Hindostani viewed independence as an "Afro-Surinamese project". The Surinamese administration which had called for independence ignored the objections raised by Hindostani, Javanese, and other population groups. The Javanese group was diverse and did not only include supporters of Somohardjo. Independence failed to win any great political or popular support. Suparlan (1995: 108-109) observes that, in the early 1970s, Javanese had argued that, "Suriname is the country of Creoles [Afro-Surinamese], so in order to survive, they must behave like Creoles or be ill-treated by them".

[30] Approximately one-third of the Javanese population left for the Netherlands; in the years 1974-1975 alone one-seventh of the total Surinamese population migrated to the (former) metropole. In total about a quarter of the population emigrated on account of (the tensions created by) independence. In this group, the Javanese and Hindostani were overrepresented (Hoefte 2013: 108-110). In the post-World-War II period small groups, including Javanese, left for neighbouring Caribbean islands, particularly Curaçao, as well as the United States, Germany, Belgium and other destinations. One particular choice for Javanese was French Guiana (Mingoen 2010).

[31] See Kartokromo (2008: 51-56) for a comparison between Hardjo and Somohardjo from a KTPI perspective.

and government employment. As Ad de Bruijne and Aart Schalkwijk (2005: 259-260) show, it was not ethnicity but time of arrival in the city and access to formal education which determined the socio-economic advancement of Hindostani and Javanese: "Their increased level of education has in turn allowed them to take advantage of better economic opportunities so that they can participate in a broader range of economic activities. Second, access to government jobs has been very important. Improved access to civil service jobs for all of the ethnic groups, resulting in part from rising educational levels, appears mainly to be a consequence of the way political parties have consistently used their administrative apparatus as a means to further the emancipation of their ethnic basis".

Religious organizations also played a vital role in the emancipation of the Javanese and Hindostani communities. Following the tradition set by the Christian churches, Muslim and Hindu organizations established schools, children's homes, hospitals, and welfare programmes. Non-Christian religions called for state funding for Muslim and Hindu schools, basing this demand on religious freedom. In effect, they were claiming the same rights as Protestants and Roman Catholics.[32] Despite the fact that the demand for state funding for Hindu and Muslim schools ran into strong opposition, overcoming Afro-Surinamese/Christian opposition, the first Hindu secondary school was opened in 1960. Other Hindu and Muslim schools followed in the years thereafter (Gobhardan-Rambocus 2001: 494-495). In 1970, the government recognized Idul Fitri, known as Bodo, (Vruggink 2001) among the Javanese, as a national holiday.

The Javanese presence in Paramaribo was and still is more informal, for example, through restaurants and *warungs*, than formal. The Javanese cultural centre Sana Budaya and its memorial column by Soeki(djan) Irodikromo – the foremost artist of Surinamese-Javanese descent – commemorating 100 years of Javanese immigration, are located on the city's northern outskirts. Most *lieux de mémoire*, such as a monument honouring the arrival of the first Javanese immigrants on Plantation Mariënburg, are located outside the capital.[33]

Socio-economic progress and recognition helped to lower the intensity of the conflict dividing the Javanese population in Suriname. During his fieldwork in the early 1970s, Parsudi Suparlan (1995: 141-162) observed that the conflict had lost its sharpness and that a middle way between east and west worshippers, which he defines as "moderate reformism", had emerged. Divisions became less pronounced or were simply not mentioned. The east worshippers do not reject Javanese cultural expressions, particularly the *slametan*, which they interpret as the giving of alms, the third pillar (*zakat*) of

[32] Harold Jap-A-Joe, Peter Sjak Shie, and Joop Vernooij 2001. These efforts undermined the practice of Christian missionaries who had set up boarding schools for non-Christian students, enabling them to get a secondary education in Paramaribo, the only cultural and educational hub in the country. See Gobardhan-Rambocus (2001: 359-376) for a description of *desa* schools, the involvement of Christian missionaries and the efforts to improve education.

[33] In a recent overview of more than 100 monuments in Paramaribo (Eric Kastelein 2020), only one, Sana Budaya (p. 90), is specifically devoted to the Javanese population.

Muslim practice.[34] However, in strongholds of east worshippers, often villages with a strong Javanese majority, Javanese cultural expressions such as dance and certain musical genres, including gamelan, were still rejected in the 1970s and this view has become even stronger since then.[35]

Snapshot 4

The twenty-first century: A phase of integration into Surinamese or Dutch society

The migration of the 1970s was permanent for the great majority of Surinamese Javanese. They settled in the Netherlands, but often with their eyes still on Suriname and, to a lesser extent, Indonesia. Globalization in the form of cheaper and faster travel options and the widespread use of the Internet and social media made it easier to stay connected with the former homeland(s). In the twenty-first century, the diaspora has been able to create formal and informal networks linking individuals and their interests.[36] In this final snapshot, we first discuss the impact of the most recent large-scale migration on the Javanese population in Suriname and then move to the Suriname-Javanese living in the Netherlands.

Surinamese-Javanese cultural heritage in Suriname

The migration in the 1970s greatly impacted the Javanese cultural scene in Suriname. In the 1950s and 1960s there had been an impressive growth in the number of gamelan ensembles. Paramaribo and the districts with a sizeable Javanese population could boast eighty to ninety ensembles (Harrie R. Djojowikromo 2011; G.D. van Wengen 1975). This number had begun to decrease in the late 1970s and this trend continued in the following decades. According to informants there are currently only five active gamelan ensembles, surprisingly none in Commewijne, known as the most Javanese district (Mingoen 2020).

The migration of key gamelan players to the Netherlands not only resulted in the almost complete disappearance of ensembles but also in a concomitant loss of cultural knowledge. Popular gamelan players tended to keep this knowledge to themselves for fear of losing their livelihood with the upshot that, with their departure, the ensembles suffered a personal and knowledge loss which was irreplacable. Currently, only one or two gamelan ensembles are offering an opportunity to learn the Surinamese-Javanese gamelan (slendro - five notes tonal).

In contrast, the Indonesian embassy is consistently active in providing opportunities to learn to play the most common Javanese gamelan of Indonesia (pelog – seven notes tonal). In addition, the embassy also offers traditional

[34] For an update in 2009, see a fieldwork report on relations between east and west worshippers by Noor Hendrix and Marjoleine van Waning 2009.
[35] See the interview with Rita Tjien Fooh-Hardjomohamad in: Djasmadi, Hoefte, and Mingoen (2010: 132–133).
[36] For more on formal efforts to create a diaspora network, see Meel 2017.

dance classes. This has been the practice since the 1964 opening of Indonesia's Consulate General (embassy after independence in 1975) in Paramaribo. Young Javanese joined the Pergerakan Pemuda Indonesia (PPI, Indonesia Youth Movement), while women who were part of the social circles of the Consulate General joined the women's organization Perwani (Persatuan Wanita Indonesia). At first, reconnecting the Javanese with Java, or more precisely seeking to connect them with "modern" Indonesia, seems to have been the driving force of the consulate's activities. However, over the years, the focus appears to have shifted towards improving and strengthening the knowledge of the Javanese of their native language and culture and in pursuing trade and business with Indonesia. In addition to language, dance, and gamelan classes in Paramaribo, scholarships have been made available for young Javanese to enroll in art and culture institutions in Indonesia. This carries the expectation that, upon their return, they will actively transfer or use the knowledge acquired in their homeland.[37]

A second cause of the decline in interest in gamelan was the growing popularity of Pop Jawa in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Visiting popular artists from Indonesia inspired this movement, yet it is important to note that in Suriname Pop Jawa has taken its own course by integrating Caribbean and Latin beats. These beats were copied by the late popular Indonesian singer Didi Kempot, a frequent guest performer in Suriname, making him even more famous in both Suriname and Indonesia.

Other cultural expressions and traditions have also declined in popularity. Factors which play a role in this process are the dwindling number of performers, the growing obsolescence of the Javanese language (see also below), internal (religious) criticism of Javanese celebrations and modernization. To give just a few examples: *wayang kulit* suffers from a dire shortage of *dalang* (puppet players and storytellers). Cabaret has gained in popularity at the expense of *ludruk*. Cabaret extends its appeal beyond Javanese audiences; instead of *ngoko* (Javanese speech style used among intimates) as the primary language, the lingua franca Sranan Tongo and Dutch are also being used to make jokes and play pranks. *Tayub* has completely disappeared, not only because of criticism by Javanese intellectuals and government restrictions on this presumed spendthrifted form of partying (Breunissen 2001; Mingoen 2021a; Van Wengen 1963), but also because of the growing preference for more modern styles of celebrating, such as dance parties in rented halls with

[37] In 2017, the Indonesian Embassy introduced the "Rumah Budaya" (House of Culture) concept, which has been implemented worldwide by Indonesian embassies as part of the government's soft power diplomacy. Craft experts in wood- and wickerwork were flown in to teach these, potentially money-earning, crafts in Suriname. This can be labelled a reconnecting of the Javanese to traditional skills which had been almost lost in Suriname. Quite new are the embassy's trade- and business missions to Indonesia for Surinamese, and particularly Javanese, entrepreneurs, to introduce new business ventures expanding commercial relations between Suriname and Indonesia. An increasingly popular event is the annual Indofair (since 1997) to promote Indonesian export products, as well as the culinary delights and art and culture of Indonesia (RM Bibid Kuslandinu 2021; D. Supratikto 2021).

hired Pop Jawa bands. Finally, if gamelan becomes extinct in Suriname, it will automatically lead to the decline, even the disappearance, of all performing arts as gamelan music is an essential element in these shows.

Similar developments can be observed in the socio-cultural sphere. *Sambatan* (a tradition of mutual help between households, including work benefiting the whole community), *bersih desa* (a tradition of spiritual cleansing of oneself and the community), *bodo kupat* (feast held for one week to mark the ending of Ramadan and the extended period of fasting, observed by many Javanese), and its related *slametan* have disappeared in many typical Javanese communities. Where they still take place, for instance, in communities such as in Koewarasan and Lelydorp (Wanica district) and in Rust en Werk (Commewijne district), they are driven by organizations which have a strong orientation towards *Kejawèn*.

To understand the arts and rituals mainly performed in the Surinamese-Javanese language, knowledge of the language is required. However, Surinamese-Javanese is no longer the language of communication in most Javanese families, let alone in public. Urbanization and the increased participation of Javanese people in education since the 1950s has resulted in a multi-lingual orientation which manifests itself in the use of Dutch and Sranan Tongo. In the 1970s Parsudi Suparlan already noted the shift towards languages other than Javanese. As soon as a child goes to school, Dutch is spoken in many homes, particularly in middle-class families. Dutch is considered the language which conveys progress and confers status. Suparlan also observed that Sranan Tongo was widely spoken by Javanese, especially in mixed situations. Mastering the lingua franca is considered a practicality. Sophie Villerius (2019: 36-39), highlights that the shift towards other languages, especially in Paramaribo, became more pronounced in the 1980s and the 1990s.

A twenty-first-century survey among schoolchildren carried out by Isabelle Léglise and Bettina Migge (2015) shows that, while children stated that they can speak Javanese (13 per cent of 1,555 children in the survey), only a few claimed that Javanese was their first language. This is consistent with the 2012 census data which reveal that in Paramaribo Javanese was spoken in 5.2 per cent of all households (of all ethnic compositions) and only in one-third of these cases, it was the first language spoken. While it might not be a first language in every household, Javanese is still being spoken, even by younger people, in a number of neighbourhoods which are traditionally inhabited by Javanese.[38] In short, over the last decades, Dutch and Sranan Tongo have taken over. It is important to note that not only the Surinamese-Javanese language is in danger of dying out, but this downward trend also impacts on Surinamese-Javanese social and cultural traditions.

[38] For example, in Paramaribo: Clevia, Maretraite, and Morgenstond; Wanica district: Koewarasan, Lelydorp, and Dijkveld; Commewijne district: Tamanredjo, Mariënburg, Zoelen, Rust en Werk, and Margaretha; Saramacca district: Kampong Baroe; Nickerie district: Wageningen, Waldeck, and Krappahoek.

Apart from language, religion is also a factor to be considered when discussing changing cultural traditions. There are branches of Islam and denominations of Christianity, such as Evangelical movements,[39] which do not encourage, indeed even prohibit, participation in what they consider to be pagan or *haram* cultural expressions. This goes well beyond the reservations felt by, for example, the PBIS and KTPI, about the excessive number of *tayub* and *slametan* which were seen to be organized at the drop of a hat. Despite their reservations, these critics do support commemorations of life-cycle events such as circumcision and marriage.

Overall, social mobility and the integration of the Javanese into Suriname society has resulted in a loss of cultural heritage, but this social process, which is also occurring among the other ethnic groups, is only a part of the story. It is important to note that Suriname has not pursued an active policy which would value the cultural diversity embodied in its various population groups. Since independence, subsequent governments have ratified UNESCO treaties on safeguarding and promoting diversity of cultural expressions and the protection of cultural heritage, but a formal policy to implement these treaties has still not been tabled.

The only element of the Javanese cultural heritage which has largely been preserved is the food culture. Their cuisine and culinary habits have been largely retained although there are a few examples of distinctly Surinamese-Javanese flavours in Javanese dishes produced by the use of local spices, herbs, and vegetables. Such is the case with *saoto*, a soup whose basic broth in Suriname is prepared with allspice and stock cubes. It is served with chicken, not boiled in the broth but fried, then shredded into small strands. Added to this are fried small pieces of potato, fried *soeoon* (rice vermicelli), and fried onions. The *sambel* (hot sauce) prepared with Madame Jeanette and Adjuma chili peppers (both varieties of Capsicum chinense) has a special aroma and is fiercer in taste than the *sambel* in Java. All these elements make the *saoto* a distinct version of the chicken *soto,* of which many varieties exist in Java.

Javanese food is very popular and eaten by all ethnic groups in Suriname. Javanese dishes have become part of the daily menu of non-Javanese Surinamers; *bami goreng* and *nasi goreng* with side dishes are a common sight at parties held by non-Javanese. For their part, with the exception of a *slametan*, the Javanese prepare dishes of other ethnic groups for everyday consumption and festivities. The popularity of Javanese food can also be seen in the public space. There are *warung*s everywhere, a much appreciated element in the food culture of Suriname.

[39] As in other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, Evangelical movements are rapidly growing in Suriname, also among the Javanese population. The festive atmosphere and the lack of ecclesiastical hierarchy seem to attract large groups of adherents. In the 2012 census, the Full Gospel Church (Volle Evangelie Gemeente) was the second largest Christian denomination, after Roman Catholicism, and slightly larger than the traditional church of the Moravians (Evangelische Broedergemeente).

Surinamese-Javanese cultural heritage in the Netherlands

The Javanese who migrated to the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s immediately set up their own organizations in the towns in which they settled. The Hague, Rotterdam, Hoogezand (in the province of Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands), and Sint-Michielsgestel (in North Brabant, in the south) were among the first places with sizeable Surinamese-Javanese communities. Some of these organizations were successful in obtaining welfare and cultural subsidies from local governments. They have been instrumental in helping newly arrived migrants to access housing, welfare facilities, and employment. In addition, they have organized social gatherings and cultural activities to make people feel at home in their new surroundings. Under their umbrella, gamelan players who migrated to the Netherlands have begun to make gamelan instruments and to form gamelan ensembles (see Illustration 2).

Illustration 2. Wayang kulit performance of the gamelan ensemble "Witing Klapa" in "Het Wereldhuis", Boxtel Netherlands, 2019. (Photo archives: Stichting Comité Herdenking Javaanse Immigratie).

This happened first in Rotterdam, followed by Sint-Michielsgestel, The Hague, Delfzijl, Alkmaar, Amsterdam, Hoogezand, and Groningen. Groups have also been formed to perform Javanese traditional dances, *ludruk* and *jaran kepang*. In the Netherlands, annual Eurasian cultural festivals such as the Tong Tong Fair in The Hague or Pasar Malam which are organized in many Dutch cities, serve as a source of inspiration and meeting place.

At a later stage, a number of organizations have successfully lobbied for living communities in which the Javanese elderly can spend their old age together retaining their independence but within reach of care services. Two such living communities were built in The Hague, one in Hoogezand, whereas in Rotterdam sections of two apartment buildings were specially allocated

to Javanese elderly. They have become centres for social gatherings and celebrations. Despite being domiciled in the Netherlands, these institutions as do gamelan ensembles have Javanese names: Wisma Tunggal Karsa, Rukun Sido Kumpul, Trisno Soeworo, Rukun Budi Utama, Bebarengan Anggawe Rukun Rakyat, Gotong Royong, Bangun Trisno, Bangun Tresna Budaya, Langgeng Trisno, or names which refer to places in Suriname, for example, Waterkant or to an episode in their history, like *Langkoeas*, the ship which took Surinamese-Javanese migrants to Sumatra in 1954.[40] Senior Javanese in particular prefer Javanese names: they think that feelings, values, objectives, and expectations can be expressed concisely and meaningful in just a few Javanese words. This applies to the elderly who are not conversant with Dutch. They are a minority and, given their age, their generation will soon vanish. Dutch and Sranan Tongo, and to a lesser extent Javanese, are the colloquial languages of the generation who left Suriname as adults, while the generation born and educated in the Netherlands speaks Dutch and often other languages, mostly English.

Indonesia's influence among the Surinamese Javanese in the Netherlands is most noticeable in the realm of culture. Frequent visits to Indonesia, easier to reach from the Netherlands than from Suriname, enables the purchase of Indonesian items (costumes, jewellery, masks, et cetera), music, batik, and even gamelan instruments. Visits to the (first) homeland are also used to gain insights into and knowledge from Indonesian choreographers. Javanese from Suriname also participate in dance and gamelan classes at the Indonesian embassy in The Hague. In the larger cities, many youngsters used to learn Javanese classical dance from private Indonesian instructors living in the Netherlands, but the demand for such classes is decreasing. At the same time, Indonesia's achievements on the world heritage level are strengthening the awareness of the importance of one's own cultural heritage. For example, just like Indonesians, Surinamese-Javanese are prouder than ever to wear batik.

Yet here too a downward trend is noticeable. Of the approximately thirteen gamelan ensembles which were active in the 1970s and 1980s, only eight remain. Three of the eight will most probably cease to exist soon because of the advanced age of almost all players. Realizing the risk of extinction, in December 2018 the gamelan ensembles joined forces to form the Netwerk Surinaams-Javaanse Gamelan (Network Surinamese-Javanese Gamelan), which seeks to preserve the Surinamese-Javanese gamelan. Under the leadership of Stichting Comité Herdenking Javaanse Immigratie (Foundation for the Commemoration of Javanese Immigration), the network successfully completed the process of enlisting the Surinamese-Javanese gamelan in the intangible heritage inventory of the Netherlands in December 2020 (Mingoen

[40] Wisma Tunggal Karsa (Home for like-minded people); Rukun Sido Kumpul (Unity brings us together); Trisno Soeworo (The love of sound); Rukun Budi Utama (Reaching a good cause together); Bebarengan Anggawe Rukun Rakyat (Working together brings prosperity); Gotong Royong (Join forces (to achieve a goal)); Bangun Trisno (Built with love); Bangun Tresna Budaya (Building on the love of culture); Langgeng Trisno (Enduring love).

2021b). The listing obliges the network to play an active part in preserving the Surinamese-Javanese gamelan. This is a driving force to co-operate on the preservation, with plans to recruit young players who are not necessarily of Javanese descent, as well as to collaborate with other gamelan groups playing the Indonesian gamelan. One of the Surinamese-Javanese gamelan ensembles purchased a complete set of Javanese gamelan instruments in Indonesia and now plays the gamelan melodies which have been developed in Suriname on these instruments. This might be the only way to preserve the gamelan tradition among the Surinamese-Javanese population. An amalgamation of instruments and of gamelan melodies from the east and the west provides the best possible opportunities to create and re-create.

The number of groups specialized in Javanese dance has also shrunk considerably because of the seniority or passing away of the founders. At present, there is actually no difference with the situation in Suriname as groups tend to stand and fall with their leaders.

Just as in Suriname, the *warung*s opened by Surinamese-Javanese migrants have been a success in the Netherlands. While well-known Indonesian restaurants serving the traditional *rijsttafel* have had to close their doors, *warung*s, whether they are Surinamese-Javanese or Indonesian, are doing well. Their attractive prices, tasty food, easy access, and *halal* certification are probably the most important parameters of their success. The use of cassava (*teloh*) and plantains also attracts African patrons. Some *warung* entrepreneurs have opened branches and in recent years young entrepreneurs have launched trendy eateries based on the Surinamese-Javanese cuisine. These Surinamese-Javanese *warung*s offer dishes which are different to those on offer in Indonesian *warung*s. To underline this difference and their Surinamese-Javanese identity, the national flag of Suriname is used in signs, interiors, and menus (Lisa Djasmadi, Hariëtte Mingoen, and Matte Soemopawiro 2015). This tells us something about the orientation of Surinamese Javanese in the Netherlands: the cultural ties with the Javanese in Suriname are still strong, while there is also a bond with the country itself, as illustrated by the national symbols of Suriname.

Many Suriname-born Javanese undertake frequent trips to Suriname. Emotional ties with Suriname are very strong and, depending on the personal situation and the upbringing in their families, these feelings are shared by their offspring born in the Netherlands. Visits are not only intended to visit the family but also with a view ultimately to repatriate or to stay for extended periods of time (circular migration). The proof of this are the efforts made during holidays to renovate or build houses on inherited land. Moreover, relatives in Suriname are supported, for instance, in setting up a business, in building a house and in the education of their children. The social, economic, and political situation in Suriname is closely followed and in case of emergencies individual or collective action is undertaken in attempts to alleviate the problem(s).

Conclusion

In 1890 the first Javanese indentured labourers arrived in Suriname to work on the colony's plantations. Soon other immigrants – indentured and free – followed, in total more than 33,000. At the end of the migration period, in 1939, they formed more than 20 per cent of the colony's population. Consequently, they constituted a substantial community which needed to adapt to a new socio-cultural environment but, at the same time, managed to keep in touch with the homeland. Javanese culture, values, and traditions were crucial to overcoming feelings of isolation and alienation, and sustaining connections with each other and the homeland. The fact that they lived in multi-ethnic Suriname with its mixed labour force also contributed to strengthening the migrants' Javanese identity. The colonial government, employers and other colonial inhabitants identified and stereotyped them as "Javanese", with its connotations of docility and backwardness, re-enforcing the common cultural ground among these migrants even more.

The Javanese shaped their own cultural expressions and traditions in Suriname with what little they could remember of their places of origin. We have attempted to analyse processes of identity formation and adaptation, examining the worlds which the migrants created by looking at four distinct time periods. The first two focus on the Surinamese-Javanese population's connections with Suriname and Indonesia, the latter two on Suriname and the Netherlands.

In the first snapshot, covering the 1930s, the focus is on the religious differences between east (*wong ngadep ngetan*) and west worshippers (*wong ngadep ngulon*) and the first group's rejection of Javanese traditions such as *slametan* and *sajèn*, an attitude which affronted the majority of Surinamese Javanese. It was therefore more than a religious chasm as it also represented a conflict between reform-minded and traditionalist Javanese.

An ideological clash deepened this religious-cultural conflict even further. As explained in the second snapshot, covering the 1950s, approximately 1,000 Javanese left for Sumatra as a result of fundamental political and socio-religious disputes between people looking back to a romanticised past in Java and those looking forward to a better future in Suriname. The hostilities between the KTPI and PBIS parties and their respective leaders, Iding Soemita and Salikin Hardjo, ended with the departure of PBIS supporters. After their return to Indonesia, the failure of Tongar limited the options for Surinamese Javanese. If a return to Indonesia was not feasible, Suriname was, at that point in time, the only place where the population could advance.

In the third snapshot, the 1970s rivalry between Willy Soemita and Paul Slamet Somohardjo takes centre stage. It seemed a replay of the conflict between Iding Soemita and Salikin Hardjo some two decades earlier. Both conflicts turned on the question of migration to better places. However, there were two fundamental differences: firstly, in the 1950s it was the discontent of a specific Javanese group which had prompted emigration, whereas in the latter case the anxiety surrounding Suriname's independence touched

all ethnic groups and led to mass departure to the Netherlands. Secondly, the migration to the Netherlands lacked the strong cultural-religious overtones which had embittered the Javanese community in the 1940s and 1950s. Despite the fact that politics created so much anxiety, it is important to note that the existence of Javanese political parties and their significant role in Surinamese politics is a unique feature in the global Javanese diaspora. Moreover, political leaders, such as the Soemita, Hardjo, and Somohardjo, played a critical role in the political, socio-economic and cultural emancipation of their followers. They might have fallen short of realizing all of their dreams, but substantial progress was made nonetheless.

The Javanese in Suriname held on to their cultural expressions for more than a century. The final snapshot features continuities and changes in Surinamese-Javanese cultural heritage in Suriname and the Netherlands in the twenty-first century. Influences from the multi-ethnic society which is Suriname and from other countries, as well as historical and socio-economic developments, including new migrations, have produced a dynamic heritage. Some parts are at risk of extinction, while the same time there is an emergence of new elements which can be labelled distinctively Surinamese-Javanese.

These cultural elements have crossed the Atlantic Ocean with the migrants who have settled in the Netherlands. They have re-created their Surinamese cultural life in the Netherlands, expanded by additional knowledge and attributes acquired by following classes at the Indonesian embassy in The Hague, trips to Indonesia and the many annual Eurasian fairs in Dutch cities. Nevertheless, the main orientation of the Surinamese Javanese is not towards Indonesia but towards Suriname. Visits to Indonesia are frequent but often undertaken more for touristic and nostalgic reasons. So far, we have noted no significant influence of such trips in social, cultural, economic or political domains.

In terms of identity, the Surinamese Javanese themselves identify strongly with Suriname. This is apparent from the fact that they always point out "*Ik ben een Javaan uit Suriname*" (I am a Javanese from Suriname) when asked where they are from by Indonesians or by Dutch people who often mistake them for Indonesians or Indos (Indo-Europeans). Also, at diaspora gatherings organized by the Indonesian government since 2012 and attended by the global Javanese diaspora,[41] Surinamese Javanese are proud to identify themselves as citizens of Suriname or as Suriname-born. Those born in the Netherlands tend to emphasize their link with Suriname through their parents. Often, they are also proud to share information on the Surinamese-Javanese community in both Suriname and the Netherlands. Social media, especially Facebook, are important in the

[41] "The Congress of Indonesian Diaspora, held in Los Angeles from 6 to 8 July 2012, was the first attempt made by Jakarta to bring together representatives of the Indonesian diaspora from all over the globe. According to the Indonesian government, the capital, expertise, skills, and networks of members of this diaspora should be acknowledged as a formidable asset to foster Indonesia's economic growth, push back social inequality, and contribute to the realization of the regional ambitions of the leading Southeast Asian state" (Meel 2017: 231).

exchange between Javanese in Indonesia, Suriname, and the Netherlands; here too, Suriname often serves as a place of pride.

We argue that the homeland of the Surinamese-Javanese migrants in the Netherlands is Suriname. This certainly applies to the generation born in Suriname. This feeling is similar to the strong connections which bind Surinamese migrants of other ethnic descents to Suriname. The future will tell whether this will be the same with the Surinamese-Javanese generation born in the Netherlands.

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