

# Chance, Change, and the Sticusa

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## On the Nature of Cultural Cooperation between the Sticusa and Suriname

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In this thesis the notion of the Foundation for Cultural Cooperation with Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles (Sticusa) as an institution guilty of cultural imperialism is challenged. Instead of focusing on continuity after colonialism the focus in this thesis lies on change. The Sticusa operated in a multi-cultural country in which culture carried the weight of nation-building; therefore it was heavily contested. Through its activities Sticusa created niches that were filled by the creative practices of Surinamese writers, artist, and others involved in the cultural world of Suriname. In their cultural endeavours, they brought about cultural change and provided in the effort to create a national culture.

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## Introduction

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The prerogative of the playwright who turns to reality for inspiration is that he or she can retell actual events using prose that addresses the heartfelt sentiments of his or her audience. This was the case in the 1988 play *De tranen van Den Uyl* (Den Uyl's Tears), written by Surinamese jurist, writer, and poet Hugo Pos, in which the journalist-character Jozef Slagveer is mobilized to give a definite description of Surinamese independence:

*Ik zal u wat zeggen, niet onze politici, maar onze dichters hebben ons de onafhankelijkheid gebracht [...] De bevrijding van binnen uit, dat was het pijnlijke groeiproces waar we doorheen moesten, onze eigen Kra ontdekken, laat ik dat maar heel christelijk voor u met zoiets als ziel vertalen. Toen dat stadium eenmaal was bereikt, het gevoel van eenheid, van alles te kunnen, toen was de onafhankelijkheid geen punt meer.<sup>1</sup>*

The fact of the matter is that it was not our politicians, but our poets who brought independence to us [...] Liberation from the inside out, that was the painful process of growth we had to go through to discover our own Kra – something you could translate in a Christian fashion as ‘soul’. Once that stage was reached – the feeling of unity, of being able to do anything – independence was no longer a point.<sup>2</sup>

Independence, in Slagveer's theatrical rendition– his real-life counterpart was amongst the victims of the notorious December Murders in 1982 – was the result of a cultural process.<sup>3</sup> This attitude resonates deeply with poems from the likes of Rudy Bedacht and Trefossa, who in their lifetimes visualised a country that had only come into being in 1954. Culture is a factor in the constitution of a state that cannot be easily overlooked. Yet, the focus in academic tradition on Suriname's evolution into a sovereign state has mostly circled around the political and social fields. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that one of the first times Surinamese independence has been considered as a possible outcome of a cultural process was in a theatrical play. And with good cause, for the Surinamese cultural tradition in the period before independence was buzzing with activity.

An important incentive for this activity is the ascension of Suriname from colony to partner within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1954, the Dutch sovereign Queen Wilhelmina van Nassau implemented the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which decreed that all overseas

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme. Natievorming als opgave* (Amsterdam: Eburon, 2003), 15.

<sup>2</sup> All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author's own.

<sup>3</sup> The December Murders were the conclusion to Desi Bouterse's military coup in which fifteen dissidents were placed in front of a fire squad and killed.

territory would attain governmental autonomy.<sup>4</sup> The path to the Charter had been laid as early as 1940, when Wilhelmina was forced to flee to London after the military invasion of the Netherlands by Nazi Germany. Whilst in exile she tried to keep up morale in her Kingdom by promising structural alterations to the Kingdom if occupation ceased. In her radio broadcasts she stated that these changes were 'intended for the entire *Rijk*.<sup>5</sup> When liberation came to the Netherlands in 1945, this vague and multivalent pledge was concretised into a clear promise: Suriname would be an autonomous state. In this Dutch commonwealth only matters concerning the Crown, such as defence or trade, fell under the remit of Dutch politics. Still, this change of course did not mean full sovereignty, nor did it assure eventual independence.

Autonomy did thus not signal a long-lasting break with the metropole, but it brought significant changes to the country nonetheless. There was an influx of political parties, and inhabitants of Suriname experienced an increase in democratic freedom as they gained the right to vote and be voted on. At the head of state was the prime minister who ruled with relative clout, but had to account to a Dutch governor. The function of governor in Suriname has always been slightly autocratic, but after the Charter the governor operated as the deputy for the Dutch government in Suriname. Furthermore, during autonomy the number of nationalist movements –founded after the Second World War, when Suriname was disconnected from the metropole – soared. New groups and movements were founded, while the older ones used the increased freedom for their own benefits. But these were not cohesive, well-coordinated endeavours. There was a great deal of ambivalence among them, and the notions of selfhood they advocated were multifarious. Partly responsible for these diverging ideas was Suriname's diverse demographical makeup. Ethnicities and historical trajectories played an important role in the decision on what was to become of the state, and Suriname had plenty of them, as a result of years of (albeit forced) migration. It led the writer Albert Helman – the pseudonym used by Lou Lichtveld – to describe Suriname on more than one occasion

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<sup>4</sup> In this thesis I make a distinction between the Kingdom and the Netherlands. The latter meaning the geographically delineated country bordering the North Sea that is often referred to as Holland, and the former signalling all the countries under the rule of the Dutch Crown, of which Suriname was one.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in: Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang. Een taal- en onderwijsgeschiedenis van Suriname, 1651-1975* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2001), 304.

as a 'cultural mosaic'.<sup>6</sup> What the nationalists lacked in their ideals they had in their belief on how to implement them: a mutual preoccupation with culture.

Cultural nationalists were not the only ones who organised themselves around the field of culture. Autonomy heralded a period of increased cultural cooperation between the Netherlands and Suriname, edified in the second incarnation of a foundation called the *Stichting Culturele Samenwerking met Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen* (Foundation for the Advancement with Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles), more commonly known under the abbreviation Sticusa. This semi-private, government-funded organisation aimed at increasing the cultural interchange between the partners of the Kingdom.

The first incarnation was founded on February 26, 1948 and, although it remained active until 1955, turned out to be an outright failure. The seeds of its eventual destruction were already sown at the founding of the organisation. From the onset the focus of the foundation was shot through with an incredible preference for the cultural work in the Netherlands Indies, which was deemed crucial for the conservation of Dutch authority in that colony.<sup>7</sup> Present at the founding were multiple notables from the Dutch political scene, but remarkably few people from the cultural world. Moreover, every single founder was of Dutch descent, and they were all specialized in the Netherlands Indies, further emphasizing the organisation's initial focus on the eastern part of the Dutch colonial empire. It is then of no surprise that when Indonesia acquired independence in 1949, the organisation was quickly rendered obsolete. A sudden and complete reorientation towards the western parts of the Kingdom could not save the organisation from liquidation in 1955; the damage done by independence, together with organisational errors and the high costs of its activities, gave the organisation the fatal blow.<sup>8</sup>

What characterized the first Sticusa was an incredibly naïve stance regarding criticism. The organisation was aware of the critique on its functioning, but brushed it off as if it were nothing. In the Annual Report of 1953, the criticisms are only briefly alluded to:

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Helman, "Inleiding" in *Cultureel Mozaïek van Suriname*, ed. Albert Helman (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1997), 7, 11-13.

<sup>7</sup> Gert J. Oostindie, and Inge Klinkers. *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden. Het Nederlandse dekolonisatiebeleid in de Caraïben, 1940-2000, deel 1*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press: 2001), 161.

<sup>8</sup> Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende koninkrijksbanden*, 164.

In the Netherlands the foundation was praised and critiqued. Words of encouragement were spoken by the minister of Education, Arts and Sciences on April 15<sup>th</sup> of 1953, in a debate in the *Eerste Kamer* of the General-States: “The Sticusa is doing an excellent job in an area that is not easy and under circumstances that could be enough to let each one of us cry out in despair. I believe that, seeing the circumstances, there is no reason to not give the foundation the chance it deserves.”<sup>9</sup>

Of course, when an organisation does not reflect on the critiques on its operations in its own annual report – a report that was published for, and spread through the cultural world of the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles – it is far from being noteworthy. Yet, the description above is more akin to malapert self-congratulation; an organisation's equivalent of patting oneself on the back.

This ambivalence already appeared five years before, in a policy document that was published in 1948, at the time of the Sticusa's founding.<sup>10</sup> The document attests to the endeavours that inspired the formation of Sticusa. Among them were both the work of the UNESCO and the British Council. Inspiration, in the latter case, has to be understood in a more pejorative fashion; for the Sticusa, the policy of the British Council was exemplary of how the organisation did *not* want to function, since they accused the institution of being a cultural ‘one-way street’. ‘From the onset,’ the document continues, ‘it has been our goal to build on the historical interconnectedness of the peoples here and overseas, and to mobilize them in order to create a mutual cultural traffic.’<sup>11</sup> Yet the organisation, by the end of its existence, could not live up to that goal. In fact, at the end of its lifespan it had become the very thing that it so clearly intended to avoid: a cultural one-way street.

History has not been kind for Sticusa as well. Its nefarious reputation has led historians and other researchers analysing the cultural affairs of Suriname to claim that both the Sticusas followed an imperialistic agenda. Claims like these are often made with the idea to mind that the operations of Sticusa were continuations of old colonial policy, perhaps in a different form. Historian of Suriname Peter Meel concludes that the cultural relationship between Suriname and the Netherlands was continued after the Second World War, although it differed slightly. Hitherto, Dutch cultural policy in Suriname was aimed at creating a single Dutch linguistic and cultural community, but under directions of the Charter this was changed in a tactic to employ Dutch language and culture

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<sup>9</sup> *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague, (hereafter: NL-HaNA), 2.19.114, *Stichting Culturele Samenwerking (STICUSA)*, 1948-1989, catalog number 4, Annual Report of 1953 published at the J.J. Viottastraat 41.

<sup>10</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 4, document regarding Sticusa activities in 1948.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

as a means to accelerate the process of acculturation of the diverse population groups in Suriname.<sup>12</sup> The policy Meel refers to is the politics of assimilation that were implemented by the colonial government after the abolition of slavery in 1863.<sup>13</sup> The same goes for Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, who in a reflection on Suriname's educational history makes a similar claim. These politics of assimilation, often also referred to as *cultuurpolitiek* or culture politics, had pedagogic aims that in the most general sense meant the subjectification of the formerly enslaved; the new creole population group of Suriname.<sup>14</sup> Conformity to white rule was deemed necessary in order to be perceived as complete human beings.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, as Henk Chin and Hans Budding have stated, 'Dutch (read 'Western') culture was the most prestigious in Suriname, since it offered the greatest chances for ascending the social scale – a social scale that usually led across the sea, to the Netherlands.'<sup>16</sup>

When we place the Sticusa – both the incarnations – in the same tradition as these politics of assimilation, the organisation becomes prone to the accusation of cultural imperialism. This was certainly the case with the contemporary cultural nationalists, who perceived the Sticusa as a transmitter of Dutch culture.<sup>17</sup> It is then appealing to refer to Edward Said's study *Orientalism*, in which is analysed how empires subjected its colonies in a Foucauldian manner through culture.<sup>18</sup> Particularly noteworthy in this sense is his use of the notion of cultural hegemony, and the analytical distinction that is made between civil and political society. In the latter, domination is coercive and enforced through state institutions. Civil society, on the other hand, is the field of culture, of ideas, expressions and other means that operate through consent of the people.<sup>19</sup> Inasmuch as since 1863 the Dutch have been maintaining the cultural upper hand in Suriname, being in a position of both political and cultural superiority; safeguarding Dutch culture as the hegemonic culture as such.

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<sup>12</sup> Meel, Peter. *Tussen Autonomie en Onafhankelijkheid. Nederlands-Surinaamse betrekkingen 1954-1961*. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999), 404.

<sup>13</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 392-396.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of Suriname creole does not stand for a person that was born in the colonies. Instead it refers to a population group in the country that consists of persons from African descent, whose ancestors were slaves that were freed after 1863; this in contrast with the maroon population group that is made up of the descendants of runaway slaves.

<sup>15</sup> Edwin Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Henk E. Chin and Hans Buddingh'. *Surinam. Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Pinter, 1987), 163-164.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 67, 93.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 6-7.

Were we to categorise the Sticusa according to this analytical distinction the organisation would fit just well in civil society, meaning we are dealing here with another example of colonial continuity.

Yet it is my belief that the operations of the Sticusa fails to resonate with the notion of cultural imperialism. This understanding is based on two reasons. The first is related to the concept of cultural imperialism itself. Historian Ryan Dunch identifies certain substantial problems with the idea of cultural imperialism. To begin, the concept lacks an academic sense of cohesiveness as it is mobilized by a diverse range of academics in multiple ways.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, the notion of historical agency is often dodged in analyses of cultural imperialism – something for which Said’s work, for instance, is often criticized.<sup>21</sup> This is often revealed in the use of the passive voice (“the need was felt to educate the indigenous people only in order to enable them to function adequately in the European-dominated ... structures”), or by attributing an imaginary intentionality to abstract forces (“United States cultural imperialism has two major goals, one economic and one political ...”).<sup>22</sup> Continuing with a third problem, Dunch states that many models of culture as a field of ideological domination often imply that change comes about by outside (read ‘Western’) forces.<sup>23</sup> This is an inherent deterministic approach to the idea of human social life, and it raises the question where imposition ends and where the creative agency of individuals enters. I will return to this point later in this introduction.

A last problem raised by Dunch is the question of measure, or how to assess something like ‘cultural dominance’. Related to this is the thought of essentialism in the approach of cultures and of nations. Cultural imperialism is often interpreted as the pausing and/or regressing of (a) particular culture(s) by a dominant foreign culture. According to Dunch, this implies that ‘a cultural *status quo ante* can be identified, and moreover that that cultural system was not subject to internal contestation and was thus likely to remain unchanged in the absence of foreign contact.’<sup>24</sup>

When we apply this last problem to the case of Suriname we finally get to the second consideration: the complex history of Suriname during the period 1954-1975 impedes critical analysis of

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<sup>20</sup> Ryan Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity.” *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (2002): 305-306.

<sup>21</sup> Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism”, 303-304.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 304.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 305, 307.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 305.

cultural imperialism employed by the Sticusa, simply because it reveals that there was no clear-cut definition of Surinamese culture at the time. The only pre-colonial culture in Suriname was that of the indigenous peoples of the Arawaks and the Kalinago (more commonly known as the Caribs). But during the course of history their numbers plummeted and their cultures assimilated with that of the maroons that fled from the colonial sugar plantations. With this I do not mean that there was no sense of cultural identity (as we will notice later on in this thesis quite the opposite was the case). Rather, in the multi-ethnic country there was no consensus on what was the righteous *national* culture. With the arrival of indentured labourers from India, China, and Java, this internal contestation only grew more significantly. A cultural *status quo ante* in Suriname is thus hard to identify.

Seen in this light, an analysis of the workings of the Sticusa in Suriname that is fuelled by the notion of continuity seems out of place. At the heart of this thesis is the question whether the second Sticusa was a bastion of Dutch colonial activities, dressed in a new jacket, or the opposite: that it denoted a break with the past and facilitated Surinamese cultural change. The main argument is that the foundation was not an apologist of continuity. It did not operate as a hegemonic institution that imposed Dutch culture on Surinamese society. Instead, it operated as one of several actors that contested for cultural dominance in a country that was in desperate search for a national culture. Through its action it created possibilities for cultural change. At the most basic level this thesis is thus about chance and change after colonialism – about a break with the past and the way in which this manifested itself. In order to support this argument a few questions have to be asked. The first part of this thesis deals with the changes within the foundation itself and its surroundings; it asks how it differed from its previous incarnation, and what support and resistance it received in Suriname. The second part delves deeper into the activities of the Sticusa and its sister organisation, the Cultural Centre Suriname (CCS). What activities did they support, and what kind of material did the organisations disseminate through the country? How did these lead to change? It also pays attention to the manner in which the activities of the Sticusa were received in Suriname; at what rate? Did they bring change or continuity?

On a more abstract level there is another matter this thesis addresses: the status of Suriname as a colonial or post-colonial state. Culture here is of utmost importance. I believe that in the period

of autonomy in Suriname, culture has to be seen in line with the country's historical trajectory. As we know today, just like the personage of Slagveer supposedly knew in 1988, this pre-independence phase was characterized by zealous cultural activity; writers, poets, playwrights intentionally sought to delineate the country in a cultural sense, and by doing so, gave it a fitting place in the minds of its inhabitants. This notion reverberates with Benedict Anderson's study *Imagined Communities* that reviews the essence of the nation. Following Anderson, works of literature helped to construct an imagined and inherently limited sovereign community.<sup>25</sup> The dissemination of novels form what Anderson calls 'print capitalism', a phenomenon that is instrumental to the formation of both nationalism and the nation. I extend this definition of Anderson to also include music, art, and knowledge – understood here as knowledge about Suriname as is manifested in historical and anthropological reflections – as agents in the production of a shared feeling and the constitution of an imagined community. These conventions in Suriname were often employed for, or attached to, the ideal of nationhood. Forms of cultural expression in Suriname during the period of nationhood had, to many, a profound formative potential.

The realisation that culture in the period of autonomy was often a conduit for the urgently felt matter of nationalism and/or nationhood forms the basis of my methodological approach to the source material I consulted. I am convinced that cultural expression was not a disinterested matter, even if the artists *a priori* were not concerned with nationalism at all; there always was someone who projected on it the rise of a nation. And then there are the concepts of change and the creative agency of individuals that were mentioned earlier on in this introduction. In order to back away from the image of the second Sticusa as a neo-colonialist institution, I rely on the analytical framework developed by Dunch. This means that when analysing archival information, one must recognize multiple possibilities, creative potential, and of course change.<sup>26</sup> These criteria ask that when analysing the sources, one often has to read against the grain. But it also requires that both the intent as well as the reception of cultural activities need to be considered. Examining from this perspective what was written in correspondence and other documents in the Sticusa archives held by

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<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Joanna Cruickshank, "Introduction." *Itinerario* 34, no. 3 (2010): 7.

the National Archive in The Hague, as well as contemporaneous academic, journalistic, and literary texts offers an insight into the way in which the activities of the Sticusa led to change and the production of new actions, habits, and skills. The Sticusa archive offers possibilities for they give an insightful look in the organisational part of the foundation; present here are intentions and ruminations on policy. Yet, they have one main disadvantage, and that is that all the documents lack a self-reflective element as is illustrated in the abovementioned citation from the Annual Report of 1953. Furthermore, they tell us next to nothing about the reception of the activities that were organised with support of the foundation. For this information I turn to the other writings on cultural developments in Suriname from the time, for these are numerous and detailed, although they sometimes can be somewhat biased and are not always representative for the entire Surinamese society. To bridge this gap I frequently turn to previous work done by researchers of Suriname on cultural developments in Suriname during the autonomy.

The Surinamese path towards independence is in need of a more critical historical revision. By saying this I do not intend to downplay the academic work on the history of Suriname that has been done by others. On the contrary, I believe their work has been imperative for a better understanding of both Suriname as the Netherlands. Yet, when seen in light of international relations between these countries after the Second World War and the implementation of the Charter, the focus is often on continuity. And in the most basic sense there was a great deal of continuity, but a preoccupation with that what remained the same might cloud the vision of new significant changes. Although the intentions are good, this can often backfire. To illustrate this I return to Dunch, who states that ‘the discourse of cultural imperialism,’ in this thesis also understood as continuity of colonial practices, ‘originating in opposition to Western cultural hegemony, can ironically lead to a conclusion which is profoundly Eurocentric in its denial of agency or autonomy to non-Western populations.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism”, 307.

# **I. The Playing Field**

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## Sticusa West: a second chance or a new beginning?

Out of the ashes of the first Sticusa rose a new organisation that had the same purpose and goals as its predecessor, yet with a slightly different focus. The changes that the 1954 Charter brought affected the cultural foundation in that it no longer focused on the Netherlands Indies. And the relation between the Netherlands and the new-born Republic of Indonesia were fraught to say the least – the colony broke away from the metropole in a series of bloody colonial wars that severely damaged the bilateral ties. Henceforth, Sticusa stood for cultural cooperation between the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles; the abbreviation, however, remained unaffected. Furthermore, with the Charter old asymmetrical power structures within the Kingdom of the Netherlands shifted and evened. It would be wrong to say that the ties within the Kingdom evened completely. As historian Remco Raben states, after the Second World War the idea was developed in Dutch politics that it was a duty to the overseas territories to bring welfare and further-reaching autonomy.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, there was still a belief of dominance but it did not mean complete authority over the overseas parts of the Kingdom.

The founding of the second Sticusa (often called Sticusa West, but here otherwise referred to as Sticusa) coincided with the founding of another cultural organisation that, although it is not at the centre of attention in this thesis, is worth mentioning. This organisation, the Dutch Institute for International Cultural Affairs, was established in order to propagate European (read ‘Dutch’) cultural values in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. Both organisations were chaired by Hendrik Jan Reinink, the Secretary General of the department of Education, Arts, and Sciences. Reinink was an authority in the cultural field, also chairing a committee, founded by the Dutch government, which investigated matters concerning cultural affairs. In this position he was a great advocate of the abolishment of the first Sticusa.<sup>29</sup> In 1955 he was appointed to the position of Director General for the Arts and Foreign and Cultural Affairs, a position that was created with Reinink in mind. In both roles he strove for a ‘more significant freedom for the arts, and possibilities to evolve for the ar-

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<sup>28</sup> Remco Raben, “Nederland en de (post)koloniale wereld” in *De wereld volgens Nederland. Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in historisch perspectief*, ed. Jacco Pekelder, Remco Raben and Mathieu Segers, ed. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015), 152-177.

<sup>29</sup> Gert J. Oostindie, “Cultuurbeleid en de loden last van een kolonial verleden: Sticusa, 1948-1988.” *Sticusa Jaarverslag 1988*, 40, no. 1 (1989): 67.

tists.<sup>30</sup> The Dutch government at the time, and in particular his direct superior Jo Cals, the Minister of Education, Arts, and Sciences, did not want the Sticusa to be the only party that executed the foreign cultural policy of the Netherlands; Cals saw a role to be played by his own department, together with that of the Department of Foreign Affairs.<sup>31</sup> Reinink's personal vision, however, was more akin to the operations of the Sticusa in that he was in strong favour of little to no government interference. According to Reinink, the main purpose of the government was to fund private cultural endeavours through subsidies, and that international cultural affairs should be treated in the exact same manner.<sup>32</sup>

The Sticusa was just that: a private organisation that was funded by the Dutch government. Although this was the same case with its first manifestation the first Sticusa did not have the chairmanship of Reinink. This is a significant change for it allows us to question the relationship between the foundation and the Dutch government. As an exponent of artistic freedom, and minimal government interference in the organisation of the cultural world, Reinink had the potential to be an important instigator for cultural development in Suriname. Furthermore, it makes it more plausible to say that the efforts that were made by the employers of Sticusa were that of experts in the cultural field, rather than official government policy.

When we take the Sticusa's headquarters into account, its character as a private organisation gains even more valence. The J.J. Viottastraat 41, based in one of the wealthier districts of Amsterdam, was a relatively bland building built in the first decade of the twentieth century. With its brick façade and small windows the organisation it housed was obscured. Maybe this led the director of the first Sticusa, the poet Ed Hoornik, to avoid the insides of the building at all costs. Rather he chose to spend his working days in the lobby of the prestigious Hilton Hotel that overlooked the office. According to writer Guus Luijters, whenever Hoornik received a phone call, his secretary would hold out a piece of paper with a picture of a phone. He then called his secretary on the hotel

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<sup>30</sup> A.P. van Vliet, "Reinink, Hendrik Jan (1901-1979)" *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, last modified November 12, 2013, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn4/reinink> accessed on Jul. 17, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Van Vliet, "Reinink, Hendrik Jan (1901-1979).

<sup>32</sup> E.J. Brill, *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, 1980-1981* (Leiden: Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde, 1982), 202.

phone, who in turn put the phone's horn next to the one in his office.<sup>33</sup> The message it emits is fortified by its plainness. Originally, the houses were meant for living, not for housing an organisation that had ties reaching into the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. But the very fact that the Sticusa ended up residing in the Viottastraat underscores its identity as a private organisation. It portrayed an organisation that had one foot in society, and did not need the stature of government buildings in order to work. Neither was it located in The Hague, epicentre of Dutch political and policy-making power. Instead, it seems that the Sticusa operated on a different bandwidth.

There is another reason to take the building in which the Sticusa resided into consideration; with the *Rijksmuseum* and the *Concertgebouw* around the corner, the base of operations seemed to be firmly embedded in the Dutch cultural world. With the country's prestigious national museum and concert hall a few steps away, it is easy to imagine how the Sticusa workers were influenced by its conceptualisations of heritage and other forms of cultural expression. And then there is the realisation that Amsterdam, after the loss of the Netherlands Indies and the introduction of the 1954 Charter, was the capital of a colonial empire in decay – a city in transition, or a city undergoing change.

Let us now turn to the goals of the organisation that were written down during the establishment. The second Sticusa was described by its founding fathers as an organisation that had as its task to provide cultural assistance and help in accordance with the goals and guidelines that were set by the Charter.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the organisation tried to strengthen the cultural ties between the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles. To achieve this, the Sticusa would maintain continuous contact with the sister organisations in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles and, at the same time, cooperate with the governments and other cultural institutions in these parts of the Kingdom. Here Sticusa activities would primarily focus on the distribution of knowledge, means, and persons. Often recurring in the statutes is the notion that the Sticusa aimed to 'raise and multiply the interest for and about Western Culture, especially in her Dutch expressions' in Suriname

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<sup>33</sup> Guus Luijters, *Klein geluk Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 255, concept notes of the meeting of the Board of General Policy with Jonkers and Thijs on Wednesday evening August 14, 1956.

and the Netherlands Antilles.<sup>35</sup> In exchange it would try to expand the interest in, and knowledge about, the cultures of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles in the Netherlands.

It is possible to discern a certain prepossession with Western culture in the way the statutes reflect on the goals of the Sticusa. This is mostly noticeable in the way culture is written with a capital C when it concerns Western, European, or Dutch culture, and the opposite in the references to cultures of the Caribs. According to conceptual historian Jan Ifversen there is a lingual connection between concept and vocabulary.<sup>36</sup> Inherent to this division in culture might lay a difference in how cultures are perceived. Culture with a capital C, Ifversen writes, is often imbued with an essentialist and universal understanding; in the case of these statutes this means that according to the Sticusa Western culture was predominant.<sup>37</sup> The meaning of such an understanding is that the Sticusa did not approach its work in Suriname as a completely neutral organisation.

In this case there is a sense of continuity with the first Sticusa, and this raises the question to the extent in which the second organisation drew from the activities of its predecessor. I have already mentioned in the introduction that the first Sticusa lacked the self-reflective capabilities to stop its own annulment. It seems that the second Sticusa did not learn from these mistakes. The founders of the organisation were certainly aware of the fact that the first Sticusa made errors. Yet, they downplayed them to simple mistakes. ‘Like every other organisation,’ is written in a memorandum by ‘a few notables in the cultural life’ dated March 1956, ‘it made mistakes, but – paradoxical as this might sound – even for these mistakes we should be thankful, for out of these wrongdoings we can draw precious and valuable lessons.’<sup>38</sup> The general tone of the message is positive. Further in the note is unanimously agreed that before the arrival of the Sticusa there were no cultural relations within the parts of the Kingdom; that it was *terra incognita* – chaotic, underdeveloped, and without oversight – to which the Sticusa brought order and structure. ‘In this area,’ the authors continue, ‘the Sticusa was pioneering.’<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 208, copy of the certificate of establishment of the Sticusa, December 28, 1955.

<sup>36</sup> Jan Ifversen, “Europe and European Culture. A conceptual analysis.” *European Societies*, 4, no. 4 (2002): 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ifversen, “Europe and European Culture”, 3-8.

<sup>38</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no., 254, memorandum of a few notables involved in the cultural life of Paramaribo, March 1956.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

The fact that at the moment of writing Suriname was only elevated to the status of partner within the Kingdom for two years makes this an insensible statement. Cultural relations between the Netherlands and Suriname did not exist in the years before the founding of the first organisation simply because of the former's dominance over the latter. Cultural relations between the metropole and the periphery were non-existent due to the asymmetrical power relations between the two. This ignorance towards its own situation is even more highlighted by the fact that the notables saw the loss of Indonesia as the primary reason for the demise and liquidation of the first organisation; they do not even mention the maladministration of the first Sticusa. It shows that the second Sticusa was founded with a kind of childish naïveté.

Yet, there is a positive side to this. For, besides this profound naïveté, the document is also characterised by an unwavering optimism. The general tone of the message is positive, even proactive given the fresh incentive it offers for future activities. Instead of looking at the document as the continuation of the first Sticusa's unfortunate operations, it is far more interesting to perceive it as a manifest for change. The people in the new Sticusa saw the organisation as something new – they did not linger on the past, but rather focused on the present and the future. Mistakes that were made in the past now are employed as lessons for future activities.

### Cultural Enforcers

On most occasions the Sticusa operated in Suriname through a local cultural institution that was founded in the second half of the 1940s. This organisation, the CCS, had as its primary goal to support Surinamese cultural life through organising, monitoring, and supervising an amalgam of activities.<sup>40</sup> Among its successes were the institution of a Folk University – directed by Lou Lichtveld – and the establishment of a plan for the screening and distributions of films.<sup>41</sup> At the ten year anniversary of the CCS a play was performed in its honour, called *De Negen Muzen* (The Nine Muses) that reflected on the activities of the organisation:

*Tien jaar zijn er om te bouwen  
Tien jaar is maar een korte tijd  
Wordt Suriname een heerlijk paradijs*

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<sup>40</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 403.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 404.

*Merkbaar voor mannen en vrouwen*

*Schoonheid bloeit in Suriname  
Als wij maar eendrachtig zijn en blijven  
Zie 't success begint te dagen  
Over 't land, stad en plein.<sup>42</sup>*

Ten years we had to build  
Ten years is but a short time  
Suriname will turn in a delightful paradise  
For men and women alike

Beauty flourishes in Suriname  
As long we are and remain united  
See the success is dawning  
Over the country, city and square.

Yet, after ten years it was time for the CCS to change. In 1956 the Sticusa wanted to expand its influence over the CCS. For that to succeed it was necessary that the CCS altered its organisational structure so that it would be more akin to that of the Sticusa. The latter was made up of seven members from the private sector, three members from the ranks of the Dutch government, one representative of the Surinamese cultural world and also one cultural representative of the Netherlands Antilles.<sup>43</sup> The call of the Sticusa came out of the wish for 'a better coordination of the works of Sticusa and the Caribs and more intensive deliberation with the governments of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles about the policy in the West.'<sup>44</sup> The appeal was two-sided. On the one hand, the Sticusa wanted the Surinamese government to be more actively involved with the cultural activities that were organised under the auspices of the CCS. 'With regards to Suriname it would be desirable to have two seats in the CCS Board especially reserved for the Surinamese government,' is written in a note by the secretary of the Sticusa, Tino Thijs.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the Sticusa wanted to reinforce its grasp on the CCS by establishing a seat in the Board that had to be given to the Sticusa representative in Suriname. The Sticusa thus had a profound investment in the CCS.

However, these were not the only changes to the CCS that were requested by the Sticusa: the Dutch cultural organisation asked for even more alterations. These were aimed at increasing the

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<sup>42</sup> Marc de Koninck and Archie Sumter (eds). *K'ranti! De Surinaamse pers 1774-2008*. (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2008), 116.

<sup>43</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 255, travel report of the trip to Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles from the secretary July-August, 1956.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

proficiency with which the Surinamese organisation operated. For inspiration, so the idea went, it could look at its sister organisations on Curaçao and Aruba. Especially in Aruba the cultural life was organised efficiently. There they had special representatives for every cultural activity who all were members of the Board of the Cultural Centre of Aruba; one for folk music, schools, the theatre group, the movie league, museums, the people's university, and one for ballet. Thijs believed that due to this system, the cultural organisation in Aruba was perceived by its inhabitants as the sole and authoritative cultural organisation on the island.<sup>46</sup>

It needs to be said that Aruba, in a demographical sense, differed greatly from the multi-ethnic Suriname. In order to tackle this problem, the CCS could choose a division of the Board that suited the need of every group in society. Yet, a consequence of this would be that not every cultural activity was represented in concordance with the country's demographics. A solution put forward by Thijs was to install special subcommittees that would replace the already existing committees of the CCS. Subsequently, these subcommittees would be concerned with one particular cultural expression, for instance music, art, or literature. Every activity surrounding a cultural expression was to be coordinated by its conjoined sub-committee. All the chairmen and women were to get a seat in an advisory council of the CCS. The chair of this council had to be given an advising vote during the meetings of the Board of the CCS.<sup>47</sup> In the vision of Thijs, this was an effective way to let the CCS Board represent the diverse groups and beliefs in Surinamese society. And even more, it was an opportunity for the Surinamese foundation to develop itself as the single authoritative institution concerning cultural activities in Suriname.

The main message was clear: the CCS had to keep up with its time. The underlying idea was that the cultural centre lost its topicality in the ten years that it was active. When seen in the light of the changes brought by the Charter that Suriname underwent during the time, the CCS had, according to Thijs, to undergo even more structural changes. He elaborates:

In the first place people need to ask themselves whether it is right that the Surinamese government has no official influence at all on the operations of an organisation that was founded to be a centre for

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<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

cultural promotion in Suriname. [...] Of course, too much governmental influence on the area of culture is undesirable. Yet the total lack of said influence is just as detrimental.<sup>48</sup>

According to Thijs, the activities of the CCS lacked vision. The general idea was that the plans of the CCS were uncoordinated and that they did not affect Surinamese society in the long run. Long-term plans were the solution for this problem. This brought forward the dilemma of what exactly the goal of the CCS was:

We need to take the presence in Suriname of representatives of so many races and cultures into consideration. Do we perhaps aspire to the conservation of the distinctiveness of these cultures, or must we follow a politics of culture that is placed in the service of the striving for national integration?<sup>49</sup>

This was underscored in the budget of the CCS that according to Thijs was not substantial. In the budget came forward that the cultural centre was too focused on projects that stood alone and did not give a slight notion of interconnectedness. Added to this was the realisation that the activities of the CCS were not spread out into each layer of society. It rather spoke to the needs of an elite; to mostly the creole part of society. This is a rather interesting observation, since it shows that one of the men at the helm of the Sticusa was aware of the critiques on his organisation's and its sister organisation's workings. The final comment that Thijs put forward in his note was that the judicial structure of the CCS did not resonate with its operations. For Thijs, the most undesirable part of this structure was the lack of financial transparency:

The expenditure of the funds obtained through the Sticusa, is solely required to be held accountable to the Sticusa and is, therefore, withdrawn from the public. This status is improper for it concerns funds of which the expenditure is of great importance to Surinamese society.<sup>50</sup>

For the most part, Thijs concludes, the CCS falls short of being coordinators of cultural life in Suriname because they did not have the grand scheme of things in mind when executing their policy. In order to change this, Thijs prescribed the CCS with four points that he deemed necessary in order to change things. He put forward the outlines of a plan to develop a multi-annual plan in which was put forth guidelines for a concrete and purposeful cultural policy. He was inspired by the eco-

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<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

nomical ten-year-plan that was developed and executed by the Surinamese government in order to boost its national economy. To meet up with this plan, Thijs elaborate,

The financing of the cultural needs to be structured with a budget that requires to be drafted annually and that takes into consideration expenditure schemes of full planning periods. The financial means should not only come from the Netherlands, but also from Suriname – of which one should also think of private initiatives, beside government contributions.<sup>51</sup>

In order to meet the requirements of the plan, the organisations needed to strive for the uplifting of the cultural level of the Surinamese populace. Special attention needed to be given to the people living in the districts that had considerable disadvantages in comparison with the urban population living in the cities bordering the Atlantic coast.

Thijs' plans were made reality in 1958, when they were partly executed by the CCS. This episode in the history of the relation between the Sticusa and the CCS shows the extent to which the latter relied on the former. The secretary was able to guide and judge the operation of his sister organisation with a profound freedom; he deemed himself worthy of scrutinising their involvements and criticising it. But the message he conveyed was one of change, and he did so under the impression that these changes were beneficial to the Surinamese populace; after all, they were focused on making the cash flow transparent to the public, increasing the efficiency of the CCS, and its ideological long-term goals. And perhaps the most important part of this account is that a fair share of his plans was eventually executed.

### Opposition from below

The strongest opponents of the Sticusa came from the side of cultural nationalists. Poet and nationalist Robin Ravales – who wrote under the pseudonym of R. Dobru – described the employees of the Sticusa as *culturele pottenkijkers*, meaning something like cultural peeping toms.<sup>52</sup> Whenever the Sticusa organized lectures, Ravales stated, the halls would be filled with Dutch persons. In his function of cultural nationalist, Ravales was a prominent member of the student organisation *Wie Eegie Sanie* (Sranan Tongo for 'our own things', from now on referred to as WES), and established the Surinamese Nationalist Movement in 1959. This solidified his shift from cultural nationalism to

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>52</sup> Michiel van Kempen. *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur. Deel 1 & 2.* (Paramaribo: Okopipi, 2002), 32.

political nationalism. The focus in this section is on the cultural nationalism that was carried out by WES and other cultural nationalists.

For the Surinamese cultural nationalists the Sticusa carried with it the stigma of cultural imperialism. This negative stance was most noticeable in the works of WES. Since this organisation plays such an enormous role in the play that revolved around cultural cooperation in Suriname and the Sticusa, a deeper description of this organisation, as well as the dynamic relations between these two, is appropriate. WES was founded in 1950 by law student Eddy Bruma. At that time, WES consisted of a small number of men with diffuse backgrounds, ranging from students, labourers, to artists who all served the goal of culturally freeing Suriname. After his time in the Netherlands was over, Bruma transported the organisation to Suriname. There he and his associates developed the organisation even further; constituting themselves in the long run as a presence that could not be ignored.

According to literary historian Michiel van Kempen, WES was ‘a group that emphatically manifested being different – and not only based on the colour of their skin.’<sup>53</sup> The experience that bonded the members of WES was a mutual feeling of difference that was present during their reception in the Netherlands. In other words, they experienced a profound feeling of existential otherness which they transferred into every vein of their organisation. The primary aim of the organisation was to decolonise the national spirit by developing and ameliorating their own culture. For the nationalists of WES finding a cultural consciousness and identity was of the utmost importance, and they believed it was grounded in the Sranan Tongo.<sup>54</sup> Although Peter Meel debates the extent to which WES was founded on contemporary intellectual theories on colonialism, power, and racism, we can hear the slight echoes of the works of Césaire, Senghor, and Fanon.<sup>55</sup> During their time in Amsterdam, intellectuals were invited to speak – among them Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and W.E.B. DuBois – but these lectures were not systematically organised. WES did not identify or align itself with an international intellectual movement. It led former member and re-

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<sup>53</sup> Michiel van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 84.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Meel, “Dimensies van onafhankelijkheid. De Surinaamse ervaring.” *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2002): 185-203.

searcher of Suriname, Hein van Eersel, to look back at an organisation that laid out a ‘self-imposed isolation’: ‘If an African got lost in Amsterdam we invited him to come and talk with us. But even the international Negro movements we were hardly aware of.’<sup>56</sup>

Instead of joining international movements WES carried out a brand of nationalism that had an introspective nature. In all their appearances WES emphatically indicated that it stood for the interests of the entire population of Suriname – for every ethnicity and cultural that lived between the two rivers that made up the national borders. This idea is underscored by the artist Nola Hatterman, who described WES as ‘an island on which we feel comfortable. We did not have international contacts; it was Suriname for which we stood.’<sup>57</sup>

During a radio broadcast that was aired on April 9, 1951 the grassroots organisation made its introduction in Surinamese society. Bruma brought forward the goals and ideals of the organisation. In his address he also accused people, Surinamese people, who were quite comfortable with appropriating the Dutch culture as their own. For Bruma this formed the core of the problem for it meant the replacement of the cultural Own in order to mimic the colonial culture.<sup>58</sup> This was after all the culture of social mobility, of success. But it also meant, Bruma continues, that he, his parents, and his forefathers were raised with pejorative feelings towards their own cultural beliefs.

‘Do I have a Culture of my own?’ he asks himself further on, after which he starts elaborating on a definition of culture.<sup>59</sup> For him this consisted of three aspects: language, tradition, and the cult or religious practice. He describes them as following:

the language, the means of expression through which man communicate, learns, dictates, decides. In other words: through which he exalts a case in the domain of the mind.

the tradition, that conserves the original in society, distorted and handed over from generation to generation.

the Cult, through which mankind exalts himself to the divine or brings the Divinity to him.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Alex van Stipriaan, “Between Diaspora, (Trans)Nationalism, and American Globalization” in *Caribbean Transnationalism. Migration, Pluralization, and Social Cohesion*, ed. Ruben S. Gowricharn (Lanham: Verloren Editors, 2006), 161.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 68.

<sup>58</sup> B.J. de Roo, *Praatjes voor de West. Wereldomroep en de Antilliaanse en Surinaamse literatuur 1947-1958* (’s-Hertogenbosch: Boxpress, 2014), 89.

<sup>59</sup> De Roo, *Praatjes voor de West*, 90.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem* 90.

The translation of these three pillars of culture to the case of Suriname is, according to WES, the following. Language is for WES the Sranan Tongo, at that time spoken as lingua franca, which was perceived by WES as the pinnacle of Surinamese society. It was formed and shaped in the geographical part of the world that is now Suriname, and as such it was unique.<sup>61</sup> Tradition is translated in something Surinamese as the unperceivable and humble respect for the elderly, together with an indestructible *joie de vivre*, and not to forget the ‘fairy tales, Anansitories and games, [...] theatre, the *banja*, the *doe*, headscarves and *Koto*’.<sup>62</sup> Lastly, the Cult appears in Suriname through its devoutness and mysticism. For WES these three pillars distinguished Surinamese society from a Western or Eastern country and made the country unique in its own way.

In his description of Surinamese culture Bruma emphasizes that ‘every group in society had its share in the constitution and conservation of our culture’, following with an explanation that the fact that the Afro-Surinamese group had the most significant share was due to ‘certain circumstances of a historical nature’.<sup>63</sup> He refers to the fact that the creole and maroons – the Afro-Surinamese groups in Surinamese society – resided in Surinam for a longer period than the population groups from Asia.

Still the activities of WES were regarded by other population groups – and mostly the Hindustanis – as propaganda for the creoles. Their activities were, as Bruma mentioned himself, of an individual nature and not solely focused on creole identity.<sup>64</sup> However, they fell short in their efforts to appeal to other ethnic groups in Suriname. Surinamese Hindustanis were unimpressed by the activities of WES, and brushed it off as mere creole-nationalism.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, WES was accused of being a reactive organisation that did not really come forward with concrete activities. Rather than working on an own contra-identity, WES focused on combatting the culture and colonising power of Sticusa and CCS.<sup>66</sup>

There are at least two instances that show that the WES was not merely a reactive organisation. On July 1, 1957 Bruma organized the first cultural congress of WES in Suriname. Goal of the con-

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<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, 90-91.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 94-95.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, 102.

<sup>66</sup> Sally Price, “Beyond Francophonie. Contextualizing Éloge de la créolité.” *Small Axe*, 21, no. 1 (2017): 206.

gress was to ‘charter wrongdoings in the cultural arena through debates,’ which was mainly focused on the conceptualisation of culture.<sup>67</sup> Although it did not gather a lot of visitors, there is one present party that deserves mentioning: the CCS. For WES the CCS was a proxy organisation of the Sticusa and the main outlet of Dutch cultural imperialism. The presence of the CCS at the conference shows that WES really strived for inclusive cultural policy in Suriname. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that the presence of CCS in Suriname’s developing cultural world was of significant proportions.

Another notable organisation that portrayed the same inwards stance with regards to nationalist culture was the intellectual discussion group KRA. KRA, the name for the soul as it has taken shape in the creole *Winti* religion, was founded in 1958. The goal of the organisation was to enrich the debate surrounding national culture with deeper intellectual meaning by discussing it on a more philosophical level.<sup>68</sup> The organisation grew significantly over the time and it even got its own headquarters in 1963. However, the activities organised by KRA were not solely limited to the mental. A different aspiration was to bring the things they discussed into practice. This brought them on the path of more material means of cultural expression.

A significant success of KRA was the organisation of a large event in 1966: Bigi Spikri – Sranan Tongo for ‘big mirror’. In a report from KRA was written with pride:

When taken in consideration that we wanted to value the own, it was also understandable that we wanted to modernize the beautiful dresses of creole women and give them a more contemporary, 1950s, look. With Bigi Spikri we succeeded in this.<sup>69</sup>

The idea behind the fashion show was to give incentive to the development of an own, characteristic, yet modern Surinamese clothing line. What kept them Surinamese is that, although they resembled modern clothing, they kept their symbolical meaning.<sup>70</sup>

Although the members of the cultural institutions were quite direct in their language when it comes to cultural activities, these demarcations were not as black-and-white as they sound. The poet and nationalist Dobru in first instance refused to go on a study trip to the Netherlands, paid by

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<sup>67</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 93.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 103.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, 103.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, 104.

the Sticusa. It seems that he was not that perseverant with his principles, for years later he flew to the Netherlands for a literary tour on the costs of Sticusa.

What these organisations show is that the dynamics between the cultural institutions were complex. A conclusion that can be drawn is that in no way they were Manichean in nature. Certainly, there was a collision of interests, but these often overlapped. One's resentment to the other was never absolute, and the cultural nationalists – although for some principles were decisive – often used Sticusa funds for travelling and funding their events.

It is important to study these organisations, because their contribution to the reputation of the Sticusa and the CCS was influential. They did not significantly affect the activities of the CCS and the Sticusa, but their outbursts against these organisations helped to lower their prestige in public. It is because of their resentment towards the institutions that the Sticusa went is usually considered a neo-imperial institution in conventional historiography. In their eyes the Dutch cultural foundation would always remain a bastion of colonialism.

The actions of the cultural nationalists in the 1950s and 1960s are also illustrative of the new-found urgency to culture in Suriname. Cultural identity, so it seems, became more and more synonymous to national culture. *Sranan Tongo*, *joie de vivre*, and mysticism were no longer expressions of a particular group in society, but were perceived by WES as expressions of Surinamese subjectivity.

## The Advisory Council

In 1958 the Board for Cultural Cooperation (Racusa) was founded on the initiative of the CCS and the Sticusa. The organisations were under the impression that the cooperation between every cultural organisation in Suriname should be strengthened.<sup>71</sup> Vice-chairman of the Board was Shaw Radhakishun, a radio-maker and apologist for the Hindustani cultural values in Surinamese society. He deliberately tried to distance himself from the activities of WES, which he deemed to be representatives of the creole population group. The Board represented 27 cultural institutions, but because Radhakishun was seated in the Board of Radhakishun the WES abandoned the thought of joining. Ultimately the Racusa was abolished. It did not succeed in keeping its pledge to coordinate the cultural activities in the Caribbean. In its place was introduced the Advisory Council of Cultural Cooperation that was founded in 1961. The majority of its tasks were the same as the Racusa – combining the strengths of multiple cultural organizations for a more cohesive cultural world – but that was not the sole reason it was founded. In the years it has been active in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, the work of the Sticusa shifted from cultural cooperation to cultural developmental aid. This was not an initial goal of the foundation. On request of the governments of Suriname and the islands of the Antilles, the Advisory Council had as its task to even the cultural cooperation and diminish developmental aid.

With the founding of the Advisory Council the governments of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname could influence the cultural policy of the Sticusa. The governments were of the opinion that the cultural life was increasingly characterised by the activities of the Dutch foundation.<sup>72</sup> The most substantial difference between developmental aid and cooperation is that the former affects society more influentially. But ‘insofar this could lead to concrete projects the management was entrusted to the Sticusa anyway.’<sup>73</sup>

For WES the establishment of the Advisory Council was not deemed contributory for the advancement of their own cultural ideals. On February 11, 1961, WES and KRA, together with some

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<sup>71</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 406.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, 406.

<sup>73</sup> Oostindie, “Cultuurbeleid en de loden last van een koloniaal verleden”, 71.

other organisations that were active in the fields of culture, politics and the economic published a resolution in which they turned against the council. In it they stated amongst others that:

- 1) The establishment of this Royal Advisory Council for cultural activities flagrantly infringed upon the independence of the cultural fields in Suriname, that had been developed with so many sacrifices;
- 2) the organisations are completely capable of deciding how to give purpose to and organise our own cultural life, and therefore foreign interference can only be met with resistance;
- 3) hence, the Royal Council can only be seen as an attempt by a few colonial satellites, reactionary in nature, that are supported by foreign privies, to destroy our self-obtained cultural independence;
- 4) the organisations considerate it as their duty towards the Surinamese people to protest this attack on her cultural integrity with urge.<sup>74</sup>

One of the other problems was that the organisations did not support the chosen representatives for the Surinamese seats in the Board. The primary reason was that the men in question, Albert Quintus Bosz and Lou Lichtveld, were seen as being part of the assimilated, creole elite.<sup>75</sup> From the three representatives ‘[WES] only deems one person, [Hugo Pos], worthy of representing Suriname in a council concerning national cultural affairs.’<sup>76</sup>

In a reaction to this resistance by the nationalist organisations, the CCS, proponent of the establishment of the Advising Council, published a public appeal. It was a call for unity and coherence. According to the plea, which was published in the relatively new newspaper *De Ware Tijd*, the development of a Surinamese culture was only possible

when ALL groups in society, in a WELL-MEANING way – with complete appreciation of each other’s separate cultural elements, yet without the predominant group ambitions that could possibly harm this communal goal – would bundle ALL their strength in order to TOGETHER put forth these goals. Therefore, the CCS CAN, nor MAY contribute to the promotion of a cultural politics in Surinam that can excite detrimental contradictions, right when there is need for cooperation!<sup>77</sup>

This episode in the history of Surinamese cultural cooperation illustrates the internal contestation present in Surinamese society. Although there certainly was the wish to cooperate, this effort was severely impeded by the clashing of swords. Cultural nationalist had an aversion to Sticusa and its sister organisation CCS – they accused them of cultural imperialism on numerous occasions –

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<sup>74</sup> Found in: Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 92.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, 92.

<sup>76</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 407.

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, 407-408.

but it was not the only party against which they turned their backs. Nor was there universal support from Surinamese society for their claims of national culture.

What it further illustrates is the potential of the Sticusa to change the structure in which it operated. It did not solely operate as an institution that dominated the cultural world in Suriname as was often claimed by the cultural nationalists. Rather, it stuck to a more cohesive agenda that was aimed at combining the strengths of the multiple cultural organisations present in Suriname. At the same time, the cultural nationalists did not cooperate within the frameworks of the Racusa and Advisory Council, therefore completely shutting them of from any pro-active action.

## II. Activities

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## Literature

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In the last pages we have seen how a national cultural consciousness was growing in Suriname. Together with more autonomy this process gave incentive to the rise of a Surinamese literature. Yet, at the beginning of the 1950s a distinctive literary tradition had still to be established. Of course the population groups had their own traditions of storytelling, but these were oral traditions that were mostly confined to the own distinctive ethnic groups. Oral traditions of the creoles and maroons revolved around *Anansi Tories* – about the nefarious trickster-spider Anansi – and tales from the past, such as the slave revolt led by the maroon Boni, Paramount Chief of the Alukus.<sup>78</sup> What makes the case for a Surinamese literature even more difficult is the presence of more than nineteen languages in the relatively small country. For literary critic Hilda van Neck-Yoder the existence of these myriad tongues is a keen point. In a Babylonian analogy the lack of one shared language severely hindered the construction of a distinctive literary tradition.<sup>79</sup>

Another hardship was the fact that the majority of these languages were only spoken. They lacked a scriptural counter-part, and as such, they did not need to abide to grammatical or orthographical rules. Furthermore these stories were firmly embedded in multi-disciplinary traditions that contained music and dance. Van Kempen writes how the oral tradition is part of a holistic framework, in which ‘the distinction between sacred and profane texts, amusement and education is in general less sharp than it is in western cultures.’<sup>80</sup> Added to this is the notion that these practices are often connected to status and structure: ‘very important is the way texts are performed, the “ritual performance”, and texts nearly always belong to a larger unity with song and dance.’<sup>81</sup> It is thus important to realise that the Surinamese literary tradition was not easily transplanted to a scriptural medium. This of course does not mean that Suriname was deprived of writers until the second half of the twentieth century.

One of the Surinamese authors who tried to establish a Suriname literary tradition was Henny de Ziel, known under the pseudonym Trefossa. For him this meant the flourishing and constitution

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<sup>78</sup> Price, “Beyond Francophonie. Contextualizing *Éloge de la créolité*”, 206.

<sup>79</sup> Eithne B Carlin “Of Riches and Rhetoric. Language in Suriname.” In *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society*, eds, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2001), 221-222.

<sup>80</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 187.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*.

of Sranan Tongo in scripture. Van Neck-Yoder refers to Trefossa's poem *Kopenhagen* in that regard as one of his most meaningful works. De Ziel wrote this poem while visiting the capital of Denmark. Not only was the poem written in Sranan Tongo, it also contains the birth of Suriname as a textual identity – it is one of the first instances in which Suriname is manifested in literature.<sup>82</sup>

In the development of a Surinamese textual identity, three themes are brought to the fore: language, voice, and address, accompanied by the question 'how to invent on paper a written language that represents speech, oral culture and a complex unwritten history?'<sup>83</sup> Because these themes play a significant part in the development of literature, Van Neck-Yoder concludes, the shape Surinamese literature takes on in the twentieth century 'is highly self-reflexive, drawing attention to its fictionality and to the textuality of its representation.'<sup>84</sup> It is the transformation of a tradition that is oral, communal and private to one that is the exact opposite: textual, individual, and public.

Surinamese authors of the twentieth century – Trefossa, Bea Vianen, Albert Helman, Edgard Cairo, Wim Bos Verschuur, R. Dobru; the list goes on – changed the state of literature in Suriname. 'They introduce[d] new subject matter; they create[d] new voices on paper; and, as tricksters addressing a highly diverse audience, they invent[ed] the very language within which to write.'<sup>85</sup> This is once more underlined by Hugo Pos, himself a writer of the twentieth century, who wrote in a reflection on Surinamese literature:

Suriname was their protagonist, antagonist, tritagonist. They did not write other roles. The writers wrote prose and poetry about Suriname, its history of slavery, its abuses, and its dreams of the future. [...] It was a period of uncurbed and naïve optimism [...] nihilism and defeatism were concepts without meaning.<sup>86</sup>

The period during the Autonomy was thus of critical importance for the establishment of a literary tradition that was inherently Surinamese. As is brought forward in this short reflection on the nature of literature in Suriname, the maturation revolved around a hybridisation of three

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<sup>82</sup> Hilda van Neck-Yoder, "'Yo gowtu kankan', Treasures, Translators and Tricksters. Twentieth-Century Literature from Suriname" in *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society*, eds, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, 244-250.

<sup>83</sup> Van Neck-Yoder, "Yo gowtu kankan", 244-250.

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem 265.

<sup>86</sup> Hugo Pos, "Herinneringen." *Maatstaf*, 29, no. 1 (1981): 62.

concepts: language, voice, and address. Where authors as Trefossa, or his literary predecessor J.G.A. Koenders (1886-1957), emphasized the use of Sranan Tongo, others put more weight on voice and address. As a result, the literary tradition in Suriname was in complete analogy with its society: diverse, divided, and moreover in change.<sup>87</sup>

But what role did Sticusa and the CCS then play in this field? The organisations never operated under a clear and cohesive header programme when it comes to literature.<sup>88</sup> The CCS, backed by Sticusa funds, organised writing courses, but these were primarily aimed at the education of playwrights. Nor did the CCS publish works of literature. As such the chance that the Sticusa played a decisive part in the development of these literatures is negligible, and with that, also its reach as a presumable institute for cultural dominance.

Still, it is possible that the activities of the Sticusa and the CCS shaped parts of it. Abovementioned authors were all, one way or another, involved in works of Sticusa and the CCS. Some, Lou Lichtveld and Hugo Pos, got to influence CCS work on an administrative level. For others the importance of the two cultural organisations was more in terms of financial assistance. Many authors were offered the opportunity to go Europe for training, lectures or inspiration. These trips were organised and funded by the Sticusa.

As is described above, the trip to Europe that inspired Trefossa to write *Kopenhagen* was of great importance for the constitution of a Surinamese literature. It was on strangers tide that he felt he truly belonged to 'Sranan'. No longer was he a simple poet who sung to the anthropomorphic manifestation of Suriname – no, in a surprising turn of events he became its subject.<sup>89</sup> As Van Neck-Yoder states, the 'you' became 'I'. The underpinning of the poem is that the existence of Suriname in distant places became possible, and even is fortified by the experience of otherness. The resemblance with the experience of the founders of WES cannot be left unnoticed. They too endured an existential feeling of otherness and this shaped their own experience of Surinamese identity. What then would have been the experiences of the other authors that went to Europe or the Netherlands on a trip funded by the Sticusa? Seeing that belonging is a key topic of importance in

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<sup>87</sup> Pos, "Herinneringen", 68.

<sup>88</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 28.

<sup>89</sup> Van Neck-Yoder, "Yo gowtu kankan", 247-250.

their works, these trips might have strengthened their feelings of belonging (or resentment) towards Suriname.

Sticusa did not only send Surinamese authors to Europe and the Netherlands, they also brought Dutch writers to the Caribs. Among them were authors like Harry Mulisch, Cees Nooteboom and W.F. Hermans. What bonded these men was a remarkable disinterest in the weal and woe of the overseas *rijksdelen* of the Kingdom. They had not written about Suriname, at least. Nevertheless, a visit by a renowned Dutch writer had the potential to inspire Surinamese to write.

Reality, however, is a lot grimmer. In an interview with Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, Eva Essed-Fruin – who lived in Suriname since 1957 and was a Board member of the CCS, for which she directed the library – on the invitations of Dutch writers to Suriname, said that they were not pleased with the ‘randomly picked literati who gave lectures in the CCS that would have been just as appropriate if they were given in Stadskanaal.’<sup>90</sup> To make it worse, all the applications by the CCS for authors that had any affinity with colonial – or post-colonial – affairs, like Hella S. Haase, were declined by the Sticusa. This had more to do with application procedure than with the personal preferences of the Sticusa, as Essed-Fruin described: ‘An author visited the Sticusa in Amsterdam and gave notice, in one way or another, that he would like to visit the tropics. It was usually quite affordable to send these writers to Suriname and the Antilles.’<sup>91</sup>

These visits usually did not meet their expectations. They did not lead to interesting and fruitful cross-pollination of literary ideas. Meetings either took place with other Dutch people in Suriname, or did not take place at all. Neither did the visits incite the Dutch authors to write about Suriname or the Antilles. Only W.F. Herman did, but that can be seen as an attempt to voice his discontent with the Sticusa, who did not orchestrate his visit to Suriname according to his bidding. In reality, the subsidised trips to the Caribs were holidays for the writers; they were chances to experience the more tropical side of the Kingdom.

Poet and WES member Robin Ravales wrote about these visits in his work *Het bonte leven van Suriname*:

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<sup>90</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 410.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, 410.

They send apostles of western culture to us, like Hermans. Cultural busybodies. And when these gentlefolk give lectures here, the Dutch fill the rooms for seventy-five percent. It has been a mistake by our government to not raise the regard of culture. Yet it is a basic need when we want to give the Surinamese a feeling of integrity, of belonging here.<sup>92</sup>

In reality, the authors barely affected the Surinamese cultural world. The visits by the authors were not consequentially organised, nor did it happen on a recurring basis. As Essed-Fruin described, these visits were arbitrary, and happened according to the will of the visitor, not the Sticusa. In fact, as is illustrated by Ravales, they only provided the cultural nationalist with more incentive to turn against the Sticusa.

It seemed that, in the case of literature, the Sticusa meant less to Dutch literature than it did for the rising Surinamese literary tradition. Although the contentual influence on the works of literature as well as on their shape (the language, voice, and address) was negligible, the organisation still succeeded in creating niches of possibility for the growth of a Surinamese literature. These were mostly located in the funded trips to Europe. Rather than forcing the conventions of a Dutch literary tradition on Suriname, the Sticusa created the space in which a whole new tradition could develop in relative freedom.

A field within literature where the Sticusa and its sister organization played a more influential role was in the acquirement and dissemination of books. A few years after its founding, the CCS opened its own library on April 23, 1949. Starting out the only collection that was of considerable proportions was that of child and young adult literature, but that same year the collection was expanded. The library, which up to this day still exists, has grown quite significantly during the years of foundation and 1975. In 1954 they already had to move the library to a bigger building. In that same year the library was visited by 13,700 people (of them 4,800 adults and 8,900 children) and they loaned 12,500 books (15,000 to adults and 10,000 to children).<sup>93</sup> In the following year this number rose with sixty per cent. The library loaned a total of 37,000 books (of them 21,000 to adults and 16,000 to children).<sup>94</sup> In his comprehensive work on Surinamese literature, Van Kempen describes that in 1954 the library ‘owned 61,130 covers, had 125 subscriptions on magazines’, of

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<sup>92</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 91.

<sup>93</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 67.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*.

them thirteen were for children and nine were of foreign origin.<sup>95</sup> Between 1949 and 1976 the number book the library had on loan rose from 7000 to 400,500.<sup>96</sup> Therefore we can state that the library was a medium that had a significant reach in Paramaribo.

The library was thus a considerable success, and it succeeded in spreading books throughout the country. Attached to it, however, was a pervasive Dutch undertone. Especially the shelves with children's literature were filled with Dutch books. Young people who borrowed from the library starting at the beginning of their reading career were thus injected with an inherently Dutch view on literature. However, that does not mean that the ubiquity of this form of literature determined their literary taste. According to a contemporary study, the books that Surinamese children read during their childhood were the same books their Dutch counter-parts read. But when they finished school 'they stowed away *Merijntje Gijzen*, *Majoor Frans*, and *Familie Kegge* for good and started reading *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Claudia*, *The Saint in New York*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, et cetera, instead.'<sup>97</sup> They thus kept on broadening their literary horizons; the Dutch-filled shelves in the library were not obstructing that.

In order to finance its operations, the CCS relied heavily on financial support by the Sticusa. Besides that, they paid the librarian training and took care of their paychecks – this changed, however, in 1966 when the care for the librarians was taken over by the Surinamese government.<sup>98</sup> In the grand scheme of things, the funds that were received by the CCS from the Sticusa were relatively small. In 1975, just before the liquidation of Sticusa, only a mere ten per cent was set aside for activities surrounding literature and theatre together. Yet it was enough to give more incentive to reading in Paramaribo.

The Sticusa also enjoyed its fair share of influence on the library collections, as it occasionally sent books by Dutch authors to the library. One of the first collections that was created for the CCS was an overview of Dutch literature from 1885 until 1948.<sup>99</sup> But a qualification has to be made: the other collections did not display the same Netherlands-centric work as was given by the Sticusa.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibidem, 55.

<sup>96</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>97</sup> Found in: Ibidem 67.

<sup>98</sup> Oostindie, "Cultuurbeleid en de loden last van een koloniaal verleden", 70.

<sup>99</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 55.

On the contrary, the library was in possession of nearly thousand books that almost exclusively focused on Suriname and the Caribs. Until the 1970s the library even possessed a considerable amount of works of a more academic nature, but these were handed to the university library at a later stage.<sup>100</sup>

Besides its large collection, the library was also the site for other activities that were somehow connected to the acquisition of new collections. One must think of exhibitions or competitions that had the goal of making it attractive for the people of Paramaribo to start reading. It was also the stage of some lectures by Surinamese authors on diverging topics. One example is a lecture given by Lou Lichtveld on the meaning of Goethe for Suriname.<sup>101</sup>

There is one other particular episode in the history of the CCS library that is worth mentioning. It is the period of two years, between 1956 and 1958, that the library was directed Henny de Ziel. As we already touched upon in this section, De Ziel was a great advocate for the use of Sranan Tongo in literature. For him, the development of the Sranan Tongo meant the revaluation of the human dignity of the Surinamese.<sup>102</sup> It is from this conviction that he wrote in Sranan Tongo, and his efforts were rewarded with great respect. When in 1959 the old flag — the Dutch tri-colour — was replaced by a new Surinamese one, and the national anthem was replaced with a Surinamese version, Trefossa was asked to write a stanza. De Ziel wrote:

*Opo*  
*Kondreman un opo*  
*Sranagron e kari un*  
*Wans ope tata komopo*  
*Wi mu seti kondre bun*

*Stre def stre*  
*Wi no sa frede*  
*Gado de wi fesiman*

*Heri libi*  
*Te na dede*  
*Wi sa feti*  
*Gi Sranan*

Rise country men, rise  
The soil of Suriname is calling you

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<sup>100</sup> Oostindie, "Cultuurbeleid en de loden last van een koloniaal verleden", 70.

<sup>101</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 26.

<sup>102</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 91.

Where ever our ancestors came from  
We should take care of our country  
We are not afraid to fight  
God is our leader  
Our whole life  
Until our death  
We will fight for Suriname<sup>103</sup>

De Ziel's time as the director of the library was of short duration. When he left in 1958 it was because he fell short of his ideals. He accepted the job offer with the idea in mind that the CCS would be a good means of creating a Surinamese culture. Combined with his prolonged sickness, De Ziel eventually decided to leave the function for what it was. Around his first year anniversary as director of the library, when he was not yet discouraged, De Ziel wrote with passion:

Suriname is on a course towards an own culture. But of this culture will come nothing when the own procession is lacking. The thoughts and acts of others do not provide us with our own culture. They only allow us to acquire a mirage; something that is similar but lacks content. Now the import of other cultures can bear its fruits, but it remains the expansion or creation of something essentially ours that makes culture our culture. We can, we even must, open up for what the imported literature has to tell us; we can distract information, inspiration and recreation from it; but when we want to establish our own culture we must resist the temptations of copying it.<sup>104</sup>

According to Hugo Pos, De Ziel was a thinker, not a doer.<sup>105</sup> There was a major difference between the library director and the chairman of the CCS — the chairman actively endeavoured to make up the deficiencies that had been created in Suriname after years of colonial rule. De Ziel remained stuck in the past, and was mainly concerned with the burden of slavery. As he described above, for De Ziel — or Trefossa — it was crucial that Suriname started searching for their own culture. Whether it was by creating something new or synthesising from others, it did not matter as long as it was unique.

The creation of the CCS library increased the level of reading in Paramaribo. Over time, more books were on loan, and more people borrowed them. Although the Sticusa can only be credited for the Dutch share of books in the library and a relative small percentage of financial support, it still helped create possibilities for change in Suriname. What cannot be highlighted enough in this part

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in: Hugo Fernandes Mendes "Parliamentary Structures Reconsidered. The constitutional System of Suriname" in *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society*, eds, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, 119.

<sup>104</sup> Cited in: Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 40.

<sup>105</sup> Hugo Pos, "Herinneringen", 63.

is the creative potential of the Surinamese readers to read international literature, even when Dutch literature was pervasive.

### Sticusa, Art, and Heritage

At the Abraham Crijnseweg 6 in Paramaribo today you will find the Nola Hatterman Art Academy, an institution that offers a four-year education to become a professional visual artist. It is the spiritual successor to the Nola Hatterman Institute that was founded in honour of a woman that delivered a noteworthy effort to the development of a Surinamese art world. Since this person was of this great influence, and the fact that she collaborated with the CCS and the Sticua, this section reflects on her life and her influences.

Before we begin, however, we start with the observation that in the 1950s and 1960s there was no such thing as Surinamese art. It is, rather, a name for different strains of art that are connected to the multifarious population groups. Nonetheless, what was started in the 1950s and 1960s was a process of modernisation that rapidly affected the metier of the arts in Suriname. These processes were accelerated by government subsidies and private initiatives.<sup>106</sup> It would be wrong to state that there were no forms of aesthetical expression in Suriname, but they cannot easily be categorised as art (here understood in a western sense as being...). Objects that were made by the native and maroon population of Suriname often contained symbolical meaning and were associated with rituals and practices.<sup>107</sup> These could not easily be subjected to western principles of art, for the objects would lose their meaning when removed from their holistic framework. The art world in Suriname was dominated by Afro-Surinamese traditions. Furthermore, it was an activity that was almost solely picked up by men. At the genesis of a Surinamese art world, the contributions of women were almost limited to one woman: Nola Hatterman.

Hatterman was born in the Netherlands, but always experienced a close connection to everything foreign. In the Netherlands she came into contact with WES. Her house at the Falckstraat 9 in Amsterdam became a centre for the cultural nationalists — they came there to

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<sup>106</sup> Alex van Stipriaan, "Roads to the Roots or Stuck in the Mud? The Development of a Surinamese Art World." In *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society*, eds, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, 270.

<sup>107</sup> Van Stipriaan, "Roads to the Roots or Stuck in the Mud?", 272.

debate and discuss the cultural status of Suriname. Hatterman's house became a focal point for the organisation's activities. Looking at her oeuvre, one will discover that she mainly painted persons of African descent. With this particular choice of painting subjects she distinguished herself from other Dutch painters of her time. Although she was not the only painter with a preference for non-European models, what made Hatterman's work remarkable was the absence of 'the primitive, the exotic, and the erotic' that was imbued in the works of her contemporaries.<sup>108</sup> Instead, Hatterman inverted these tropes of painting and strove to dismantle the European beauty standards. It was her conviction that 'black is beautiful', and that this feeling should be embraced by everyone – whether your skin was dark or light.<sup>109</sup>

During her formative years, when she took up the trade of painting, Hatterman kept a close eye on the developments in Suriname. When she started painting models she created long-lasting friendships and with those an ever closer connection to that country across the ocean. She even read *Wij slaven van Suriname* – written by the anti-colonial writer and freedom fighter Anton de Kom – right after it was published in 1934.<sup>110</sup> It seems that Hatterman attentively followed the nascent cultural nationalism in Suriname from the start. Finally the pull to the tropics became too strong to resist. She left for Suriname on April 17, 1953. At the outset she would be brought there under the (financial) guidance of the Sticusa. But this offer was retracted due to suspicions of communist sympathies.<sup>111</sup> Hatterman, however, was insistent on moving to Suriname, so she packed her bags and left on her own initiative.

The repeal of the Sticusa support did not go uncriticised. In the magazine *De Westindïër* the editor and close friend to Hatterman voiced his protest:

The Sticusa [...] then had to revert this magnificent initiative, for reasons yet unknown to us, that would have proved that there in fact are persons who are fit for this kind of cooperation. We think it is a shame that they [...] had not given proper attention to the value of Nola Hatterman's art in the striving for new terms in a world that is threatening to burst to pieces due to biases, fears, and racial delusions. [...] The Dutch art world should be proud of Nola Hatterman, for she is of overwhelming value for the relation between the people of different races and origins. It is because of this that we

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<sup>108</sup> Myra Winter, "Een artistiek bemiddelaar tussen Nederland en Suriname." in *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1900-1980*, eds, Rosemarijn Buikema and Maaike Meijer (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2003), 262.

<sup>109</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 88.

<sup>110</sup> Winter, "Een artistiek bemiddelaar tussen Nederland en Suriname", 260.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, 257.

perceive Nola Hatterman as an ambassador that would create goodwill for the Netherlands in a coloured world.<sup>112</sup>

It seems that the Sticusa West was not free of criticisms in its country of operations. The fact that these critiques hail from the world of culture – the very element they strive to protect, and the cornerstone of their existence – is critical.

When Hatterman arrived in Suriname she got the chance to exhibit her work in the CCS. For many Surinamese of African descent, this was the first time that they experienced art that did not portray people of colour as a significant other – as creatures that were vulnerable to subjugation. What they saw were respectful effigies, caught in an aesthetic that soothed the eye. Sadly, this was a phenomenon that had not often occurred in the overseas parts of the Kingdom. Apparently, the CCS did not have the same convictions as the Sticusa. Together with Hatterman they founded an art school, the *School voor Beeldende Kunsten* (School for Visual Arts), where Hatterman taught and directed. In her function of art teacher she palisaded from the custom manner of teaching in Paramaribo, which she thought was too passive, too ‘cold, and stripped of any personal contact with the children.’<sup>113</sup> Instead Hatterman stepped into society and actively started recruiting talents from every layer of society.<sup>114</sup> This was an incredible break with tradition, for ‘[un]til well after the middle of the twentieth century, art training was a privilege of the higher classes, the light-skinned creoles and whites.’<sup>115</sup> Hatterman cared for her students, which often led to close relationships and strong bonds.

Hatterman thus gave a strong boost to the Surinamese art world. It is an episode in the cultural life of Suriname in which the Sticusa and the CCS played a significant, facilitating role; until the 1970s Sticusa subsidised the School for Visual Arts. Students that finished their education were offered the chance to finish their education in the Netherlands with Sticusa-funded scholarships. More important is that Hatterman’s students found a renewed love for the self. For her this reconciliation with their own integrity was the paramount objective of her Surinamese endeavours:

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<sup>112</sup> Found in: Ibidem, 264-265.

<sup>113</sup> Winter, “Een artistiek bemiddelaar tussen Nederland en Suriname”, 265.

<sup>114</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 93.

<sup>115</sup> Van Stipriaan, “Roads to the Roots or Stuck in the Mud?”, 277.

‘to rediscover the own,’ she wrote down, ‘to recognise it, is the first acquaintance of a person, of a people, with art – visual art in particular.’<sup>116</sup>

Although she was admired by many, her activities also led to criticism among her students. As is written in the section on WES, it was due to the lack of direction and the focus on combatting everything colonial, that the cultural nationalists did not construct a cohesive cultural policy. Hatterman, who was a regular among the ranks of WES, did the opposite. She was influenced by the *négritude* movement that embraced the idea that black is beautiful. Whereas Hatterman focused on the revaluation of the self, the cultural nationalists rather combatted the coloniser.

As such, her activities raised a canvas on which critics could project their dissatisfaction. What must have been a rather painful experience for Hatterman, was the account of Jules Chin A Foeng. A former pupil of Hatterman’s who, after his schooling at the School for Visual Arts, started his own school — the Surinamese Academy for Visual Arts in 1967, followed by another institution called the National Institute for Art and Culture. The driving force behind the founding of the new school was his objection to the vision and didactics of Hatterman.<sup>117</sup> The main thought was that even Hatterman’s education did not reach far enough into Surinamese society, and that the teachers should be Surinamese.<sup>118</sup>

Hatterman’s account illustrates the fact that the activities of the Sticusa and the CCS did not always support each other when it concerned their policy. This is clear in the initial unwillingness of the Sticusa to send Hatterman to the Netherlands on the basis of her apparent communist ties. This caused no obstruction for the CCS, as they provided her with considerable freedom to act as she deemed necessary. It heralded a fruitful cooperation that substantially ameliorated the artistic metier in Suriname. Eventually, even the Sticusa supported the efforts of Hatterman by funding the art school that was funded by her and the CCS. It thus shows that the Sticusa, although it had a profound influence on the activities of the CCS, did not always have the final word.

Yet, their financial influence remained significant. In 1971 the Sticusa stopped the supply of funds to the School for Visual Arts and as a result it had to close its doors. This was not a disaster

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<sup>116</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 89.

<sup>117</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 89.

<sup>118</sup> Van Stipriaan, “Roads to the Roots or Stuck in the Mud?”, 281.

for Hatterman, since she already left the school in 1968 and started her own academy, the *Nieuwe School voor Beeldende Kunst* (New School for Visual Arts) that same year.<sup>119</sup> The important information that can be distilled from this episode in the saga of the Surinamese cultural world is that the Sticusa, with its funding capabilities remained a considerable factor of influence, but that its existence was not a necessity for the cultural world to exist. There was a significant amount of cultural industriousness without its attention as well. Is there more to be drawn from this about who has power and agency in the new Surinamese cultural world?

### Towards a National Museum

An important incentive for the construction of a national identity is the constitution of a national museum that portrays the story of nationhood. That idea must have resonated in the minds of the founding comity of the *Surinaams Museum*. In 1968, a reasonable time after the doors of the museum opened in 1954, the then prime minister of Suriname, Jopie Pengel, wrote to the Dutch vice-premier the following:

The board of the *Surinaams Museum* Foundation has been for quite a while, with the assistance of our government and Dutch expertise, ameliorating the museum in Paramaribo to an institute of a scientific level that can compete with similar foreign institutes.<sup>120</sup>

Part of this success was achieved due to its cooperation with the Sticusa. Although the cultural organisation only incidentally provided the museum with subsidies, the nature of the cooperation was rather close. Elsewhere it has been argued that the museum took on the mantle of an educational institution for every population group — this was reflected in the lay-out of the museum that contained a special room for every group in society — and as such it adhered to an inherently European definition of heritage.<sup>121</sup> But what was the nature of the cooperation between the museum and Sticusa?

The CCS was not the only institution with its own library. As the *Surinaams Museum* grew over the ages it acquired enough literary works to create its own library. Unlike the books present in the CCS library the ones in the museum were academic in nature. Important men in the acquiring

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<sup>119</sup> Winter, “Een artistiek bemiddelaar tussen Nederland en Suriname”, 268.

<sup>120</sup> NI-HaNA, 2.10.26, Governor of Suriname, 1952-1975, catalog number 2576, letter from the prime minister of Suriname J.A. Pengel to the vice-premier of the Netherlands, March 16, 1968.

<sup>121</sup> Bob Molenberg, “Museum der Verdeelden. Nationaal bewustzijn en het Surinaams Museum tijdens de Autonomie.”, *Blik, tijdschrift voor audiovisuele cultuur* 9, no. 2 (2016): 8-19.

of the museum collection were Dirk Geyskes, the museum director, and Willem Gordijn, the secretary of the Sticusa. The two men wrote each other on a regular basis, often to inform the other of a new discovery.

In 1960, for example, Gordijn acquired a historical publication from 1858, called *Bijdrage ter aanwijzing van de grondslagen, waarop de afschaffing der slavernij in Suriname dient gevestigd te worden*. The content of the publication was a plea for abolition. Since it seemed relevant for the history of Suriname, Gordijn deemed it worthy of a place in the library collection. Many other works that were offered to the museum were of historical value to Suriname. Some of them concerned events in Suriname that were not really attached to the accounts of population groups, such as *Kort verslag van de zware brand te Paramaribo*, that concerned a large fire that raged through Paramaribo during the colonial period.<sup>122</sup>

The relation between Geijskes and Gordijn was of a friendly nature. The former could not thank his companion enough for the works that he offered to the museum. Especially the first half of the 1960s were fruitful, and the tone in the correspondences paralleled this, such as in a letter from Gordijn to Geyskes dating December 6 1960: ‘In response to your letter [...] I want to sincerely thank you the gratitude that was expressed towards the Sticusa with regards to the purchase and distribution of books and prints.’<sup>123</sup>

Not in any way was this relation a one-way street. The director of the museum often approached the secretary of the Sticusa asking for some literary works that would be an addition to the library. The titles he requested often concerned geographical works about Suriname and the region. Among the requested titles were: A survey of Indian River Archaeology, the Barama River Caribs of Britisch Guyana, and *Westindien und Guyana*.<sup>124</sup> Other books that were requested by the museum had a more ethnographical and historical aim, like: *Costumes de Surinam, Schöpfung und*

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<sup>122</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between W. Gordijn and Dr. D.C. Geijskes, December 30, 1960.

<sup>123</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between W. Gordijn and Dr. D.C. Geijskes, December 9, 1960.

<sup>124</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between Dr. D.C. Geijskes and M.D. Thijs, June 1, 1962.

*Urzeit im Mytus der afrikanischen Völker*, *History of the Gold Coast*, and *Negerpsyche im Urwald am Lohali*.<sup>125</sup> The prices of these works could sometimes get as high as \$239.

What unites these works is that they are written by white, European men. Together they formed a library collection that did not only provide the Surinamese with information on the geographical area they lived in – Suriname, the Caribs, and South America – but also on the roots of its population groups.

But the Sticusa did not only provide the museum with literary works. It also shipped new collection items to Paramaribo that were to be exhibited in the museum. Among these were paintings and drawings, like an assemblage of watercolour paintings that accompanied the reports on the fire in Paramaribo. These paintings are still in the possession of the museum. Gordijn also provided the museum with historical photographs, about which Geijskes wrote to Gordijn: ‘It is a small but rather interesting collection, since it shows the development of constructional changes to the houses in the city.’<sup>126</sup> All the collection items that were shipped from the Netherlands were of a general nature – they did not reflect in any way the societal structure of Suriname in the 1950s and 1960s.

It seems that the cooperation between the Sticusa and the Surinamese Museum went even further than finance and the growth of the collection. The cultural organisation also took on the role of mediator. When the Surinamese government neglected to fully pay out the budgeted subsidies, the minister of Education and Cultural Development was approached by the director of the Sticusa. In a letter Thijs wrote:

After repeatedly requesting for payment, on June 10 we received a letter from the Surinamese Museum that the museum was promised a special subsidy from your department for the acquirement of the watercolour paintings. It is to our regret that we have not heard from you ever since.<sup>127</sup>

Besides that the Sticusa also provided the museum with advices on its future endeavours and development. When the museum was about to move to a new location in 1967, the Sticusa director

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<sup>125</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between Dr. D.C. Geijskes and M.D. Thijs, March 23, 1962.

<sup>126</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between Dr. D.C. Geijskes and W. Gordijn, December 4, 1962.

<sup>127</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 445, correspondence between M.D. Thijs and the Surinamese Minister of Education and Cultural Development, A.J. Morpurgo, March 26, 1962.

advised that the renovation of this new location – the old Fort Zeelandia – should be paid by the government.

The academic capital that the museum obtained through the cooperation with the Sticusa was of an inherently western nature. The literary works, although they provided information on the context of Suriname, were all written by European writers. Furthermore, it often concerned outdated works that were written in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It can be argued that they were part of an era of a pursuit of knowledge that had a dominant colonial character. Although Jules Chin A Foeng once objected to the appointing of a new museum director, the development of a national museum was mostly in the hand of Europeans – societal contestation was surprisingly absent from the museums weal and woe, and seems that the Sticusa used this relative freedom to their benefits, creating a western institution in the process.

Although it can be stated that the Sticusa allowed for the creation of a new institution in Suriname – by doing so bringing about even more change in the country – this would neglect the fact that the creation of a national museum in Suriname was almost entirely a Dutch occasion. It seems that the organisation, when it was not contested by other groups working on a similar effort, did not hold back in disseminating its own ideal culture through society.

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## Sticusa and Knowledge

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### Sticusa and History

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At the start of 1958 Sticusa ventured into new territory by providing subsidies to the Surinamese Historical Circle – *Surinaamse Historische Kring* in Dutch (SHK) – that was founded in June of 1951. Primary instigator for the request of the subsidies was the secretary of the historical society, Philip Samson. The organisation was planning on publishing a series of biographies of notable Surinamese people who made a large effort for the growth of Suriname. The request was allowed, which provided the SHK with an annual income of two hundred guilders. A small contribution compared to the funds that was received by other cultural institutions in Suriname, but in relative terms more than enough for an organisation that at the time was only recently founded. It seems

that the Sticusa was satisfied with the activities of the circle for the contribution lasted until Surinamese independence (the amount remained constant during all these years).

One can argue that the foundation of a society that has as its prime focus the development of a Surinamese historical tradition is of crucial importance for the development of a national identity. Once more I refer to Anton de Kom, who in a critical reflection on the Surinamese history education pointed out that it was merely parroting the colonial metropole. 'There is no better means to create a psyche of inferiority in a race of people, than through this historical education, in which exclusively are discussed and praised the sons of a different people.'<sup>128</sup>

At the base of the operations of the SHK were four goals. First, the organisation wanted to organise multiple lectures on the history of Suriname. These were to be given by both members as people with a special interest in history. For these lectures to stay interesting and original, the organisation strove to collect and publish information about Surinamese history. Thirdly, the circle aimed to increase historical interest with the Surinamese youth. Lastly, it wanted to pressure the government into maintaining and organising the archives in a manner deemed fit.

The initiator of the SHK was a diverse group of people with a personal interest in history, and Surinamese history in particular. Among the initiators were some notable persons from the Surinamese cultural and political lives whose efforts were not primarily limited to the SHK. The notables included Lou Lichtveld, and Friar Abbenhuis, but also sociologist Rudie van Leer who studied history under Johan Huizinga. Another noteworthy member was H. van Boheemen who functioned as the technical director of the Department of Education in Suriname and was concerned with the reformation of the Surinamese educational system. The secretary and main instigator of this historical endeavour was Philip Samson, historian and lawyer. Another member, A.J.A. Quintus Bosz, also wrote for the academic journal *West-Indische Gids*. Two of the main founders went on to play a decisive role in the development of history education in Suriname. Both Van Dijk as Samson wrote histories that were to be used in schools. These books, the majority of them

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<sup>128</sup> Anton de Kom, *Wij Slaven van Suriname* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2017), 50.

published in 1965 and 1967, were titled *Naar vrijheid en eenheid* and were used as history methods for primary school.<sup>129</sup>

One might say that the organisation really wanted to put effort in the creation of a rich and developed Surinamese historical tradition. Indeed, in the execution of its goals the members of the organisation purposefully tried to discuss elements of Surinamese history. One of these efforts was the development of an emancipation edition of the *West-Indische Gids* – to this date the oldest scholarly journal on the Caribbean – that was primarily focused on the abolishment of slavery within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1863. The edition was to be published in 1963, but preparations already started in 1960 when the SHK had to renew their subsidy request.

Members of the board of the society wrote articles about different topics related to slavery. They were, however, not required to primarily write about the Dutch brand of slavery, as they requested the Surinamese historian professor Johan Einaar to write an article on slavery in Brazil. Einaar later became the representative for Suriname in the Netherlands (*gevolmachtigde minister* in Dutch) and was member of the *Rijksministerraad*: the executive council of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. More importantly, he was the first president-consul of the University of Suriname (founded in 1968). By asking professor Einaar to write a piece about slavery in Brazil the Surinamese Historical Circle provided in the self-qualified need to create a historical tradition that was more grounded in the conventions of academia. For the SHK it was an urgent need to have an authoritative historical overview of Surinamese history. The last ‘complete’ history of Suriname was written in 1861 by historian and abolitionist Julien Wolbers (1819-1889). His work *Geschiedenis van Suriname* was approved by King William III and was even awarded with knighthood.

Even the members of the historical society themselves tried their best to enrich the list of literature on Suriname. Some of them already frequently wrote for the *West-Indische Gids*, like H. van Boheemen, who published multiple articles in the journal that was mostly oriented on education, such as an article on reforms in the educational system and other troubles surrounding

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<sup>129</sup> C.F. Getrouw, J.L.J. Pouwels and W. Van Dijk, *Naar vrijheid en eenheid. Korte Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Zeist: Dijkstra, 1965). And also C.F. Getrouw, J.L.J. Pouwels and W. Van Dijk, *Naar vrijheid en eenheid. Een geschiedenis-methode voor de lagere scholen in Suriname* (Zeist: Dijkstra, 1967).

education.<sup>130</sup> Secretary Samson also wrote articles before the founding of the SHK, mostly through a historical-judicial lens.<sup>131</sup> Others started writing for the journal after joining the society, like A.J.A. Quintus who studied history at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.<sup>132</sup> These examples show that the members of the historical circle in their effort to unveil a Surinamese historical tradition added substantial historical depth to the historiography on Suriname. The SHK thus placed importance on a historical tradition that was not simply a transplantation of Dutch history to a Surinamese context. Neither was it an effort by Dutch nationals to write a history of another country. For a large part they were inspired by historians outside the usual canon of the mother country.

In the development of a Surinamese historical metier, the Sticusa took on the role of facilitator. Through financial support the SHK was able to offer the Sticusa at least one hundred biographies of important Surinamese in 1964. But the support went further than finances – the annual subsidies meant more than that. It was an approval of their endeavours and an incentive for them to continue with what they were doing. Yet, the historical writing was the complete doing of the SHK. In the emancipation issue of the WIG, respectively called *Emancipatie 1863-1963*, some of the biographies were published. In the preface was written:

The Surinamese Historical Circle cannot think of any better way to commemorate this energetic ascent [of Surinamese society] by guiding the attention to these ‘Children of our own soil’, that ‘nanga gado wani’ witness the nerve and heart of their predecessors. A second serial will follow swiftly.<sup>133</sup>

The biographies were of a considerable level, and described in detail the life stories of, among others, Boni, the Paramount Chief of the Alukus, and his quarrel with another maroon tribe that was led by Bambi, Paramount Chief of the Ndjukas from 1791 to 1812.<sup>134</sup> The latter killed the former, who was rewarded with a memorial, given by the then English colonial government. The story was immortalised by the inhabitants of the forests of Suriname and told from generation to

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<sup>130</sup> H. van Boheemen, “Onderwijshervorming in Suriname.” *De West-Indische Gids* 28 (1947) 353-367. And also: H. Van Boheemen, “Surinaamse onderwijszorgen.” *De West-Indische Gids* 32, (1951): 65-91.

<sup>131</sup> Ph.A. Samson, “Persdelicten in Suriname.” *De West-Indische Gids* 32, (1951) 32-44.

<sup>132</sup> A.J.A. Quintus, “Misvattingen omtrent de staatkundige ontwikkeling van Suriname.” 40, (1960-1961) *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* (1960) 3-16.

<sup>133</sup> M.F. Abbenhuis, “Inleiding” in *Emancipatie 1863-1963. Biografieën*, eds, M.F. Abbenhuis and Carel Paulus Rier (Paramaribo: Surinaamse Historische Kring, 1964), 3.

<sup>134</sup> Silvia W. de Groot. *Agents of their own Emancipation. Topics in the History of Surinam Maroons* (Amsterdam: n.p., 2009), 74.

generation. It is then no surprise that there exist myriad diverging accounts of this tale.<sup>135</sup> This biography, however, is one of the first written accounts of Boni's life.

The general tone of the biographies was that of admiration and respect. As is illustrated in the account of Sophie Redmond (1907-1955), who was a Surinamese doctor, politician, actor, feminist, and most of all, apologist for an own Surinamese culture. In the biographies she is described as 'not only an outstanding doctor, but above all a human that sacrificed herself for the benefits of her fellow humans.'<sup>136</sup>

It has to be emphasised that the narrative that is unveiled surrounding the persons in *Emancipatie*, is one of the national hero that through his or her actions helped the creation of a Surinamese nation. The persons in the biographies were not just Dutch governors or other people with a Dutch inheritance that contributed to the ascension of the Surinamese state. Instead, these are people of mainly Afro-Surinamese descent, that contributed to Suriname in their complete own ways. An endeavour like this makes it appealing to compare these biographies with the Dutch canon of national heroes – with figures like Michiel de Ruijter and Jan Pieterz Coen. These historical figures were placed in a heroic narrative, ascending them to the status of persons whose effigies deserved to be cast in stone.

A qualification has to be made, however. The majority of the biographies are about people of Afro-Surinamese descent. This is partly due to the fact that the historical figures hail from eras in which other population groups, such as the Chinese and Javanese, did not live in Suriname. The fact that there is only one entry about a woman – the only biography that has been written by a woman – we have to take for granted considering the day and time of writing.

Despite this, the SHK is shrouded in a mist of ambivalence. This feeling is most notably fortified by the topics of the lectures that were organised by the organisation. If we take a closer look at a list that was published a whole different picture manifests itself. Of all the lectures given between February 1952 and April 1956, only four out of twenty-nine were primarily about Surinamese history. Seven others discussed a topic that was connected to Surinamese history, but

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<sup>135</sup> De Groot, *Agent of their own Emancipation* 75-84.

<sup>136</sup> S.A.S. Mitrasing-Sitalsing, "Sophie Redmond 1907-1955" in *Emancipatie 1863-1963. Biografieën*, eds, eds, M.F. Abbenhuis and Carel Paulus Rier (Paramaribo: Surinaamse Historische Kring, 1964), 188.

discussed it from a European or Dutch perspective. Other lectures, like the one on Maya culture or Thomas Jefferson did not have any direct relations to Suriname. Perhaps these are just characteristics of an organisation that is trying to find its way in a relatively untouched sector of knowledge, but the lectures appear to be in stark contrast with the aforementioned articles.

Furthermore it can be debated whether the SHK really reached a broad audience. And when it did, with what kind of history? Assuming that they reached more Surinamese with their lectures than they did with the academic articles that were published in the *West-Indische Gids*, we can question its effect on the long run. Nevertheless, it would be too easy to criticise the SHK for the argument that the lectures only provided a shallow historical reading. Yes, the chance that the *West-Indische Gids* did not reach a large and diverse reading group is significant. But what the SHK added to the academic capital of Suriname is of large importance. They even published stories about topics that were completely Surinamese in a journal that was known for its Eurocentric perspective. In this effort they avoided discussing hot topics such as slavery.

The reality that the lion's share of the contributors of the SHK had a Surinamese background – the majority creole – is of a great symbolical importance. It means that we are talking here about an innately Surinamese historical effort. At stake was the development of a Surinamese tradition of knowledge. The very fact that the contributors relied on historical works from the pen of Julien Wolbers and others, shows that they did not shy away from citing from people that were openly critical about the dark past of the Netherlands. As such they went against the grains of the Sticusa that wanted people to feel attracted to the Dutch culture.

At the same time the Sticusa helped the establishment of Surinamese academic capital. The funds they offered to the SHK were relatively small but given consistently during seventeen years. Furthermore, financial support did not mean that the historians of the circle were to follow the directions of the Sticusa. They used their own intellectual potential to develop the Surinamese historical works. In that effort they did not follow a method that was supported by every part of the population; even the historians from the SHK were not invulnerable to critique from within society. Again cultural nationalists from the ranks of WES and KRA criticized members of the SHK, such

as Lou Lichtveld and A.J.A. Quint Bosz, who they regarded as assimilated creoles.<sup>137</sup> That is a rather heavy accusation, since they imply that the knowledge that had been carried out by these men was in fact not Surinamese. It was Dutch. For the cultural nationalist, Lichtveld and Bosz were sheep in wolves' clothing. This episode thus simultaneously demonstrates internal contestation.

### Sticusa and Ethnology

A similar venture that was funded by the Sticusa was the Surinamese Ethnographical Circle – *Ethnologische Kring Suriname* (EKS) in Dutch. The circle that was founded in 1959 received an annual number of two hundred guilders to execute its plans. The goals of the EKS were also similar to those of the Surinamese Historical Circle.<sup>138</sup> They were threefold: the first aim was to promote inter-cultural relations between the different racial and ethnic groups in Suriname, with respect to the key and most important elements in said cultures. The second goal, almost identical to the one put forward by the SHC, was the research, development, publishing of informative works with an ethnographical approach. Furthermore, the EKS aimed to organise multiple demonstrations of the cultures present in the myriad ethnic groups present in Suriname. The final goal was to create and maintain cooperation with institutes and (governmental) bodies that pursued the same goals, either within Suriname or from the outside.

The EKS was founded under the supervision of a few notables in the cultural and intellectual world of Sticusa. Among them was Friar Richard Abbenhuis, who was also an active member of the SHK. But also the director of the first national museum of Suriname, Dirk Cornelis Geyskes, oversaw the founding of the society. Important to note here is that Geyskes played a considerable and influential role in the constitution of knowledge in Suriname. His role in the EKS was a privilege appointed to him through the Surinamese Museum's Foundation that was allowed to pick a member for the Board of the circle. Another notable present during the creation of the EKS worth mentioning is Edward René Wessels, otherwise known as Eddie Wessels, the then director of the CCS. The CCS was given the same privilege as that was handed to the Foundation of the Surinamese Museum.

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<sup>137</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 92.

<sup>138</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 688, statutes of the *Ethnologische Kring Suriname*, January 2, 1959.

In the twelfth article of the first statute was decided that the founding fathers of the EKS appointed three members to form the Board: Friar Abbenhuis was to be the chairman, Shew Shawh Radhakishun the treasurer, and Henricus Guilaume Welles the secretary. Treasurer Radhakishun was also member of the board of the Racusa, where he functioned as vice-chairman, and was also an advocate for the Advisory Council.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, he was an opponent of the WES, which he accused of 'creolism'.<sup>140</sup> At the time of the founding, the EKS had six members. When we review the names on the member list we are reunited with some familiars. Philip Abraham Samson, jurist and chairman of the SHK, was also involved in the anthropological activities of the EKS. The rest of the names, Sarijoen, Tjin a Sie, Sowma, Campagne, Kiban, and Geijskes, paint a clear picture: every population group was represented. Whether this was on purpose, or just sheer luck is not clear, but it resonates well with the goals of the organisation.

In the budget of the year 1961 the EKS gives an impression of the activities they organised that year. For all their activities they put aside 2,400 guilders. Of that sum, 900 guilders was spent on the replenishment of the library that was administered by the EKS. This library also contained storage for records and film. Unfortunately the archives do not contain more information that can help us get a better understanding of the content of the library, but we can speculate that they contained records of the multiple musical traditions in Suriname. Continuing, they put away 300 guilders for the sponsoring and publication of ethnographical academic work, and they set aside another 300 guilder as a buffer. Finally, they put aside 900 guilder for research. This amount had to be divided over four researches that were to be executed that year. Were we to believe the budget, the research activities done in 1961 were: an analysis of the Caribbean song by interpreting the texts and transferring the melodies and rhymes to paper; a research into the sounds of the Arawak natives of Suriname; an ethnographical research into the Arawak's, and; a large investigation of Surinamese children's games and songs (also aimed at transferring the melodies to scripture).<sup>141</sup>

Research was carried out under the guidance of the minister of Education and Cultural Development, Alfred Morpurgo. The help that was offered by the ministry to the activities of the

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<sup>139</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 92.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*, 101.

<sup>141</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 688, budget duplicate, October 15, 1960.

EKS was honourable. At the end of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s they helped the organisation researching the children's games. Support was mainly offered by spreading questionnaires throughout the country: to children at schools, societies and private initiatives. But there was also moral support:

The initiative of this circle to gather knowledge regarding children's games typical to Suriname, is rejoicing, and it justifies our confidence in the Board, so that of everyone who is asked to cooperate will partake with interest in order to care that this questionnaire will be a complete success.<sup>142</sup>

The result of the questionnaire was that over eighty names of games – mostly creole – were discovered and categorised. Inherent to this research was the notion that the youth had to be encouraged to help with the 'striving for the goal that is set by Suriname: the promotion of understanding, appreciation and cooperation in this society of our country that is rich and varied.'<sup>143</sup>

The questionnaire was made up of fifteen questions that can be categorized in three categories.

Questions asked paid attention to 1) the form and method of the game

Think of the games you play at home or outside; alone, with someone else or with more children. Games you play on the compound, in the forests, on street, on the savannah, on the water, under a tree, etc. [...] When do you play it? During droughts or monsoons? Under the scorching sun or moonlight? [...] Does it require you to sing? [...] Can you describe the movements, dances or gestures?

2) the ethnic pillar it was connected to

Is it a game of the Arawak's, Caribbean's, Maroons, Hindustanis, Javanese, Chinese, Lebanese, or Europeans? Or is it West-Indian, from one of the islands in Suriname's proximity?

3) the manner in which the games were passed on: 'Do you remember who taught you the game?'<sup>144</sup> Alongside the questionnaire was given the promise that when they collected and analysed the data, they would present their findings in a 'nice book'.<sup>145</sup>

In a few cases, researchers from the Netherlands flew over to Suriname in order to help with the research of the EKS. Like the help the circle got from cultural anthropologist Herman van

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<sup>142</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.19.114, STICUSA, cat. no. 688, questionnaire May 29, 1959.

<sup>143</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>144</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>145</sup> Ibidem.

Renselaar who, amongst others, wrote about the cultural nationalism in Suriname in comparison with messianism.<sup>146</sup> When writing this article he was supported by the EKS. The trade was that he was asked to give demonstrations of the *lakoen* – a creole theatre play from the nineteenth century, which combined music, dancing and theatre. This demonstration consisted of a recitation and the screening of video tapes and slides.

As was the case with the SHK, the Sticusa did not decide what activities this small yet zealous organisation would carry out. Even the subsidies were not of an extreme importance. A contribution of 200 guilders in 1961 only made up for 8.3 per cent of the total budget. Still, as was the case with the SHK, the support was consistent and could be seen as the moral encouragement to carry on with their activities. Besides that, the Sticusa was an organisation with a considerable network back in the Netherlands; this was something of which the circle could reap the benefits. It is also an illustration of the infrastructure of possibilities that was created by the Sticusa in cooperation with cultural organisations in Suriname. Here again is shown that funds were important for the gathering of knowledge and the advancement of culture in Suriname, but this would mean nothing were it not for the zealous efforts made by the people at the helm of the EKS.

The value of both the EKS and the SHK lied in the fact that they were pro-active; that they had a goal in mind: the ascension of culture in Suriname. In their eyes the Sticusa was not a bulwark of regression. They did not waste their potential on passive accusations of colonisation, but rather used the structure in which they lived to their own benefits. At the same time, as the activities of the SHK have shown, they did not shy away from their colonial past as well as they gave it a rightful place in a Surinamese historical canon.

### Sticusa and Music

In this final section I explore the only instance where an accusation of cultural dominance by Sticusa and the CCS is at its right place. Yet, at the same time, it is also a topic that lucidly exemplifies the creative potential of the Surinamese; a topic in which I have seen most actively the powers of hybridisation. Music in Suriname is of the utmost upright importance.

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<sup>146</sup> Jan Voorhoeve and Herman C. van Renselaar, "Messianism and nationalism in Suriname." *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde* 2, (1962), 193-216.

In 1956 the Dutch author Johan van de Walle wrote in *De Gids* that ‘it is almost impossible to write in completion about folk music in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles.’<sup>147</sup> The reasons for this, he continues, was that Surinamese music was rarely influenced by European music, whereas, for instance, the music on the Antilles combined a lot of elements from Latin-American musical traditions, which in their turn were imported from European musical traditions. Suriname, on the other hand, was isolated from the islands and did not experience the same amount of ‘cultural injection’ from the outside.<sup>148</sup> Although the statement lost some of its accuracy in the course of time, we can understand why Van der Walle came to this observation when we place the statement in its proper time. The cultural policy of the Sticusa and the CCS was here of strong influence. One of the most substantial critiques was that they carried the banners of western culture. This critique resonates with the contribution of these organisations – or rather the lack thereof – to the world of music in Suriname.

Sticusa policy in the case of music was an active one. Many individual artists, music ensembles, theatre groups that performed in Suriname were brought to the country under the guidance of Sticusa.<sup>149</sup> The same goes for Surinamese choirs, quartets, and folk groups that toured the Netherlands. Moreover, under the guise of Sticusa a dozen music teachers and theatre directors found their way to the Surinamese cultural institutions.<sup>150</sup>

CCS director Eddy Wessels was an exponent of Western culture in Suriname, most particular in the form of Western musical traditions. He himself was the founder and director of the Surinamese Philharmonic Orchestra. His CCS directorship was characterised by an unwavering devotion to ascend the cultural world in Suriname. It was his personal opinion that the only way to achieve this was to embrace Western culture and to let it be the funding on which a Surinamese culture had to be built. For his efforts, Wessels was rewarded with the *Zilveren Anjer* in 1961. He

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<sup>147</sup> Johan van der Walle, “Enige aantekeningen bij Antilliaanse en Surinaamse volksmuziek.” *De Gids* 119, (1956), 257.

<sup>148</sup> Van der Walle, “Enige aantekeningen bij Antilliaanse en Surinaamse volksmuziek”, 260.

<sup>149</sup> Max Nord, “Nederlandse Hulp en Samenwerking” in *Cultureel Mozaïek van Suriname*, ed. Albert Helman, 429-432.

<sup>150</sup> Nord, “Nederlandse Hulp en Samenwerking”, 430.

was the first person from Suriname to gain this distinction.<sup>151</sup> To this day, his directorship is honoured in the auditorium of the CCS, which is also known as the Eddie Wessels Auditorium. Despite his fanaticism, he was not free of conflicts of interest. A significant part of the subsidies that were given to the CCS by the Sticusa were transferred to his own Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>152</sup> This orchestra solely played Western scores that Wessels brought over from the Netherlands, and this would not change until the end of the period of Autonomy.

In the case of music, the Sticusa was an active exponent of the spread of Western culture as well. In 1963 the secretary of the Sticusa, Tino Thijs, mentioned in a Dutch radio broadcast that the assistance of Dutch cultural experts would remain in Suriname for a while.<sup>153</sup> In September of 1962 they had sent the former director of the Music School of Deventer to Suriname in order to direct the School for Folk Music in Paramaribo.<sup>154</sup> Although the name implies that this institution educated the Surinamese in their own folk traditions, this was not the case. Rather, they educated the students in the Dutch folk traditions. The emphasis was put on traditional music from the Netherlands. Besides this, the director from Deventer would be the new conductor of the Surinamese Philharmonic Orchestra, replacing Eddy Wessels as such.

September 1962 also heralded the third lustrum anniversary of the CCS, which was celebrated with a book exhibition in the library. During the festivities music was provided by multiple male choirs, as well as the Society of Chamber Music, which organised a Debussy night in the library. This society only played European classical music, and that incited the poet Robin Ravales – in a reflection on the cultural activities in Suriname – to ask: ‘Why does the Society for Chamber Music only play Bach, Mozart, et cetera, and never the music of the Surinamese people, of the negroes, Javanese or Hindustani’s?’<sup>155</sup>

It is then of no surprise that when the KRA organised a musical night of *kawina* in the building of the CCS, it was seen as a large victory over Dutch cultural imperialism.<sup>156</sup> To KRA and other

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<sup>151</sup> Joop van Mil, “Biografie van Eddy Vervuurt.”, Last modification date unknown, [http://www.apintie.sr/Eddy\\_Vervuurt.pdf](http://www.apintie.sr/Eddy_Vervuurt.pdf), accessed on Jul. 17, 2017, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*, 74.

<sup>153</sup> M.D. Thijs, “Culturele samenwerking van Nederland en Suriname.” *Neerlandia* 67, (1963), 64.

<sup>154</sup> Thijs, “Culturele samenwerking van Nederland en Suriname”, 64.

<sup>155</sup> Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang*, 409.

<sup>156</sup> Marshall, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Surinaamse nationalisme*, 104.

cultural nationalists, this was a victory of unmeasured proportions for they saw the organisation that housed the evening as champions of the European classical culture. It must have been a joyful and pleasing evening to hear the African drums that are characteristic for kawina music in the house of the oppressor, and to lose their selves in ecstasy in the call-and-response that is part of this genre.

Sticusa and the CCS missed the boat by solely focusing on the Western musical tradition. For years the music in Suriname expanded on its own initiative; as a living organism it adapted to the musical traditions of every group in society. Where there had not already existed a Surinamese literature in the 1950s and 1960s, there surely already existed a typical Surinamese musical tradition, like the hybrid genres of *kawina* and *kaseko*.

*Kawina* is a musical genre which development soared after the abolition of slavery in 1863. It is a proper Surinamese affair – a mix of African musical sounds and traditions from the heart of the continent with that of the native Indian tribes of the inlands. Nowadays, *kawina* is not solely reserved for the creole population group, but in the 1950s it still was. After the Second World War, things started to change. Out of the *kawina* grew a new musical genre: the *kaseko*. At the core of the *kaseko* are the drums, congas, wind instruments, electrical guitars and bass guitars. Since its basis is this neutral, it provides the space for the different groups in society to mix it with their own traditional music. The musical genre gave room to the development of an own distinctive style and that made it appealing for a wide audience, letting it transgress the societal demarcations. In the course of history, almost all the ethnic groups in society participated and experimented with the styles in *kaseko*.<sup>157</sup>

There are two characteristic elements of these musical genres. Firstly, from a historical point of view, they have a strong connection with the Surinamese soil. The sounds were developed in the forests and on the plantations of the colonial era. Secondly, these musical genres are both hybridisations of different traditions. Since they are hybrids of various musical traditions – ranging

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<sup>157</sup> Hillary de Bruin and Marlène Aminah Lie a Ling, "Muziek en Dans." In *Cultuur in Suriname*, ed. Chandra van Binnendijk and Paul Faber (Paramaribo: Vaco, 1992), 106-107.

from the heartlands of Africa, and the plains of Europe, to the near forest of the Guyana's – the label of 'world music' is rather accurate.

Of course, there were many more musical traditions in Suriname. The Hindustani's, Javanese, and Chinese brought over their own native musical traditions to the tropics of Suriname. In their journey across the seas they mainly brought the classical traditions with them – it concerns genres such as the *baithak gana*, *kawali*, *chautals* from India, and the arrival of the *gamelan* from Java. In the course of time these musical traditions and instruments 'surinamised': for the creation of musical instruments the musicians were required to rely on other provisional means of constructing them, therefore creating their own distinct sound.<sup>158</sup> But what distinguished the *kaseko* and *kawina* from these musical traditions was the low entry, which allowed it to spread over all the layers of society.

Let us return now to the observations made by Van de Walle at the beginning of this section. They are debunked by the Surinamese expert on folk music Terry Agerkop, who writes that the *kaseko* 'music, which is nourished on the one hand by the rich and other by Caribbean popular music with which, musically speaking and in terms of performance, it has great affinity.'<sup>159</sup> It seems they have not been that as isolated as he suggested.

The role of the Sticusa and CCS in the development of these authentic forms of music was nearly non-existent. Music, in the vocabulary of the Sticusa, signified classical music. Folk music meant Dutch folk music. Since the director of the CCS was also the founder and conductor of the Surinamese Philharmonic Orchestra, a lot of the subsidies were used for the advancement of the musical activities of the organization. But we must not let the biases of the Sticusa and CCS fool us. In a biography of Surinamese composer, musician, and composer Eddy Vervuurt, his close friendship with Eddy Wessels was mentioned. Vervuurt composed a classical piece in honour of Wessels, which was played by the Philharmonic Orchestra and called Mamio.<sup>160</sup> It was a lively and original piece that used both elements from classical music, and combined it with more traditional

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<sup>158</sup> Kenneth Bilby, "New Sounds from a New Nation. Processes of Globalisation and Indigenisation in Surinamese Popular Music" in *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society*, eds, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, 297.

<sup>159</sup> Found in: Bilby, "New Sounds from a New Nation", 299.

<sup>160</sup> Joop van Mil, "Biografie van Eddy Vervuurt.", 2.

elements from Surinamese music. In 1956 he composed *Sranan Prenkibuku*, a suite of Surinamese dances that were played during the visit of Princess Beatrix.<sup>161</sup> It seems that even with the musical genres that were inherently Western in nature, there still was room for agency for the creation of something essentially Surinamese.

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, 4-5.

## Conclusion

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During the opening of the fifteenth meeting of the Advisory Council in 1975, the Surinamese minister of Education and Cultural Development, Ronald Venetiaan, stated that ‘the Sticusa carries, whether it is justified or not, a colonial and colonialist stigma.’<sup>162</sup> It was a meaningful observation, and moreover, a blow to the morale of the Sticusa that was required to stop its activities a short while after. In this thesis I have argued that it was not justified that the Sticusa carried a colonial and colonialist stigma. Instead the organisation played an important role in the Surinamese search for a culture. Through its activities it created many possibilities for the creative potential of the Surinamese cultural workers, yet the creation of these niches have not always been very visible.

Although the foundation on the surface level looks quite similar to the first Sticusa – it had the same goals, the same base of operations, and most obviously it used the same name as its predecessor – it differed from its first incarnation on multiple points. Obviously, it had to operate in a completely different context. The 1954 Charter profoundly changed the playing field in which the organisation had to work. These were not only alterations to the structure of the Kingdom that made it resemble a commonwealth, but also to the mentalities of the Surinamese. For them, autonomy did not only mean more political freedom; it also brought about in them the striving for more cultural freedom, even national freedom. After 1954, the Sticusa was thus pressured by more internal forces. Moreover, the cultural field expanded significantly, with more cultural organisations – nationalist in nature or not – striving to ascend the cultural level of Suriname. These alterations were embraced by the Sticusa and even let the organisation to change the structure of its sister organisation, the CCS. When we look at the activities of the Sticusa through an administrative lens we see an organisation that is highly aware of the state of the cultural field in Suriname during autonomy. It did not try to expand its influence over other cultural organisations. Instead the Sticusa agreed to changes that were aimed at increasing the cultural cooperation within Suriname, which would also restrict its influence.

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<sup>162</sup> Max Nord, “Nederlandse hulp en samenwerking”, 433.

Another important change in the playing field is the influx of nationalist movements in Suriname. During the 1950s and 1960s they increasingly succeeded in constituting their claims as they became more abundant. Moreover, they were extremely critical on the activities of the Sticusa, meaning that the organisation continually had to defend itself from attacks to their image. But the nationalists lacked any coordinated organisation: their numbers were relatively large, but they were ideologically divided. Moreover, they were often more focused on moral accusations of Dutch cultural imperialism of the Sticusa than on starting activities on their own. Other Surinamese cultural workers that tried to establish a Surinamese culture were often targeted by the nationalists as well. Yet, these relations were not as black-and-white as they seem, with the cultural organisations often working together with institutions they targeted before.

The surge in numbers of these nationalist organisations was also the result of a new sense of direction that manifested itself in the mentalities of the Surinamese working in the cultural field. Trefossa, the CCS director Eddy Wessels, and the cultural nationalist: through their work they all tried to ascend the cultural level of Suriname. Culture in Suriname during the autonomy had more urgency to it than it had in colonial times. This another change to the context in which the Sticusa worked.

It is true that the Sticusa operated with an inherently Western concept of culture in mind, but this was no secret as it is even mentioned in the founding protocols. During its activities, it was often preoccupied with Dutch forms of cultural expression. There was no room in its musical vocabulary for anything Surinamese; it dispersed Dutch literature through the CCS library, and developed a Dutch tradition of heritage together with the Surinamese Museum. However, the organisation left plenty of room for the creative potential of the Surinamese to turn these things into something unique. Indeed, on numerous occasions it can be argued that the Sticusa even created an infrastructure in Suriname through which these Western forms of cultural expression could be transformed into something Surinamese – an infrastructure of change, if you will. This is important to emphasise, as it is often overlooked in studies of cultural imperialism. Although the Sticusa disseminated Dutch culture on numerous occasions – mostly when it was not contested by other cultural organisations – this did mean that they blindly adopted it.

Were we to see the operations of the Sticusa solely from the lens of colonialism and cultural imperialism, the image that takes shape is indeed that of an organisation that spread a foreign culture. On the contrary, the image that is painted in this thesis severely differs from what I just described. The fact remains that the Sticusa was a Dutch institution and that it possessed more funds than other cultural institutions in Suriname during the autonomy, but when we focus on change instead of continuity our understanding of the dynamics of post-colonial states are exposed in a different light that reveal dynamics that are otherwise hidden. This study of cultural cooperation after the implementation of the Charter reveals an extremely vibrant and zealous society in which change was the mind-set of many a cultural worker. The Sticusa did not bring change to Suriname, nor did it determine Surinamese social life. Quite the contrary was the case: change was brought about by the industrious endeavours of the Surinamese. The role of the Sticusa was that it created the opportunities in which these creative outbursts could manifest themselves, but the eventual change came due to their activity. Indeed, it seems that it was Slagveer's poets who in the long run brought independence to Suriname.

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