THE JEWISH NATION IN SURINAM

Historical Essays edited by R. COHEN

S. Emmering, Amsterdam



The frontcover-illustration: J.Ottens; Nieuwe kaart van Suriname . . . (before 1718)

THE JEWISH NATION IN SURINAM

HISTORICAL ESSAYS

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ROBERT COHEN

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For Nannette, my twin

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The prayer is reproduced here with the kind permission of the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.R.A.	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
Cal. St. Pap.	Calendar of State Papers. Colonial Series. America and the West Indies
PAJHS	Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society
WIG	West Indische Gids

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

R. VAN LIER is emeritus-professor of the Agricultural University of Wageningen as well as emeritus (part-time) professor of the University of Leyden in sociology of sub-tropical and tropical countries. He has published a book and articles on the social history of Surinam.

G.W. VAN DER MEIDEN studied history and is an archivist at the Algemeen Rijksarchief (Netherlands General State Archives). He published an inventory of the archives of The Netherlands Embassy in Turkey until 1811 and several articles.

J.A. SCHILTKAMP is a notary at Curaçao N.A. and author of: *De geschiedenis van het notariaat in het octrooigebied van de West-Indische Compagnie* (The history of the notarial office in the former Dutch possessions in North and South America and on the West Coast of Africa).
In collaboration with Prof. Dr. J.Th. de Smidt he has edited volume I, II and III of the series *West-Indisch Plakaatboek.*

R. BIJLSMA (1880-1947) studied law and became General State Archivist of the Netherlands. He published several inventories and articles on the history of Rotterdam, The Netherlands and the West Indies.

Z. LOKER is the former Israeli ambassador to Haiti. He has published articles on the history of the Sephardim in the Caribbean, France, and the Balkans.

R. COHEN is a lecturer in Jewish History at the University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel. He has published articles on the history and demography of the Jews in early America, Surinam, and The Netherlands.

PREFACE

Jews were among the earliest settlers in the plantation colony of Surinam. In the second half of the seventeenth century they started the first permanent Jewish settlement in the Americas, creating an interesting and unique historical phenomenon.

Probably nowhere else before the nineteenth century had Jews enjoyed so many political privileges, with so little intrusion on their lives.

Remnants of the Joden Savanne, the village of the Jews, that had been the centre of Jewish life in the colony for several centuries, are still to be found up the Surinam river. Among them are the ruins of the oldest synagogue in the western hemisphere. In Paramaribo, the capital of the country, are the Portuguese (and the German) synagogues, built and rebuilt on the very spots where the original buildings had been erected in the first half of the eighteenth century.

The fate of the Jews was closely related to events in the colony; their material wealth as planters collapsed with the downfall of the plantation culture in Surinam. Following their emancipation in 1825, when they became full citizens, the Jews integrated further in Surinam society and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, gained increasing influence as merchants, doctors and lawyers, as well as civil servants and teachers. They also played an important role in the political activities in the colony.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it became customary for Jews who could afford it to send their sons to study in the Netherlands; most of them never returned to Surinam. Others sought their fortune elsewhere, believing Surinam held few prospects for their future. Some of the younger Jews assimilated into the general culture of Surinam society. As a result, the Jewish community shrank and lost its importance. However, for some time before these developments, Jewish religious and cultural life in the colony had already begun to lose its vitality; the absence of religious leaders and teachers contributed to a gradual spiritual starvation.

The Jewish contribution to Surinam society did not completely fade; there are still many vestiges of the

past. Moreover, one cannot fail to detect traits in the Surinam culture which are unmistakenly of Jewish origin.

Bringing together these studies dealing with the history of the Jews in Surinam is to be commended. The first settlers were Portuguese Jews, soon to be followed by German-Jewish settlers who, by the end of the eighteenth century, already constituted more than a third of the Jewish population. The first historians of the Jews of Surinam – the *Parnassim* and representatives of the Portuguese community – correctly saw the history of the Jews as the integral part of Surinam's past. Principal among the *Parnassim* was the extraordinary and erudite David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, to whom many pages in this volume are justifiably devoted. It is my belief that present and future historians dealing with this subject should emulate them.

The archives dealing with the history of the Jews in Surinam are rich and vast. They are waiting to be explored and used and there is much valuable work still to be done. Any initiative in this field, such as this volume, should be warmly welcomed. Given the wealth of the available historical material, separate studies on Sephardim and Ashkenazim will certainly be necessary, but all should eventually be accorded their proper place in Jewish history and in the annals of Surinam.

I would wish that this reader, which brings together both published and new articles on Surinam Jewry, will inspire a new generation of historians to delve into the captivating history of the Jews of Surinam.

R.A.J. van Lier

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

When the regents of the Sephardi Jewish community in Surinam in 1788 published the *Historical Essay on the Colony of Surinam*[1], they intended to describe the colony, "its founding, its revolutions, its progress from its origin up to our days" together with "a history of the Jewish Portuguese and German community established there". They purposely combined the history of the colony with that of its Jews, for "how could a chain of petty events which happened to a handful of Jews in the space of 130 years in a part of Dutch Guiana attract the attention of the reader?"[2]

Uncharacteristically, the regents of the community had underestimated themselves. The *Historical Essay* certainly attracted the attention of the public. The publication of two Dutch editions within 15 years is less remarkable than the appearance of an English version in 1974. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, the *Historical Essay's* main author, could not have foreseen that his book would remain the standard work on Surinam Jewry for almost two centuries. From a descriptive narrative it evolved over the years into the main, if not only source about Surinam Jewry.

Had there been no others, this situation would have been perfectly justifiable. A subjective chronicle of events, based on material then available, may be, when judiciously used, a welcome contribution to our knowledge.

The *Historical Essay* is, however, only one of many sources. Jacob R. Marcus already pointed out that the history of the Jews in Surinam "cannot be written until the vast sources so fortunately available have been properly exploited." These sources are almost all at the Rijksarchief in The Hague, complete with inventory and indices.

Marcus continues "The substantial collections in Portuguese and Dutch will ultimately permit historians to reconstruct in detail the life of one of the great and important eighteenth-century western hemisphere Jewish communities."[3]

This book hopes to begin this recontruction by using a wide variety of available sources. Most of the articles appear in print for the first time. R.A.J. van Lier's article, included to give the reader a survey of the history of the Jews in Surinam, has been previously published in Dutch and English. L.L.E. Rens' work originally appeared in *Vox Guyanae*; it was introduced

to make it available to a wider audience. R. Bijlsma's article, originally in Dutch, is here translated and brought up to date for the first time.[4]

The history of the Jews in Surinam started in the middle of the seventeenth century. Attracted by favorable charters of the Dutch and the English, who were in dire need of manpower in their colonies, Jews came to the "Wild Coast" and to the islands of the Caribbean.

For a number of them the new world was not new anymore. The Dutch had had a colony in Brazil with an important Jewish community. When the Portuguese reconquered the Dutch colony, the Jews were given three months to leave Brazil or face the consequences of staying as Jews in a Catholic country. All of them left, the majority returning to Holland, while others sailed northwards to the Caribbean and to New Amsterdam.

At the same time, colonial authorities in England and Holland tried to attract settlers for their possessions in the northern part of South America and the islands of the West Indies. Thus began many of the small, often minute Jewish communities in the West Indies that would be of great importance during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The *Historical Essay* is rather brief about the beginnings of the Jewish community in Surinam. Since most of the research done on Surinam Jews is almost exclusively based on the *Historical Essay,* the community's early years are shrouded in a veil of inaccuracies and misunderstandings.[5] The Jewish community was probably established in the 1660s. During these years the Jews were often a pawn in the power struggle between the English and the Dutch, described in detail by Rens. His "Analysis of Annals" not only constitutes a valuable contribution to the first years of the fledgling community; it also shows how much can be learned from sources other than the *Historical Essay.*

During the eighteenth century the Sephardi Jewish community gained in importance. Accorded extensive privileges and helped by the fact that they formed a considerable part of the small white population, the Jews were able to play a role in the political and economic development of the colony. The *Historical Essay* describes this period from a contemporary perspective and van Lier, using this source among others, gives a competent summary of the Jewish-Christian relationship together with the role of the Jews in the colony.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the *Historical Essay* was written during the 1780s, when the position of the Jews had markedly deteriorated. It purposely creates the impression of an undoubtedly genuine regression, valid only in comparison with the earlier period. Many a community in the old world would have considered itself extremely fortunate to have obtained the privileges of Surinam Jewry at the end of the eighteenth century.

Still, there was friction. Van der Meiden discusses the political tension during the middle of the eighteenth century, in which the Jews played a major role. The article analyzes the conflict from the political point of view, paying particular attention to the role of Governor Mauricius.[6]

The legal position of the Sephardi Jews in Surinam is dealt with in Schiltkamp's article. It describes the unique institution of the Jewish Jurator, or notary, and its

origins. Schiltkamp also examines the role of the Nassy family in the development of this office.

The Nassys were undoubtedly one of the leading families of the Sephardi community and, in the next article, Bijlsma provides a biography of their most famous son. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, the principal author of the *Historical Essay,* in many ways personifies the Sephardi community. Through his biography one learns about the economic hardships of the community in the last quarter of the eighteenth-century, the inner workings of the community and the origins of the *Historical Essay.*

Most important, Bijlsma shows to what extent the spirit of Reason and Enlightment prevailed among the Surinam Sephardim. The erudition and knowledge of David de Isaac Nassy bear witness to the extent to which the intellectual climate of late eighteenth-century Europe had found its way to a remote Dutch colony.

Another kind of erudition is shown in Loker's article. The late eighteenth-century prayer of the Sephardi Jews in Surinam proves that a knowledge of Hebrew existed side by side with more secular education. Equally important, the prayer reflects the relationship between Jews and slaves, particularly runaway ones, a subject deserving more attention than could be given here.

The final article describes the socio-demographic mechanisms of the community, a topic hitherto totally neglected. It shows how different the Jewish community was from the rest of the white population, not only in its marriage customs, but also and especially in its demographic origins. The generation after the writing of the *Historical Essay* was overwhelmingly Surinam-born, a fact which contributed considerably to its stability.

None of the articles carries the survey beyond 1825. From that date on the Jewish community in Surinam was no longer based upon the privileges granted them in the middle of the seventeenth century. The change altered the community's character to such an extent as to make 1825 an appropriate date for the conclusion of a period.

When David de Isaac Cohen Nassy ended his *Historical Essay,* he was aware

> "that in this work we have left out many things which are to be desired, many articles which are susceptible of great reflections which could be developed both in regard to the Jews in particular and in regard to the colony.... in general. But if this work, despite its faults is worthy of attracting the attention of the public.... then we shall consider ourselves happy."

The sentiment expressed in the 1780s holds true two centuries later. This collection of articles will, we hope, renew interest in what was once of the most important concentrations of Jews in the western hemisphere.

---

1. *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam, sa fondation, ses révolutions, ses progrès, depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours: avec l'histoire de la nation juive portugaise et allemande y établie, leurs privileges* (Paramaribo, 1788, reprinted Amsterdam, 1976). The Dutch translation is *Geschiedenis der Kolonie van Suriname. Behelzende derzelver opkomst, voortgang, burgerlijke en staatkundige gesteldheid, tegenwoordigen staat van koophandel, en eene volledige naauwkeurige*

beschrijving van het land, de zeden en gebruiken der ingezetenen. Geheel op nieuw samengesteld door een gezelschap van geleerde Joodsche mannen aldaar (Amsterdam, Harlingen, 1791, reprinted Amsterdam, 1974). A second edition of the Dutch text appeared as *Geschied en handelkundig tafereel van de Bataafsche West-Indische Colonien bijzonderlijk van Suriname samengesteld uit echte bescheiden en op gronden van ondervinding* (Amsterdam, 1802). The English translation is titled *Historial Essay on the Colony of Surinam, 1788,* translated by Simon Cohen and edited by Jacob R. Marcus and Stanley F. Chyet (Cincinnati, New York, 1974). In the following articles the notes refer to the English edition.

2. *Ibid.,* p. 8.

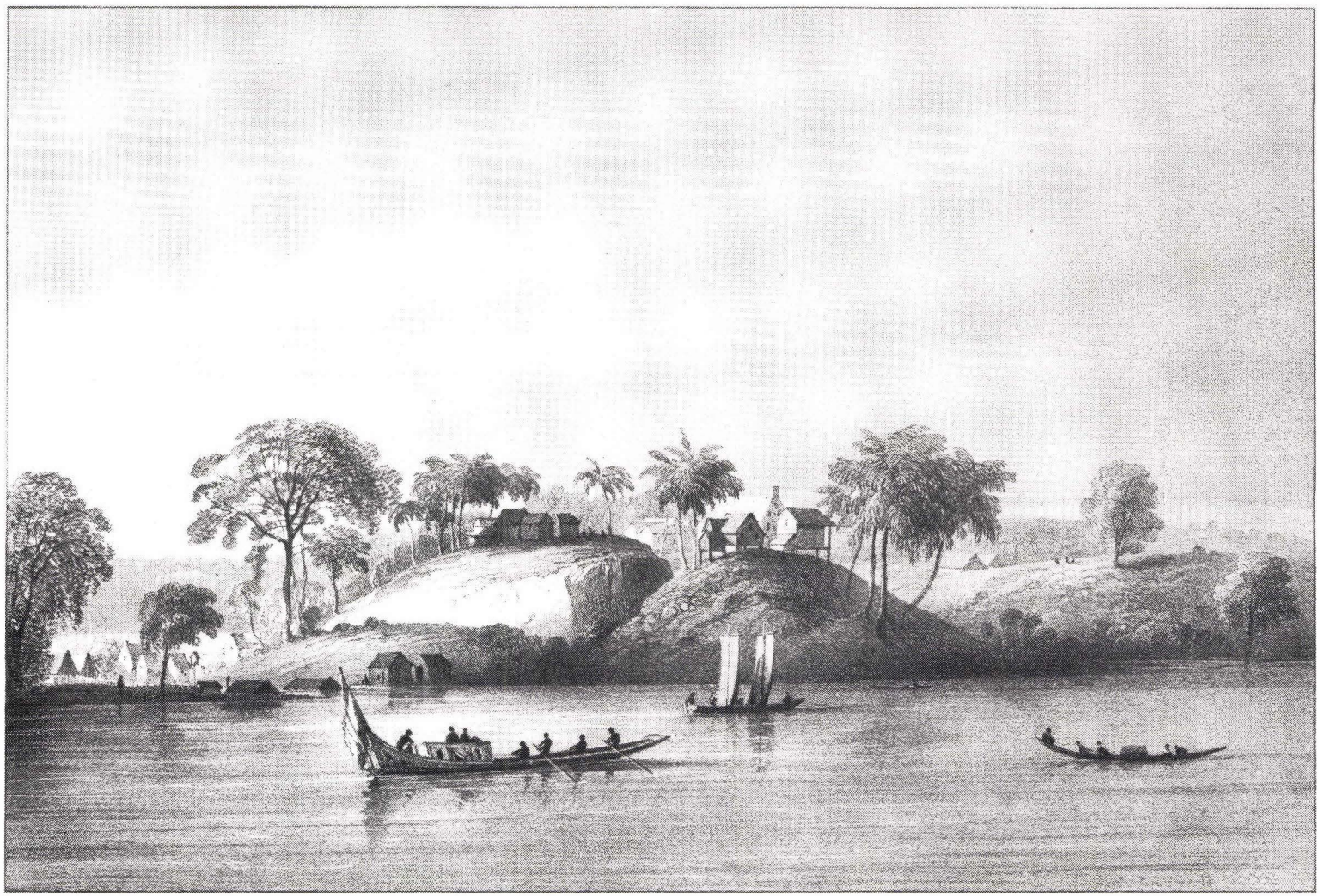
3. Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew 1492-1776* (Detroit, 1970), pp. 152-153.

4. R.A.J. van Lier, *Samenleving in een Grensgebied. Een Sociaal-Historische Studie van Suriname* (The Hague, 1949, reprinted 1971 and 1977). Translated into English as *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague, 1971); L.L.E. Rens, "Analysis of Annals Relating to Early Jewish Settlement in Surinam," *Vox Guyanae,* I (1954), pp. 19-38; R. Bijlsma, "David de Is. C. Nassy, schrijver van de *Essai historique sur Surinam," Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde,* 5th series, VI (1919), pp. 218-233.

5. It has been stated repeatedly, for example, that the Jews had established a community by 1643. Elsewhere I have shown that this is based on a faulty reading of a *Ketuba* (marriage contract). There were no Jews in Surinam at such an early date. See R. Cohen, "The misdated Ketuba: A Note on the Beginnings of the Surinam Jewish Community," *American Jewish Archives,* forthcoming.

6. For an extensive discussion of the conflict from the Jewish community's point of view, see Beatrice L.D. Eckhaus-Leyh, *A Survey of the Position of the Sephardi Jews in Iberia During the Moors and Christians: Aspects of their Existence in the New World, Especially in Brazil, Essequibo, Surinam, Barbados, Jamaica, and Curaçao* (M.A. Thesis, Amsterdam Municipal University, 1979). The author shows the importance of internal conflicts as the basis for the struggle surrounding Governor Mauricius.

7. *Historical Essay,* p. 168.



The Jewish Savannah. Lithograph by Madou after Benoit.
From: Benoit, Voyage à Suriname, 1839.

R.A.J. VAN LIER

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SURINAM:
A HISTORICAL SURVEY

The Jews in Surinam are the only group of white colonists to have settled there long before Emancipation and to have maintained their identity as a separate group. In 1652 a number of Jews entered the country with Parham and in 1666 a new group under David (Cohen) Nassy arrived.[1]

When in 1654 the Jews were denied free worship in Portuguese territory a large number of them left Brazil for the Netherlands, where in 1659 they received an important charter from the West India Company. This charter granted a number of them the right to settle in Cayenne, which had for the greater part been conquered by the Dutch in 1656 and 1657. They further received freedom of worship, the right to administer their own form of justice, and a number of privileges in connection with taxation. This group settled in Cayenne but moved to Surinam when Cayenne was conquered by the French in 1664. There they were given a favourable reception by the British. The group consisted of well-to-do people who brought with them their wealth and slaves and in particular the techniques of plantation agriculture which they had learnt in Brazil. They exercised considerable influence on the development of plantation agriculture. One of them, a certain David Mercato, is reported to have invented a new method of constructing sugar mills in 1663.[2]

After the Colony was conquered by the Zealanders a number of Jews moved away, many Jewish persons leaving the country in 1670, 1675 and 1677. The number of Jews rapidly increased again, however, and in 1694 there lived 92 Portuguese Jewish and 10 to 12 German Jewish families in Surinam, while the number of single persons was 50. They were the owners of 40 sugar estates with in a total of 9,000 slaves in that year. Most of these estates were situated on the upper Surinam River. It was there, three hours' rowing from Paramaribo, that the Joden Savanne, the Jewish village containing a large synagogue which was inaugurated in 1685, was also located. Some of the Jews, however, have also lived in and around Paramaribo since the beginning of the 18th century. But the Joden Savanne was the centre of Jewish life in the Colony. At the beginning of the 19th century this Jewish settlement gradually became derelict and has lain almost totally abandoned since 1832. Religious life was thereupon centred wholly in the town, where the Portu-

guese Israelite (since 1737) and the German Israelite (since 1735) communities each had their own synagogue. The synagogue of the German Israelite group originally belonged to the Portuguese Jews, who had founded it in 1720 and given it to the German Jews 15 years later. Relations between the two groups were often strained. This is evident from, among other things, resolutions by which the German community imposed fines on any of its members visiting the Portuguese synagogue, or which stipulate that anyone marrying a "Portuguese" is liable to "having his name struck off the list of members and demoted to associate members." The latter regulation was not repealed until 1814; it also applied in cases of marriage to "mulattoes".[4]

The Jews, and in particular the Portuguese Jews, formed a separate group with political rights of its own. In 1665 they were granted a number of important privileges. They had the right of free worship and were, moreover, granted additional privileges which exempted them from the obligation of fulfilling compulsory public offices and performing military service, provided they supplied replacements and there was no threat of an enemy invasion. They were also given permission to draw up wills and conclude marriages in accordance with their own custom and to conduct their own trials, provided the verdict did not amount to a fine exceeding 10,000 pounds of sugar.

When Abraham Crijnssen conquered the settlement in 1667 the treaty concluded on its transfer stipulated "that all present inhabitants, of whatever nationality they may be, will share and enjoy the same privileges as the Netherlanders with whom they will live together". (Article 4).[5]

The policy which the Society pursued did not introduce any changes in the position of the Jews. In 1669 Governor Lichtenberg granted them the right to work on Sundays, while he furthermore promised to enforce the orders of the Jewish church board in cases of disobedience and to have agitators in the Jewish community expelled from the Colony on the advice of "Representatives of the Nation" in order to maintain discipline in church matters. In 1671 a special Jewish civic guard was sworn in, which was also referred to in resolutions of the governor and his councillors as that of "the Jewish quarter". The privileges of the Jews were explicitly confirmed in a missive dated 10th December, 1685, from the directors of the Society to van Sommelsdijck.[6] This did nothing to prevent friction from arising as a result of these privileges and the special place occupied by the Jews, however, so that the latent anti-Semitism which the colonists had not left behind them when leaving the mother-country reared its head again and assumed a more definite form. Disputes about the right of Jews to conclude marriages soon arose. In 1705 it was resolved to permit the Jews to celebrate marriages only "after a marriage certificate issued by the *Hof* could be produced, on penalty of a fine of 200 florins". The right to work on Sundays especially gave offence. Van Sommelsdijck wanted to put a stop to this, but after a petition by two prominent Jews in Holland, Count Belmonte and Samuel Nassy, who had settled in Holland after a prolonged stay in Surinam, the directors decided that the privilege should be upheld. But this verdict did not in the end prevent the revocation of this

privilege a few decades later anyway. The Jews were prohibited from carrying on trade and opening their shops on Sundays.[7]

The opening paragraph of the edict prohibiting this clearly shows the resentment felt against the Jewish community. It also reveals that the prohibition was issued after protests were raised by the consistories of the Protestant communities.

> "Greetings to all those who see or hear this read, by which we announce that we have reflected on the complaints of the Honourable Consistories of the Dutch and French communities respectively submitted to the Lord *Raad Fiscaal* here in Paramaribo, and referred to us by His Honour, namely to the effect that members of the Jewish nation in this town have no scruples about opening their shops on Sundays, notwithstanding our edicts and resolutions to the contrary, this day being set aside for religious worship, as though in desecration of the same and in order to vex the Christians; that they display all kinds of wares in their windows and peddle them in the streets; and what is more, that they allow their womenfolk to sew and knit and do all kinds of needle work in their doorways not only on that day, but at the very times when we are on our way to church, with every appearance of doing so with premeditated intentions of depreciating our religion and scorning our edicts" (Edict 11th November, 1718).

In a small community differences between residents are apt to vex and give rise to friction. Hence the historical sources on Surinam contain numerous data on conflicts with the Jewish group about their privileges. Nonetheless the relationship was not generally speaking bad until the middle of the 18th century. Van Sommelsdijck himself had a very high opinion of the Jews. In 1684 he writes to the directors of the Society:

> "Finally, in conclusion of the above, I must bear testimony to the extreme contentment which the docility, industry, the friendly disposition and the honesty with which the Jewish nation acts and behaves here has given me, and continues to give me daily; and I wish I could say a quarter as much of our Christians."[8]

Jews were appointed to some public functions, such as that of notary and assistant tax collector; but none of them ever succeeded in being appointed to a top function in the 17th or 18th century, or was ever elected a member of the Council of Policy. It can nonetheless be said that the Portuguese Jewish planters were respected, and mixed socially with the other planters before the middle of the 18th century.[9]

The chief cause of the anti-Semitism which developed after 1750 was of a political nature. From the beginning the Jews, who somehow continued to consider themselves a somewhat discriminated group and who were probably aware of the latent anti-Semitism of the planters, sought the protection of the directors of the Society in Holland and that of the representatives of the latter in the Colony, namely the governors. They tried to render the governors certain services, and it became customary for the representatives of the Jews to call on the governor on the eve of an election of a new member of the Council of Policy in order to ask him which can-

didate pleased him. This seems to have been a long-standing tradition in the Colony. Mauricius reports that he came up against it as soon as he arrived in the Colony.

> "The custom in accordance with which the Jewish representatives or their so-called governors came to pay their respects to the governor on the evening before and to ask him whom His Excellency recommends is as old as the Colony itself, one which I did not introduce but found here ready-made."[10]

An utterance in the *Journaal* of acting Governor Beeldsnijder Matroos, where he observes with reference to an election that

> "The behaviour of the Jewish nation, having little to fear from the power of an interim governor who is about to retire, has been high-handed in the extreme in this matter, although they are otherwise the persons through whom a governor may force the nomination, *sed transeat cum caeteris*; and it is almost a matter of indifference, as most of the elected members mix more with their colleagues than with the governor and his ministers anyway,"[11]

testifies that this tradition still existed in the latter part of the 18th century. The antagonism between the colonists and the Society and its representative the governor which later arose in the political life, also gave rise to friction between the other colonists and the Jews, who supported the government.

The existing political tensions reached their climax under Mauricius' governorship and in the period following his retirement from office. The Jews supported Mauricius' party – although sometimes, under special circumstances, they withdrew their support – and this way gave offence to the other inhabitants. This resentment against them has never quite disappeared, especially as the Jewish group has upheld the tradition of supporting the governor.

In my view this is one of the main causes of the forms of anti-Semitism which developed here and which, one they had appeared, were constantly aggravated by new conflicts and controversies. It does not surprise us to find a number of grievances formulated especially against the Jews in the *Verzoekpunten van Redres* (Request Items for Redress), a petition submitted by Mauricius' enemies to the government in Holland on behalf of the planters and other residents. A request is made in Article XXIII to exclude the Jews from elections of members of the Council of Policy as "no other Christian nations permit or suffer Jews to take a hand in running the affairs of the country;" moreover, "(they) offer the Governor their vote, or the latter is exhorted from them by promises or threats."[12] However, the government in Holland did not comply with the planters' wishes in respect of the Jews.

The relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish colonists gradually worsened. In 1761 a few members of the Council of Policy conceived a plan to allocate special residential quarters to the Jews. The directors in Holland did not reject this plan, but pointed out in their reply with reference to the proposal that the privileges of the Jews had to be upheld, [13] and no further measures were ever taken to put this plan into execution. These anti-Jewish feelings became rather more dangerous when the economic position of the Jews deteriorated

markedly during the 1765/1775 crisis in Surinam. The Jews were hardest hit of all the groups. The general causes of the crisis, namely the raising of huge loans which were not put to a profitable use for improvements on the estates or which were spent injudiciously, speculations in respect of credit opportunities, and, in conclusion, the suspension of credit, made themselves felt equally to Jewish estate owners. But the position of the Jews became especially unfavourable as a result of a special circumstance which had arisen before, but which had particularly disastrous consequences at this time. The Jews were among the oldest estate owners, and on their lands, situated along the Surinam River, as everywhere else in the Colony, there had been much overcropping. It did not occur to owners to use fertilizers. The soil on these holdings now began to be exhausted, and produced lower and lower yields. This was one of the chief reasons why Jewish estate owners were unable to carry on. The crisis reached its climax between the years 1770 and 1775, when Dutch moneylenders proceeded to sell the estates of owners who failed to pay the interest due. A large number of estates was sold in this period, and the Jews were hardest hit of all. The prejudices which the rest of the community had formed against them made it impossible for them to obtain more credit, like the other planters; not were they given the opportunity – as many other planters who had lost their estates were – to carry on as managers of their former properties. Moreover, they did not succeed in gaining admission to the ranks of the *administrateurs*, whose turn it now was to amass large fortunes as the representatives of absentee owners. In 1760 Jews still owned 115 of the 591 estates, the majority of which were sugar estates, while by 1788 this number had dwindled to 46, including 16 sugar and coffee estates, the remainder consisting mostly of timber estates.[14] The prejudices against the Jews had gradually assumed a stereotyped form. They were held responsible for the running away of slaves, as they had sent a number of their slaves into the jungle during the French invasion in 1712 so as to reduce their share in the levy imposed by the French admiral. After that they supposedly caused a marked increase in the number of deserters because of the cruel treatment to which they subjected their slaves, amongst whom they failed to keep discipline, moreover, as a result of the large number of Jewish feasts on which work was at a standstill. Some accused them of too great a familiarity with their slaves, others of excessive cruelty. They were said to be bad farmers who had only themselves to blame for their ruin.[15] The authors of the *Historical Essay* have produced sufficient evidence to disprove these views. These persisted until Emancipation, however, and claimed many innocent victims among the Jews. Especially the view that Jews were exceptionally cruel masters for their slaves constantly recurs in the literature on Surinam. We find allusions to this in the writings of Hartsinck and Stedman, while even as late as the 19th century Teenstra wrote about the cruel treatment which slaves received especially at the hand of Jewish owners.[16]

I have not come across any evidence that the treatment to which Jews subjected their slaves was any worse than that given them by other planters. There are even occasional remarks to the effect that slaves were

contented under a Jewish master. But it may be that Jews created the impression in the 19th century of being cruel, tyrannic slave owners as they were at that time one of the few groups of original colonists which, more than any other group, had unconsciously preserved the customs of the past of a slave colony both through a certain familiarity with their slaves and through severity of punishment. Moreover, a number of Jews were active opponents of Emancipation. This aroused a hostile attitude towards them on the part of the common people and the protagonists of Emancipation. The *Historical Essay* summarizes the position of the Jews after 1770 as set out below. After drawing the conclusion that until Mauricius' time the Jews lived under favourable circumstances, in spite of a few petty annoyances and slight difficulties in connection with their privileges, the authors continue:

> But as soon as the Jews lost their well-being, and poverty made itself felt, all resources were closed to them, and only continual contempt and estrangement from all that interested them, and the insulting word *Smous* was applied in abundance to Portuguese and German Jews without distinction, until it later became the favorite word employed by the slaves themselves to designate with contempt any Jew whatsoever: the unfortunate results of the habits of children in the houses of their fathers, and of slaves in those of their masters.
>
> In consequence, the houses of the Jews were no longer frequented by the Christians, and they were never invited to their homes on any festival or on any private or public occasion of rejoicing. They were even spoken to with arrogance, and several times the Jews experienced (almost to juridical condemnation) what *Candide* said when he came to Surinam. Later on this estrangement gave birth to an indifference which was just as remarkable, and which was transmitted from father to son; the bulk of the Christians attached a sort of baseness to having familiarity with the Jews. Forgotten, then, by their fellow-inhabitants, they resumed among themselves in their households a manner of living which, though far removed from ostentation and from minute and forced tidiness, is perhaps more natural and more moral in the eyes of a good philosophic observer than that which is done elsewhere. This indifference which, giving vent to prejudice, produced hatred, was the reason why at the least fault committed by one of its members, the whole Jewish community was blamed for it. Never had "such and such a Jew" committed such and such a crime; but, *the Jews committed it,* and although several wrongs done to the Jewish community were constantly redressed by the always uniform conduct of the Lords Proprietors, prejudice followed its course.[17]

This is an excellent analysis of the origin of an anti-Semitic current and its symptoms. In Surinam, as everywhere else, the Jew was made a scapegoat in times of severe stress.

In the Jewish group itself the misfortune which had struck it effected the changes which are also observable in contemporary situations whenever there is a crisis in the life of the Jews. The Jews developed acute

feelings of guilt and regarded the misfortune which befell them as a form of divine retribution. Feelings of aggression in respect of the other inhabitants of the Colony which they were not able to express or give vent to in any other way, were directed against their own group. The ancient canon law was applied with the utmost ruthlessness; bigotry had free play, whilst the governors exerted their penal authority freely. So the Jews faced an extremely difficult time. They were no longer appointed to minor public functions as before, and they were prohibited from carrying on trade as bakers or grocers. The Jewish civic guard was reviled during its drills and the slaves of Jewish planters were forbidden to spend the night in town. All these measures were rationalized through the existing prejudices. Another example of discrimination was the prohibition against Jews visiting the theatre. For this reason they opened a theatre of their own in 1776, the standard of acting of which, according to the author of the *Remarques,* was much higher than that of the Dutch theatre. The fact that various colonists of non-Jewish descent performed as amateurs in the Jewish theatre shows that there was not a total discrimination.[18]

Conditions improved for the Jews several decades later under the governorship of Texier, who was well disposed towards them. Under his governorship the later Governor Wichers – who was the founder of the *Genootschap voor Natuurstudie* (Nature Study Society) for membership of which Jews were also eligible – was *Raad-Fiscaal.* Under Governor Wichers more changes for the better were introduced. Wichers became patron of the Jewish literary society, *Docendo Docemur,* and himself took a constructive part in its activities, together with a number of prominent citizens, including the later Governor Friderici. For the first time in years a Jew was even appointed to a government function.[19]

There was only a slight improvement in the economic position of the Jews. A number of them lived on a meagre income; these persons were employed as clerks in the offices of *administrateurs* and of a few commercial houses. The *Historical Essay* mentions further 150 poor Jewish families who had to make a living from retail trade in a town which offered an extremely limited scope in this field and in which numerous private citizens had their slaves carry on trade. The trade in plantation products was a side line in which housewives and even well-to-do ladies in the country engaged. A group of 100 to 120 people still eked out a miserable existence in the Joden Savanne with as their main source of income the trade with the officers and soldiers of the nearby military post.

Nonetheless, a considerable amount of wealth was still in Jewish hands. Of the 1,119 houses in Paramaribo with a value of 8,000 to 80,000 florins, 213 of varying values were owned by Jews. There were still some families who owned huge fortunes, as well as a group with smaller fortunes, which they derived mainly from the timber trade.[20] But an estimated two-thirds of the Jewish population lived in poverty. This group consisted mainly of Surinam-born Jews who had lost their fortunes, though it had also grown in consequence of the immigration of poor Jews. A law prohibiting the settlement in the Colony of Jews without capital was therefore promulgated.[21]

In 1825 a change took place in the position of the Jews which eventually led to a development which enabled Jews to occupy an influential position in the Colony. In the beginning of the 19th century there were, however, no signs of this later development. In a missive to the Council of State, Governor Beranger, although himself a man of liberal views, advised against equality of religion and against the eligibility of every citizen for every function as he feared that the appointment of Jews was bound to result in chaos.[22]

The prejudice against them was as strong as ever after the British interregnum. A.F. Lammens, member of the Court of Justice in Paramaribo and later its president, noted in his Journal in 1816:

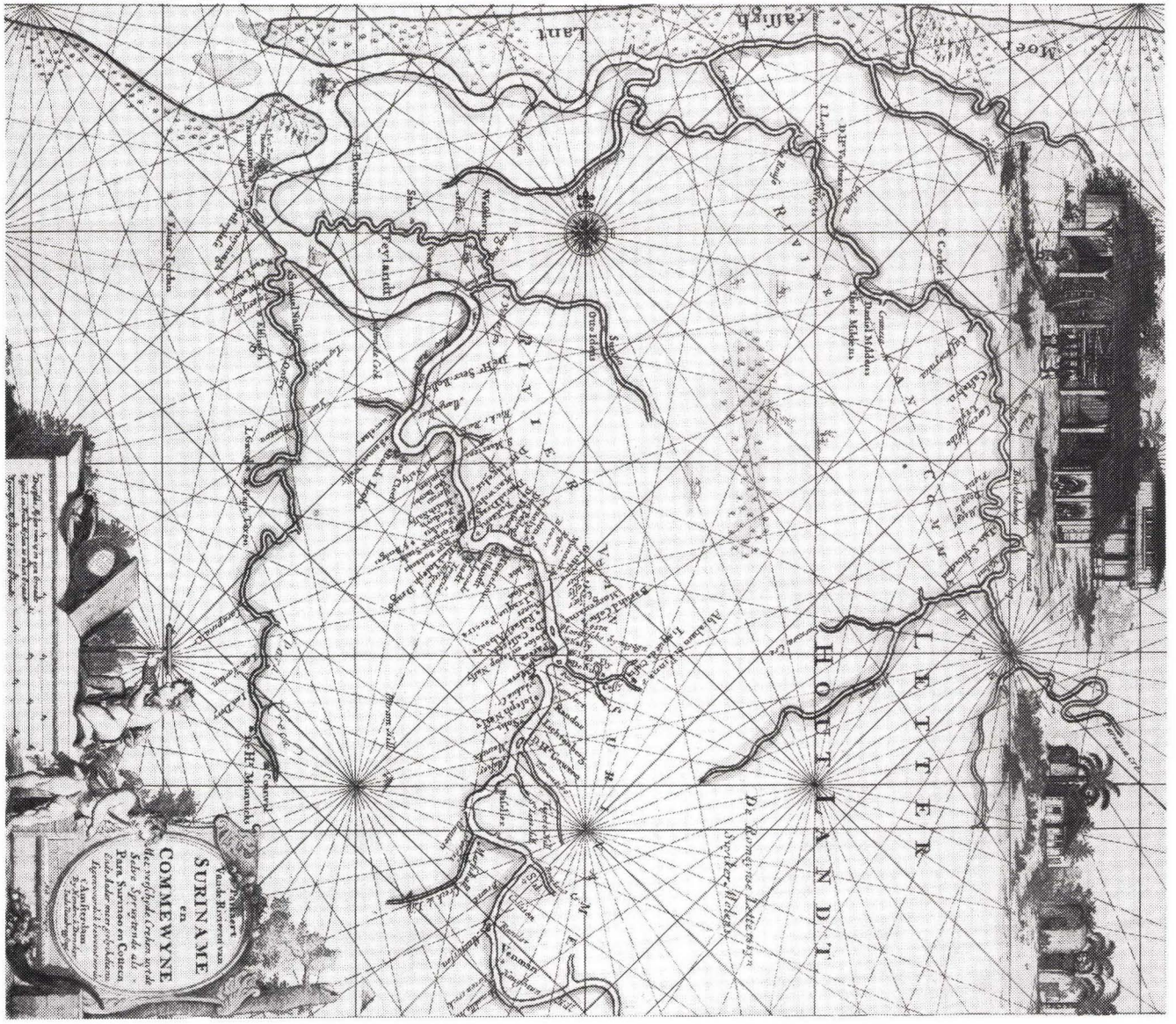
> "Article 26 of the Constitution stipulates that the Council of Policy and its members should be composed of estate owners; this severely limits the choice, as there are few Non-Jewish colonists who are estate owners, and it was not considered desirable to have Jews in the Council."[23]

In 1825, however, the Jews were given the same rights as members of other denominations and on the basis of this an end was put to their privileges at the same time. The Order of the Crown of 2nd April, 1824, to this effect was promulgated by Governor General de Veer on 20th June, 1825. At the repeated instigation of Commissioner General Van den Bosch, who spent some time in Surinam in 1828, more Jews were appointed to public functions as well. Equal civil rights were emphatically conferred on all citizens, "no matter what their creed or colour," and the authorities were admonished to fight existing prejudices, in Article 116 of the Constitution drawn up by Van den Bosch.[24]

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2. H.D. Benjamins and J.F. Snelleman, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indie* (The Hague, 1914-1917), p. 386. J. Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname, van de ontdekking van Amerika tot op den tegenwoordigen tijd* (Amsterdam, 1861, repr. 1970) p. 36.
3. Benjamins and Snelleman, *p. cit.*, p. 386.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
5. *Historical Essay,* on *the Colony of Surinam 1788.* Translated by Simon Cohen. Edited by Jacob R. Marcus & Stanley F. Chyet (Cincinnati, N.Y., 1974) pp. 188-189, 192.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 48, 236-237.
8. R. Bijlsma, "De Brieven van Gouverneur van Aerssen van Sommelsdyck", *WIG* (1923), p. 437.
9. *Historical Essay,* pp. 103-104.
10. *Recueil van egte stukken en bewijzen,* door Salomon du Plessis (...) tegen *Mr. Jan Jacob Mauricius* (...), (Amsterdam, 1752-1754), Vol. II, p. 96.
11. Journal of Governor Beeldsnijder Matroos, December 9th, 1784. Old Archives of the Government Secretariat (Governor's Archives) of the colony Surinam. A.R.A.
12. J.J. Hartsinck, *Beschrijving van Guyana of de Wilde Kust in Zuid Amerika* (Amsterdam, 1770), Vol. II, p. 817 ff.
13. *Historical Essay,* p. 106; Wolbers, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100, 129.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 101, 236-237.
16. M.D. Teenstra, *De Negerslaven in Suriname* (Dordrecht, 1842), p. 46.
17. *Historical Essay*, p. 104.
18. *Remarques critiques sur le Tableau Historique* (London, Amsterdam, 1779).
19. *Historical Essay*, p. 117, 213-219.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 151, 239.
21. Wolbers, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
23. L.C. van Panhuys, "Mr Lammens over het bestuur van Suriname in 1816", *WIG* (1934), p. 160.
24. Regeeringsreglement, July 24th, 1828 (*Gouvernementsblad van Suriname*, No. 3 Government Gazette).



The map of Surinam by Doncker, 1678.

L.L.E. RENS

ANALYSIS OF ANNALS RELATING TO EARLY JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN SURINAM

Owing to a deplorable lack of concrete data the early history of Surinam, as it came down to us, is full of half-truths, unfounded assertions, arbitrary statements, and false interpretations of the scanty records, which sometimes give a picture quite different from what presents itself to the eye of the investigator. This paper is concerned with the legend regarding a supposed departure of many hundreds of Jews, said to have left for Jamaica and other English West Indian islands, in the decade following on the peace treaty of Breda in 1667.

Its purpose is to subject this period in our history to as close a scrutiny as is possible, in order to arrive at the truth in this matter.

One of the oldest authorities, and the principal source of information regarding the history of the Jews in Surinam is the *Historical Essay*,[1] which is, however, not always exact in the matter of the earliest settlement of the Jews in these parts. The *Historical Essay* tells us that after the peace of treaty of Breda twelve hundred people left for Jamaica, most of whom were Jews who had come with Willoughby to Surinam.[2] A few pages further it mentions ten more Jewish families, who left with their slaves in 1677.[3] ...

These statements... suggest that the Jewish population of 1667 was very large, approaching, if not actually exceeding, a figure of 1000. This view has been adopted by all those who wrote on this subject. There are, however, no data, factual, statistical or otherwise, available, that would warrant such a supposition. On the contrary, everything points to a very small Jewish minority, so small indeed, that it needed the departure of the English, and the absence of Dutch planters, to bring the Jewish element into relief, and to accentuate its existence in the community.

In the following pages we shall first try to establish this point, and then prove the historians wrong in the matter of the exodus.

The beginning of Jewish settlement in Surinam can be placed round the mid-fifties of the seventeenth century, probably even later.[4]

The first intimation of the presence of Jews in the country we get from a petition to the King of England, dated April 8, 1661, in which Benjamin de Caseres, Henry de Caseres, and Jacob Fraso ask permission to 'live and trade in Barbados and Surinam'.[5]

The request is granted, and when we find that in 1662 one Henrico de Caseres is mentioned as a resident of Surinam, it looks like we can identify him with Henry de Caseres, especially as we can infer from the text that this gentleman was sometimes absent from the colony.[6]

From Sanford's pamphlet it also appears that there were other Jews in Surinam at the time, and that they lived at the capital Thorarica. This seems very important to us, as it is an indication that the Jews in Surinam were then not engaged in any agricultural occupation.

When Byam issued the famous grant of privileges to the Jews in 1665, he expressly made mention in it of Jewish residents. It is therefore beyond all doubt that there were Jewish settlers in Surinam between 1661 and 1665. The question that immediately presents itself to us is now: Where did these Jews come from?

Passing under review the countries they might have used as starting-points, we shall consider briefly the possibilities which each offered for the emigration of Jews to Surinam.

Brazil. Nowhere has it been stated in the records that Jews came directly from Brazil to Surinam. We find evidences of their going to French and Dutch possessions, both in the Caribbean area and on the continent of South America. They are also known to have emigrated to British West Indian islands. But Surinam is never mentioned. The Jewish planters from Brazil, with their knowledge of making sugar, would have had a hearty welcome in a country that was in the experimental stage as regards sugar production. The addition of a group of experienced sugar planters would have been a fact that could scarcely have been overlooked by all those who wrote about the new colony of Lord Willoughby, neither in Surinam itself nor in the mother-colony of Barbados, which regarded Surinam as a potential competitor and consequently feared its growth and development. This does, of course, not preclude the possibility of individual colonisation, but even if this should haven taken place the number of Brazilian Jews must have been insignificant.

Barbados. In the early years of British colonial history Jews were not permitted to practise their religion in English possessions. This was, of course, a serious check on their willingness to settle in British colonies. The first professing Jews to be admitted to Barbados were one Abraham de Mercado, a doctor of medicine from Recife, and his son. These two people settled there in 1656.[7]

The Jews being what they are in matters of religion, there is hardly any need of records to show us that their number in this island cannot have been considerable at the time. In a letter from the governor of Barbados, Sir Jonathan Atkins, to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, dated July 1676, this gentleman puts the number of Jews at 'not over 30 families'.[8] So far no records have been discovered of any Barbadian Jews, who asked for permission to settle in Surinam. But even if such records are or were in existence it is clear that the number of emigrants from this island must have been extremely small.

England. It is not surprising that there are hardly any records of Jews who left England to emigrate to Surinam.[9]

The reason is no doubt that if they went (and there is no reason to limit this emigration to the one case Mr. Oppenheim found), the fact cannot have made a great impression on the English. The Jews in England were traders, not planters. Expelled from this country in 1290 it was more than three centuries before they were again admitted to the British Isles. It was Cromwell, who, realizing the value the rich Portuguese and Spanish Jews, with their financial ability and their extensive trade relations, would have for England's economy, re-admitted them (though not openly, because of the strong opposition to this measure) into the country. These Jews were, of course, merchants and traders. An evidence of this we find in the Jewish Encyclopedia, which tells us that 'towards the middle of the seventeenth century a considerable number of Marano merchants settled in London'.[10]

It is clear that the English never looked upon the Jews in their country as potential agricultural colonists. Samuel Oppenheim writes: 'The English are not known to have solicited or encouraged Jewish colonists to go to Guiana.'[11]

Jamaica. Captured from the Spaniards in 1655 it began to attract colonists a few years later. Its possibilities were such that the comers were stayers, as is testified by the steady growth of its population.

There were some Jews in the French colonies of Martinique and St. Christopher.[12] But as the French only tolerated, and never seem to have encouraged any Jewish colonization to their territories, the extent of Jewish settlement in these places cannot have been considerable.

In the *Dutch colonies* The treatment was far better than in English possessions. They were granted several privileges, and if any Jews in these colonies left them to settle in Surinam, where they were without any official protection, the cases cannot but be looked upon as exceptional.

In view of the above, even if the Jewish population of Surinam should have been composed of people from all the places mentioned, we are compelled to reckon with small numbers.

In support of this statement we cite from Oppenheim: 'In a work published in 1671, but apparently limited to events up to between 1660 and 1665, we find a significant reference to the small number of Jews in Surinam under the English.' (Oppenheim gives his source as: Lewes Roberts, *The Merchants' Map of Commerce,* London, 1671, p. 60, 2nd Edition.) 'The statement' he continues, reads: 'Some few Jews live here and trade also as merchants, they having obtained a license from the King so to do.'[13]

Even if Mr. Lewes Roberts had not spoken of 'some few Jews', the fact that these Jews were merchants (as is expressly stated by him) positively points to a very limited number. For the King would never have given permission to so many traders to settle in Surinam that their number would have been out of all proportion to the total population. And this total population, in 1661 nearly 1,000 people, is not likely to have exceeded 2,000 by far, as we can infer from the lists of Englishmen to leave the colony after 1667. In trying to ascertain the extent of the Jewish population a comparison with Barbados, where conditions cannot

have differed much from those in Surinam, will prove most instructive. In 1672/73 the inhabitants of Barbados 'by lists taken during Lord (William) Willoughby's life' amounted to 9,274 white men over 16 years of age, 3,600 boys and 8,435 women and girls.[14] At this time there were 'not over thirty families' of Jewish nationality in the island, that is, between 120 and 150 people, or maximally 0.75 per cent of the total white population. Estimating the white population of Surinam at 2,000 to 2,500 persons, it seems that we can proportionally fix the number of Jews at 15 to 20 persons. We must, however, take into consideration the fact that, owing to the much smaller number of inhabitants of Surinam, the percentage of a minority, like the Jews, is likely to increase. We therefore feel fully justified in putting their number at about thirty. Such a number accords very well with the 'some few Jews' of Lewes Roberts.

It is not long, however, before conditions force the English to change their attitude in matters of Jewish colonization, from indifference to actual encouragement. Round 1660 Surinam is their one and only foothold on the continent of South America. On both sides it is flanked by Dutch settlements. On the left Essequebo, Pomeroon, and Berbice, and on the right Cayenne. These colonies are much smaller and less thriving, it is true, but potential, if not actual, competitors on the sugar market. The policy of the Dutch West India Company to grant religious freedom and other liberties to all the settlers in its territory is now realized as a positive factor towards attracting experienced Jewish planters from Brazil. They settle in Cayenne, they settle in Essequebo, in Pomeroon and in Berbice. But the most important and largest of the colonies in Guiana is given a wide berth. Thus matters stood when in 1664 the French, reasserting previous rights, captured the Dutch settlement in Cayenne. A French-Dutch treaty of May 1664 guaranteed the Jews freedom of worship.[15]

But these Jews, who had already suffered much at the hands of the French in these parts,[16] apparently did not trust them. Moreover, probably owing to its unstable condition, the Cayenne settlement does not seem to have flourished. The greater part of the Dutchmen and Jews left the colony, and most of them went to Surinam.[17]

We estimate the number of Jewish colonists (that is, men, women, and children), who went to Surinam at about 100 persons. This is not a wild guess.

When the Dutchman Guerin Spranger settled on the island of Cayenne in 1656 he found the place deserted. It seems that Spranger's object was not so much the establishment of an agricultural enterprise as an attempt to find and exploit possible gold and silver mines.[18]

If there were any Jews in Spranger's party they did not remain in the island, for when Nassy's Leghorn Jews came over in 1660 the governor of the island Jan Claesz Langendijk 'only had from thirty to thirty-five people with him, mostly boys, and only twelve laborers, and had planted and cultivated nothing to speak of.'[19]

The difficulties which Nassy's Jews experienced before they were permitted to settle in the island[20] are an indication to us that there were no Jews among the 'thirty to thirty-five people, mostly boys.'

This group of 152 people from Leghorn sent hither by David Nassy was the first and only large body of Jews to settle in the island of Cayenne. Hartsinck informs us that in 1663 the directors of the West India Company sent a group of colonists to Cayenne, but does not add if there were any Jews among them.[21]

It is very likely that after Nassy's group more Jews settled in Cayenne. These must then be considered individual cases of migration, as we do not come across any large bodies of immigrants. In view of the oft repeated forays of Baron Gerbier's soldiers, in which the sugar crops were damaged, it is not probable that (apart from the group of 1663 sent in support of the existing colony) there was any substantial addition to the colony. It is therefore difficult to believe that in four years the Jewish colony should have increased to more than, or even double its original number. It seems to us that, in estimating the number of Jews at 150 to 250 people, we are really having a very liberal maximum.

Before we can form a more or less trustworthy estimation of the number of Jews, who fled to Surinam we must consider the following factors.

1. After the French occupation of the island in 1664 a large number of Jews and Dutchmen were transported to La Rochelle.[22]

2. When the English took Cayenne in 1667 there were still between 50 and 60 Jews in the island.[23] There is no reason to believe that these were newcomers. It is incongruous to suppose that while Jews were being carried off by the French and others fled to a neighboring country, colonists of the same nation should settle in the place. It is known that the French, at this time, felt a kind of contemptuous tolerance towards the Jews, which may have been the cause that a number of them remained in the island. Moreover, the French must very well have realized that if they left, the place would be practically deserted. We can, therefore, look upon these 50 to 60 as the 'left-overs' of the original group.

3. It is possible that not all those who left went to Surinam. There were other Dutch possessions in the West Indies. There were other English possessions besides Surinam.[24]

We may, however, assume that practically all the Jews fleeing from Cayenne, went to Surinam, which had just opened its doors wide to this nation. Estimating the number of Jews shipped to La Rochelle at maximally 100 (that is not even half of their maximal number in the island), and taking into account the 50 to 60 who remained there, and the few who drifted to other places, we find a maximal figure of 100 Jewish fugitives from Cayenne. But these Jews could not have removed at once. Even if they had decided immediately after the surrender of the place to the French to leave Cayenne, it would have taken a considerable time to dismantle their sugar mills, to settle their affairs by paying off their debts and collecting the sums due to them. And they would have had to wait until shipping had been provided to carry them off with their families, their slaves, their cattle (indispensable in those early days of colonization), their personal property, including essential parts of their sugar mills.

The English, always practical, were quick to see the chance that was offered them here. Here was a large

body of planters, provided with everything necessary for sugar making, including slaves, on the point of leaving one country, and on the look-out for some new place of settlement. Though we have (naturally) no records about this, it is certain that a certain amount of negotiation was carried on between the interested parties before the decisive step was taken. It is but natural to assume that before settling down in any place these Jews wanted to make sure beforehand that they should in their new abode enjoy certain liberties regarding their religion and religious customs.

As for the English, the appearance of the grant, at this date, is not accidental. Towards the end of 1664 an epidemic broke out in Surinam, which beginning at Thorarica 'spred itselfe in the plantacions adjoyning' and 'swept many away'.[25]

That this epidemic cost a great many lives becomes apparent when Byam writes that 'thorough the late heavie visitacion of sickness, one forth part of ye ablest men are swept away...'[26]

But the colony had also suffered otherwise. The dissatisfaction at the high-handed methods of Willoughby had been the cause that about 200 men had left in various ships in 1665.[27]

It would appear then that the colony was in dire need of manpower. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the Governor William Byam, (who seems to have had a personal dislike to Jews[28]) looking for means to increase its manpower, and seeing a rather large group of planters wanting to remove from a neighboring settlement, grasped the chance with both hands.

Governor and Assembly issued a grant of privileges, in which the Jews living in Surinam, and those who wished to settle there, were promised freedom to plant and trade, free practice of their religion, exemption from public duties with the exception of military service, a tribunal of their own for the decision of minor suits, and a concession of ten acres of land at Thorarica, the capital to build a synagogue and schools, and to lay out a cemetery.[29] It is the first time in English history that full religious liberty and citizenship were granted to Jews. The mere handful of Jews in Surinam at the time would not have warranted this sweeping measure. Having the chance of going to other Dutch colonies in the vicinity where they were sure of the protection of the West India Company, the Cayenne Jews would not have come to Surinam if they had not been promised the same privileges as accorded to their nation in Dutch settlements. Issued on the 17th of August 1665, the grant is therefore, in our opinion, to be looked upon as an invitation to Jews in general, and the Cayenne Jews in particular. It also places the coming of these settlers in the second half of 1665.[30]

The number of Jewish settlers in Surinam may also have been increased by a small number of fugitives from Essequebo and Pomeroon (or New Zealand as it was also called). In the Anglo-Dutch war of 1665-67 the English attacked these colonies in January 1666. The usual complaints of extensive damage caused by the enemy to plantations, personal property and sugar works, which the losing party promptly made, are not lacking here. In this case, however, the facts seem to contradict them:

1. The defenders did not put up a stiff resistance,

but surrendered rather quickly, an attitude which the directors at Middelburg resented very much, of course.[31]

2. William Byam gives us the following account of the state of things after the English conquest. 'In a few months his (i.e. John Scott, the Commander-in-chief of the forces sent from Barbados to capture the Dutch possessions) great fortune and gallantry, prudent and industrious conduct made him master of all the great province of New Zealand and Desseceeb, settled a peace with the Arrowayes, left both colonies in a flourishing condition and well garrisond for the King of England...'[32]

The above statements make it difficult to believe that the English should wilfully have destroyed settlements that had not suffered any war-damage, and were, moreover, intended to be kept for England. The damage can therefore not have been very extensive.

A number of people left these colonies. Byam tells us that Dutchmen, Frenchmen and Jews fled to the French islands of Martinique and St. Christopher's.[33] In view of the above we are led to think that the reason for this flight was not so much due to the destruction of their property, as to the unwillingness of these people to live under English rule. A short time after the English conquest the colonies were plundered by a French fleet. As the French did not succeed in taking the forts, their stay in these parts was not of long duration. Soon after the Dutch recaptured the colonies.

The speedy restoration under Dutch flag, and the confirmation of the state of things by the peace treaty of Breda are not indicative of a migration on a large scale. It seems that Pomeroon had suffered most from the invasions, and that a number of plantations were deserted by their owners. We do not know where these people went.

It is not likely that the Dutch and French fled to enemy territory. But the Jews may very well have struck out for themselves, going to a neighbor who had already expressed his willingness to receive them.

There may also have been a number of Cayenne Jews among these fugitives. The *Chronological History* tells us that some of the Dutch settlers banished from Cayenne by the French in 1664, had left Europe as soon as possible, returning to the other Dutch settlements in Guiana, Essequebo and Pomeroon.[34]

As there had been a fair proportion of Jews among those that had been taken to La Rochelle, it is natural to suppose that there were also Jews among those who returned to Guiana.

These people could not yet have established themselves in their new location. And this may have made it easy for them, after the events of 1666, to turn their backs upon this part of Guiana. The Jews may then have been attracted by the flourishing state of Surinam, and the freedom offered them there, to settle in this country, and under English rule.

All this is only conjecture, but the element of probability in this hypothesis is so great that we are obliged to consider it in our reconstruction. It is, however, clear that we can only reckon with small numbers. Accordingly, a maximum of 50 people (both original inhabitants of Essequebo and Pomeroon, and fugitives from Cayenne) seems to us a very liberal estimate.

Regarding the Jewish settlement in Surinam in 1667, we come to the following conclusions:

1. Up to 1664/65 maximally 30 persons.
2. In 1665 or 1666 an addition of maximally 100 from Cayenne.
3. A (hypothetical) further addition of maximally 50 from Essequebo and Pomeroon.
4. Consequently, a total which is not likely to have exceeded 200 people.

This maximum makes it virtually impossible for us to lend credence to the statements to be found in the *Historical Essay*...., which suggest emigrating groups of hundreds of Jews. The colony, at that time, simply did not harbor so many Jews.

We may also consider the supposed departure of the Jews from another angle. In migrations like these the migrator is always a loser: he is obliged to leave immovable property behind, such as land (cultivated and otherwise), buildings, furniture, etc. Every form of production stops, and his business is discontinued for a considerable time. In the new country he has to start all over again: he has to build a new dwelling house, a new storehouse, new slave quarters, a new mill, the parts of which may be difficult to be had, as appears again and again in the records of this time. He has further to clear the forest before he can plant anything, and it will be a long time before his business has reached its former productive capacity.

The above reconstruction has shown us that the greater part by far of the Jews had just settled in Surinam. Having arrived here in 1665 and 1666 they had just had time to get started. This new start was the second they had made in Guiana. And that within a period of five years.

It is unthinkable that these people, travel-weary, always fleeing, always losing, should have made up their minds immediately to leave this new haven the moment it passed under Dutch control. What was England to them that they should prefer to stick to it.

Even if they had not known what the attitude of the new rulers towards them and their creed would be, they would have preferred to await further developments before breaking up everything they had just set up, and move on again.[35]

The new rulers, however, were the Dutch, well known for their liberal policy in matters of religion. Brazil was still remembered. Moreover, Crijnssen, fearing to lose the planters without whom his new colony was worthless, hastened to make 'several solemn declarations' both to the English and to the Jews.[36]

He promised the latter that they should continue to enjoy the same privileges that had been extended them by the English. When in 1668 the colony was definitely ceded to the Dutch, and the new Governor Lichtenberg arrived in the country, the Jews at once asked of him the confirmation of Crijnssen's promises.[37] But they did not stop at that. Realizing their importance in this unstable society they asked also for new privileges, which were duly granted.[38]

It would now have been sheer folly to leave the colony. The Jews had a greater amount of liberty than ever before, the Dutch having satisfied their every wish. In other English possessions they could not even depend on finding the same freedom of action the

1665 English grant had extended to them. So far this grant had been quite exceptional in English policy. That such people, under such circumstances, would still insist on emigration is therefore psychologically unacceptable.

We shall now view the problem from a third angle, turning to the data in hand to prove our point.

Abraham Crijnssen captured Surinam in 1667, but it was not until 1670 that the English colonists began to leave the colony. This departure of the English, which has been dealt with summarily before in *The Historical and Social Background of Surinam Negro English,*[39] will now be treated somewhat more extensively.

In October 1667 Sir John Harman and Henry Willoughby (the son of William Willoughby, brother, one of the heirs, and successor of Francis Willoughby as governor of Barbados) recaptured Surinam, 'but the want of knowledge of the peace, and of that article of the surrender of the places taken after the 10th May, caused them to encourage the English colony, and leaving a good garrison they arrived at Barbados on the 10th of November.'[40]

On learning that, according to the articles of peace, the Dutch were to retain possession of Surinam, Willoughby immediately sent back his son with instructions to do his utmost to prevail upon the English colonists to remove to some other English colony. In his letter to the Privy Council (referred to in n.40) Willoughby had informed the Council that, if the colonists did not want to leave, he had instructed Henry to suspend the surrender of Surinam to the Dutch until he should receive positive commands from the Council. Apparently Willoughby had taken into account that the colonists would not greatly welcome the idea of having to leave their flourishing estates, and go to some other unknown place to begin all over again. The subsequent events proved that he was right.

On February 19, 1668 Henry Willoughby had returned to Barbados with 67 persons, 412 slaves, 160 head of cattle, and 150,000 lbs. of sugar, besides planks, speckled wood, and dry wares to the value of 150,000 lbs. of sugar.[41] From the same collection of documents, we learn that those 67 people were 'some of the most considerable persons', which is not surprising, as the authorities and other prominent figures who had no further business in the colony would be the first to leave it. These people went to Antigua, for later we find that 'many from Surinam are settled upon it'.[42]

There is no reason even to consider the possibility that Henry Willoughby should have included in these 67 persons, the first to leave the place, any persons of Jewish origin. Despite the 1665 grant the English apparently only tolerated the Jews. Their attitude towards them in the other English possessions throughout the seventeenth century affords abundant proof of that.

With Willoughby Jr., went the cream of the land: the richest, the most important people. This is not only apparent from the number of slaves they carried with them,[43] but also from the fact that Sergeant-Major James Banister, appointed governor of Surinam on February 1, 1668, was in official terms 'the only remaining eminent person'.[44]

The appointment of Banister as governor proves

that Surinam had not yet been surrendered to the Dutch. The English apparently first wanted to remove the planters to some other place. In March, a frigate arrived from Barbados to fetch such colonists as wanted to settle in Antigua or any other colony, but 'none stirred thinking to gain time'. On the 15th of April Crijnssen was back in the colony, and Surinam was again under Dutch rule. Now the contest for the English colonists began in earnest. The Dutch want to keep these experienced planters without whom their new gain is worthless. The English want their people back. Firstly because they need them, their colonies, Antigua, Montserrat, and especially Jamaica, being sorely in need of planters, and secondly, because they know very well that 'the Dutch are no planters, and should the English and their slaves be removed Surinam must sink.'[45]

From now on the English complaints keep recurring with regular intervals: the Dutch keep the English colonists in debt by extending large and easy credits to them, so that they cannot leave; they employ 'the meaner sort of English planters, whose condition is much mended by them';[46] they refuse to provide shipping, though it had been agreed that the English subjects 'should have shipping at moderate rates to remove themselves and their estates to some other of his Majesty's colonies',[47] etc. etc.

From several sides, both in England and in the West Indies, pressure is brought to bear on the King and his advisers to provide the necessary shipping in order to fetch the English from Surinam.

On September 25, 1670 the king orders the Duke of York to see to this matter.[48] On October 25, 1670, Major Banister, Captain Yates, and H. Ayler get their instructions to remove the English in two merchant ships of 150 and 200 tons.

Banister left England on November 15, 1670, and arriving in Surinam on January 9th, 1671, got permission of Governor Lichtenberg to remain six weeks in Surinam to dispatch his business. From the 'Narrative of the proceedings of Major Banister in the business of Surinam'[49] we learn that the governor declared that all those who wanted to leave should give notice of their intention in 10 days, and that all Englishmen who wished so might remain without fear of the king's displeasure and that 'those departing shall not destroy anything they will not take with them or cannot dispose of.'

'That day and the next all the people of Paramaribo division (except one) gave in their names, which caused the Governor to put forth two notifications in the other divisions to prevent them declaring their intentions to remove by leaving them no way to pay their debts but in money or such goods as sugar or specklewood, which he knew none or few were masters of.'

Banister left on February 28, 1671, bringing with him '105 families and the whole number 517 persons, with which the two ships were so filled that they had scarce room to lodge in.'[50]

We do not hear as yet of any Jews concerned with this departure of the English. There is no mention of any giving in their names to emigrate, or of the English inviting, or putting pressure on any of them to join the emigrants. It is understandable that Banister and the other commissioners should first take care

that their countrymen left the country before occupying themselves with others. Moreover, before they left 'the Governor came aboard the *America* and *Johanna*' we read in Banister's narrative, 'and examined all the passengers to see if there were any aboard contrary to the States General's orders'. In view of the later controversy between the English and the Dutch, respecting the nationality of the Jews (that is, whether they were to be considered English subjects or not), this passage can only be interpreted as showing that even then (that is, the very first time a batch of emigrants were to leave, and before the English seem to have brought up the point) the Dutch were guarding carefully against any one but born Englishmen – the Scotch and Irish included – leaving the colony.

If there had been any Jews among the passengers it would have been strange indeed if the governor had not protested against and even prevented their departure. On the other hand, the English would have been quick to use this as an argument in 1675, in order to prove that Jews had before been considered English subjects by both parties. We can therefore safely assume that there were no Jews among the 517 persons concerned in the migration of 1671.

In a letter dated April 8, 1671, Banister expressed his regret to the King that he had not been able to carry off the whole English colony. He had brought away 'as many as the two ships would carry', and been obliged to leave 'above half' behind.[51] In his letter he enclosed a petition of 'his Majesty's loyal subjects now residing in Surinam under the Government of the United Netherlands', in which said subjects express their regret at not having had a chance to get away, but 'humbly request for a future coveniency by two other ships, with which the Dutch will never furnish them, being possessed that the welfare of the colony consist in detaining the intelligent and industrious planters, of whom they have few of their own nation.'

In the years following the departure of the Banister group repeated requests again reach the king and his advisers to provide shipping to transport the remaining English colonists. The deplorable state both of the colony and the colonists is referred to again and again.[52] There is great lack of food and medicine, a general sickness resulting in a high rate of mortality. 'Even the Jews seem now highly dissatisfied' writes William Byam, now governor of Antigua. And one Captain Peter Wroth, who had captured the Dutch colony of Approwaco in 1666, on August 5, 1673, just returned from the coast of Guiana, declares in a sworn deposition that 'the English and Dutch were very sickly and died very fast'.

The acting Governor of Surinam P. Versterre, in a letter addressed to the Commitee of the States of Zealand and dated September 5, 1672, asks for ('of promised') ships with provisions, 'for (by deaths and sickness) he is fallen to 200 men only, counting too the Dutch planters and merchants, and the masters and seamen of their ships, three of which lie ready to depart, when a great weakening will ensue'.

They have 'nothing to eat but rotten bacon, peas and gruts, and but little of that. '... Some bread (Versterre undoubtedly means cassava bread) might be got from Indians on other rivers, but he has not a piece of

trade goods left.' He calls God to witness that it is not his fault 'the country not being able to maintain itself without supplies of men and provisions.'[53]

Meanwhile another Anglo-Dutch war had broken out (1672-1674). By Treaty of Westminster in 1674 the freedom of English subjects to leave Surinam was again specially affirmed. Early in 1675 the States General issued orders to Governor Versterre to prepare the departure of the English. Leaving England on April 6, 1675, Edward Cranfield and Marcus Brandt, the commissioners appointed by the king to carry off the English from Surinam, arrived at Paramaribo on June 4, 1675, Edward Cranfield and Marcus Brandt, the commissioners appointed by the King to carry off the English from Surinam, arrived at Paramaribo on June 4, 1675. On July 11 the commissioners wrote to the Secretary of State Williamson that Jews had demanded transportation with his Majesty's subjects. The governor, after some hesitation, had at first consented to their departure, but 'finding the Jews to be as considerable for number and fortune, and that more had given in their names to depart than the Governor expected, the Governor wholly altered his resolution of suffering them to go, believing it would be an immediate destruction of the place'. We also learn from the same letter how the governor came to find the Jews to be 'as considerable for number and fortune'. 'Understanding' they write, 'that the Major of the garrison had been all over the country to take a list of the Dutch, (we) took occasion to pump him and found they were but 130, besides the garrison of about 140'.

The Major had, however, also taken lists of the Jews and the English. These lists have been preserved, and were published by Baron Mullert.[54]

It appears that there were 120 English families, of which Versterre expected 80 to leave. The Dutch were represented by 125 men, with a garrison of 115 men and 4 sailors. The Jews numbered 57 men capable of bearing arms ('weerbare mannen'). Taking into consideration that boys of 16 were also included among the men 'capable of bearing arms', we may estimate the total number of Jews (that is, men, women, children) at 200 to 250 people.[55]

On August 9, 1675 the emigrants left Surinam in three ships, the *Hercules,* the *America,* and the *Henry and Sarah.* At the last moment there was again some friction between the Dutch and the English concerning a few Indians, who had served some English settlers as house servants. The English wanted to take them to Jamaica, but the Dutch tried to prevent this. Cranfield wrote in his report to the king: 'On the request of the masters of the free Indians the Commissioners protested against the Governor for hindering the free Indians and Jews coming off; the Governor afterwards did the like against the Commissioners for carrying off the free Indians.'

This passage proves that there were no Jews on board. Still, when perusing the lists of passengers[56] we come across two (and only two) names of Jews, namely Isaac de la Parr, Overseer, and Gabriell de Solis, who left in the *Hercules* with 33 slaves. The question is explained to us in Cranfield's report: 'With much importunity he (namely the Governor) gave way for Signior Aaron de Silvis to send off 33 Slaves under the Conduct of an

Overseere being one that was naturalized by Act of Parliament.'[57]

This 'Overseere' is no doubt Isaac de la Parr. Of Gabriell de Solis, who, judging from his name, may have been a Jew, we find nothing on record. To Cranfield's three lists of passengers was added 'A List of Such persons of ye Hebrew Nation willing to depart & transport themselves & Estates to Jamaica, but hindred by ye Govr. yet hope for, & humbly request another Occasion.' The list is signed by Isaac Perera, Jacob Perera, David Perera, Isaac de Prado, Isaac de Mera, Aaron de Sylua, Isaac Gouia, Gabriell Antonijs, Moses Baruch, and Benja Perera.[58]

These ten Jewish families, who, for reasons unknown to us, had expressed their wish to leave Surinam, became one of the pawns in the Anglo-Dutch contest, played out again and again by the English to discredit their Dutch competitors. In the years immediately after 1675 they were repeatedly referred to as English subjects, who had been prevented by the (treacherous) Dutch, for purely selfish reasons, from leaving a country where conditions were so bad that everyone wanted to get out of it, though their right to do so had been expressly stipulated in the Treaty of Breda and again in the Treaty of Westminster. The complaints were obviously meant to represent the Dutch as faithless people, who did not keep covenant. For, what could these ten Jewish families, three of which were evidently very poor (they had only 18 slaves among themselves) have meant to them?

The fact that the names of these ten persons are known, has made their case a concrete one, especially when viewed against the vague and hazy departure of the other Jews. The historians have therefore seized upon it and never fail to mention these 'emigrants' with their 322 slaves.

All this has given the case of the ten Jewish families undue prominence, and has made it backbone in this legend of Jewish emigration lending an air of veracity to the unfounded and unproved departure of hundreds of other Jews.

Now the curious thing in this story is that it is not at all certain that these Pereras etc. left the colony. The first to state the departure of these people as a fact, and who influenced all later historians, was the *Historical Essay,* which states on page 34: '... ten Jewish families and their slaves, to the number of 322 persons, who left the colony after having complained to England that the Dutch had forbidden them to leave'.

Now the *Historical Essay* gives as its source Hartsinck's *Beschrijving van Guiana,* II, p. 599. He wrote: '... in 1677 complaints were made by the English Ambassador because ten Jewish families had been refused permission to leave with their slaves, consisting of 322 persons.' Not one word more.

Strange is also that Wolbers, who wrote the monumental work on the History of Surinam, also names Hartsinck as his source when stating as a fact that these ten Jewish families left the colony.[59]

J.H. Hollander, who examined the original documents relating to this affair (see note 57), never found or stated that they really left. Nor have our own (though rather hurried) investigations given us any reason to assume that they actually left Surinam. There are numer-

ous references to this affair in the *Calendar of State Papers.*[60]

But the end is apparently to be found in the Minutes of the Committee of Trade and Plantations, dated May 18, 1676 (see No. 924 in note 60), in which we read: 'Sec. Williamson to be asked what effect H.M.'s last orders had in Holland for demanding the Jews detained in that Colony. He answered that the Hollanders denied the Jews were H.M.'s subjects or free citizens.'[61]

In the *Cal. St. Pap.* 1677-1680 we did not find any more references to this affair.

If, on the other hand, these people had been permitted to depart, the archives in the Hague would no doubt contain some document to that effect. For every time that English colonists left Surinam the States General had to issue special orders to the governor for permitting them to do so. So far as we know, such a document has not been discovered.

The last batch of Englishmen to emigrate from Surinam left in January 1680. The English, afraid that their vessels might be confiscated by the Dutch[62] sent only a small ship, a ketch, to carry them off.

The ketch could not contain all the colonists with their slaves, and as the Dutch refused to provide shipping for the rest,[63] there were still 39 Englishmen left in Surinam. As England did not provide any more shipping they probably remained in the country.[64]

As for the Jews, after 1676 they are no more mentioned neither by the English nor by the Dutch. In view of their firm attitude in the matter of the departure of the English in general, it cannot be assumed without further proof that the Dutch should have changed their attitude with regard to the Jews. In their eyes the Jews were no English subjects.

In 1680 one Isack Meza appears in an offical document as a deputy of one of the divisions or districts.[65] This Isack Meza is perhaps no other than Isaac de Mera, one of the ten 'emigrants'.[66]

In 1695, 20 years after the petition, the inhabitants of Surinam subscribed for the founding of a hospital in Paramaribo. Among the Jewish subscribers[67] we find the names of three Pereyras. It seems to us that if the four Pereras of 1675 had left, the colony would have been drained of Pereras. Besides the three mentioned above there is another subscriber, a 'widow of Isaac Israel Pereira'.

It is, of course, possible that both Isack Meza and the Perera family have nothing to do with the 'emigrants', and the above can therefore not be taken as proof. It remains, however, a remarkable coincidence.

Summarizing we conclude:

1. The number of Jews in Surinam at the time of the conquest by Abraham Crijnssen cannot have been very large. Working with maximal figures, and making allowance for a hypothetical addition from Essequebo and Pomeroon, we remain well below 200.

It is therefore safe to accept an average number of 150, though our personal opinion is that even this number is a liberal maximum.

2. These Jews, for reasons both of a practical and a psychological nature, are not likely to have left the colony immediately after the conquest, that is, in the time transition, between February 1667 and April 1668 (the 15th of April 1668 being the date on which the

colony came permanently to the Dutch). Nor does anything in the Dutch or English archives suggest that they may have done so.

3. As a result of negotiations between the Dutch and the English the Surinam colonists were transported to other British possessions in English ships. Judging from their names the English ships appear to have transported only two persons of Hebrew origin. These two persons were an overseer named Isaac de la Parr, who, having been naturalized, was evidently no longer considered an alien by either party, but a true Englishman, and a man named Gabriell de Solis of unknown identity.

4. In view of the Dutch attitude towards the emigration of all those whom they did not consider English subjects, it is not to be assumed that they should have provided special shipping for Jews to leave Surinam. Nor does anything in the Dutch or English archives warrant such an assumption.

5. There is absolutely no proof that the ten Jewish families who asked for transportation in 1675 actually left the country in 1677 or in any other year. Indeed, there are indications that suggest the contrary.

In view of these considerations it is our conviction that the statements in the *Historical Essay...* regarding an emigration of several hundreds of Jews to British possessions, to which we have referred above, are entirely unfounded, and even lack all basis of probability.

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1. *Historical Essay on the Colony of Surinam 1788.* Translated by Simon Cohen. Edited by Jacob R. Marcus and Stanley F. Chyet (Cincinnati, New York, 1974).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 34
4. See L.L.E. Rens, *The Historical and Social Background of Surinam Negro-English* (Amsterdam 1953), pp. 15-16 and 23-24.
5. See H. Friedenwald, "Material for the History of the Jews in the British West Indies." *PAJHS* V (1897), pp. 46-47.
6. See R. Sanford, *Surinam Justice* (London 1662), p. 40. Mr. Sanford writing about persons who had rebelled against the Governor William Byam, tells us that they had been locked up 'at the house of Senior Henrico de Caseres where Mr. Stephen Neal liveth'. He mentions these gentlemen on page 41. 'This was at the house of Senior Henrico de Caseres where Mr. Stephen Neal now liveth.'
7. See Cardozo de Bethancourt, "Notes on the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the United States, Guiana, and the Dutch and British West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." *PAJHS* XXIX (1925), p. 9.
8. *Cal. St. Pap. 1675-1676,* No. 973.
9. Samuel Oppenheim, the American historian, who made a special study of Jewish settlements in Guiana in the seventeenth century, mentions one such case. He writes: 'Early in 1665 we find also a reference to two Jews sailing from Rotterdam in February, 1664-1665, for Surinam being held up on their way on the Thames.' (Jews who wanted to settle in British territory first had to ask and get the King's permission to do so.) It seems that these two men indeed reached Surinam, for, as Oppenheim tells us, their names, Meza and Baruch appear later as members of the Jewish community in Surinam, and in 1677 (which should be 1675) they claim to be English subjects. (See S. Oppenheim, "An early Jewish Colony in western Guiana, 1658-1666; And its relation to the Jews in Surinam, Cayenne and Tobago," *PAJHS* XVI (1907), p. 145.
10. *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. V, p. 168.
11. Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 114. As a matter of fact, the number of Englishmen (and others) to go from England directly to Surinam is likely to have been very small. It is known that Willoughby did his utmost in England to get colonists for his settlement. (See his prospectus, entitled '*Certaine overtures made by ye Lord Willoughby of Parham unto all such as shall incline to plant in ye colonye of Saranam on ye continent of Guiana*' in Sloane MSS. 159, ff. 20-21b.)

But this prospectus is not known to have had any results. The English colonists, who peopled Surinam came from Barbados, St. Christopher's, Nevis, and Montserrat. (See *Cal. St. Pap. 1574-1660,* p. 374.) The exodus from these islands was even so great that it was feared that Willoughby would further his own personal interests – Surinam was his property – at the cost of the King's. (See the item concerning Surinam in the *'Minutes of a Committee for Plantations'*, dated June 5, 1662, in the *Cal. St. Pap. 1661-1668,* No. 309.)

12. See the 'Petition of the Amsterdam Jews to the Lords Directors of the West India Company in Amsterdam', dated January 1655, in Morris. U. Schappes, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the U.S., 1654-1875* (New York 1950), p. 3.

13. See Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

14. See *Cal. St. Pap. 1669-1674,* No. 1101.

15. See C. Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadelphia, 1932), p. 291. See also Cardozo de Bethancourt, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

16. Cayenne was 'continually harassed and devastated by French adventurers under the leadership of Baron Gerbier.' (H.I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, Penn., 1937), pp. 152 and 154.

17. It appears that the distrust of the Jews was well founded. In the later history of Cayenne the French are known not only to have discouraged, but to have positively prohibited the settling of Jews in that colony, as is proved by an ordinance of 1685. (See Ab. Cahen, "Les Juifs dans les colonies françaises au XVIIIe siècle", *Revue des Etudes Juives,* IV (1882), pp. 129 ff.

18. See J. Hartsinck, *Beschrijving van Guiana of de Wilde Kust in Zuid Amerika* (Amsterdam 1770), I, p. 161. P.M. Netscher, *Geschiedenis van de Koloniën Essequebo, Demeray en Berbice,* ('s-Gravenhage, 1888), p. 356, n. 23.

19. Read the statement made by Francisco van Daelen at the request of David Nassy, his employer, before Notary Padthuysen on May 11, 1660, in H.I. Bloom, "The Dutch Archives, with Special Reference to American Jewish History", *PAJHS* XXXII, (1931), pp. 17-18.

20. Langendijck did not want them to remain in the island. He told them that they might establish a colony on the mainland, but as the mainland was marshy with only a few small pieces of suitable land, 'situated a mile from each other', 'so that they would be in great peril on account of the attacks from the Indians', this was not possible. (*Ibid.*) See also Bloom, *The Economic Activities,* pp. 152-154.

21. See J. Hartsinck, *op. cit.*, I, p. 162.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 163, who gives us this piece of information, mentions as his source a contemporary, namely the *Holl. Mercurius* of July 1664. The relevant text of the *Hollandtze Mercurius* is to be found in Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136, n. 78. It reads in translation: 'They (i.e. the French under de la Barre) took by force Fort Caperou which they called St. Louis, and in addition seized six ships and ruined the inhabitants. They carried the Jews and Christians, bereft of their property and in deep poverty, to Rochelle whence they were permitted to go afoot to their Fatherland.'

    Making allowance for the usual exaggeration in this kind of press paragraphs, we read for, 'the Jews and Christians', 'a large number of Jews and Christians' (presumably the richer among them). That the whole population was not carried off is, moreover, proved by subsequent events.

23. See 'An exact narrative concerninge the takeinge the island of Cayenne from the French, & the Fort & collony of Surrynam from the Dutch July 1667' in V.T. Harlows' *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667* (London 1925), p. 240.

24. Max J. Kohler writes e.g., that after the colony at Cayenne was dissolved the Jews removed to Surinam, to Jamaica, and to Barbados. (Max J. Kohler, "Phases of Jewish Life in New York before 1800", *PAJHS* II (1894), p. 95.

25. See "Verhaal van de inneming van Paramaribo (1665), door Generaal William Byam medegedeeld door George Edmundson," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 19 (1898), p. 233.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

28. See Sanford, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

29. See the grant in *Historical Essay,* Appendix 2, pp. 188-189.

30. Samuel Oppenheim holds the view that the Cayenne Jews did not go directly from Cayenne to Surinam, as is generally supposed, but that they first went to the Dutch colonies of Pomeroon and Essequebo,

and that it was only after their plantations had been destroyed by the English in 1666 that they came to Surinam. (See Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-143.)

Mr. Oppenheim's argumentation has failed to convince us of the truth of this assertion, for reasons which it is impossible to state now, a discussion of this subect being beyond the scope of this paper.

But if he should be right, after all, and the Cayenne Jews did not arrive in Surinam before 1666, the invitatory character of the grant is herewith established beyond all doubt.

31. See Netscher, *op. cit.*, p. 358, n. 30.

32. See Edmundson, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-234. See also James Rodway & Thomas Watt, *Chronological History of the Discovery and Settlement of Guiana, 1493-1668* (Georgetown, Demerara, 1888), p. 190.

33. See Edmundson, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

34. See Rodway & Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

35. The attitude of the English themselves in this matter is very instructive. In the *Cal. St. Pap. 1661-1668,* No. 1814, we read that in March 1668 shipping had been provided for English colonists who desired to leave Surinam, but that 'none stirred thinking to gain time'. Apparently, they were reluctant to leave, awaiting further developments.

36. See *Historical Essay,* p. 31.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

38. See the petition to Governor Lichtenberg in *Historical Essay* II, pp. 192-194.

39. See Rens, *op. cit.*, p. 34, n. 34.

40. Quoted from a letter of Willoughby to the Privy Council, and dated December 16, 1667. *Cal. St. Pap. 1661-1668,* No. 1648.

41. *Ibid.*, No. 1759.

42. *Ibid.*, No. 1812.

43. 412 slaves was about 20 to 25 per cent of the total slave population at that time. (See Rens, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81). It seems, however, that of these 412 slaves only 244 belonged to the emigrating 'prominent persons'. The other 168 (together with 8 coppers, 126 head of cattle, and 21,000 lbs. of sugar) no doubt belonged to absentee owners. The Dutch, according to the custom of the time, had confiscated the property of absentee owners, and of the colonists who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Dutch Government. (See Hartsinck, *op. cit.* II, p. 585). Now that the colony was again to come into hands of the Dutch, this property was put in safety. This is the only explanation we can give to the fact that the Dutch at once lodged a complaint with the King of England that young Willoughby had unlawfully carried off to Barbados 168 slaves, 126 head of cattle, 8 coppers, and 21,000 lbs. of sugar, and that the King at once gave orders to Willoughby to return these goods to Surinam. (See Hartsinck, *op. cit.* II, pp. 589 ff. See also *Cal. St. Pap. 1661-1668,* Nos. 1759 and 1785.

44. See *Ibid.*, No. 1814.

45. See *Ibid. 1669-1674,* no. 41.

46. See *Ibid.*, No. 1132.

47. See *Ibid.*, No. 61.

48. See *Ibid.*, No. 274.

49. See *Ibid.*, No. 486.

50. See *Ibid.*, No. 734.

51. See *Ibid.*, No. 485.

52. See *Ibid.*, Nos. 508, 596, 1132, 1364, 1384, etc.

53. See *Ibid.*, No. 920.

54. See F.E. Baron Mullert, "De bewoners van Suriname in 1675", *De Navorscher* (1917), pp. 401-406.

55. These figures are in perfect agreement with our above estimation of 150 Jews in 1667. For, it is well known that in the years following upon Crijnssen's conquest many Jews settled in Surinam under the protection of Dutch privileges.

56. They have been preserved, see *Cal. St. Pap. 1675-1676,* No. 675.

57. See J.H. Hollander, "Documents Relating to the Attempted Departure of the Jews from Surinam in 1675". *PAJHS* VI (1897), p. 27.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

59. See J. Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam 1861), p. 44.

60. See e.g., *Cal. St. Pap. 1675-1676,* Nos. 675, 683, 818, 825, 924, 932.

61. See also Hollander, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

62. *Cal. St. Pap. 1677-1680,* No. 1002.

63. See *Ibid.*, No. 1255.

64. See Rens, *op. cit.*, p. 91, n. 3.

65. See Hartsinck, *op. cit.*, II, p. 610.

66. Misspellings in proper names were so common at the time that we often find many variants of the same name. See on the Mera-Meza question, Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 145, who identifies one Meza, a Jew who came to Surinam via Rotterdam and London, with Mera, 'a member of the Jewish community in Surinam in 1669'.

67. A list of them was published by J.S. Roos, "Additional Notes on the History of the Jews in Surinam", *PAJHS* XIII (1905), pp. 130-132.



Portrait of Governor Mauricius,
by P. Tanjé after A. Schouman, 1753.

G.W. VAN DER MEIDEN

GOVERNOR MAURICIUS AND THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF THE SURINAM JEWS

The serious complications concerning Governor Mauricius (1742-1751) were the climax of an extended range of conflicts over how Surinam should be governed.[1] The position of the Surinam Jews also contributed to Mauricius' troubles.[2] In order to understand the problems dealt with here, we have to turn the clock back and underscore some incidents in Surinam's political history as well as the role played by the Jews in the colony.

The colony of Surinam was established in 1651 by the English. Royalist planters from Barbados who had experience in sugar-growing brought the colony to prosperity within a very short period. Sephardi Jews who came from Cayenne after having migrated from Brazil also settled down in the colony, receiving on 17 August 1665 important privileges, including the right to practise their religion and to litigate in their own law-court.[3]

In 1667, however, Surinam was conquered by a Zealand squadron, the conquest being confirmed by the Peace Treaty of Breda the same year. Surinam now came under the direct rule of the province of Zealand. For a number of reasons the colony's economic prosperity declined disastrously. Most of the English planters left Surinam, but many Jews remained. In 1669 the earlier Jewish privileges were confirmed by the Zealand governor, at least provisionally. Furthermore, certain other requests by the Jews were granted, among them the stipulation that a Jew who caused problems might be expelled by the governor if the deputies of the Jewish nation asked him to do that.[4]

Zealand rule of Surinam was contested within the United Provinces, especially by Amsterdam. As a result, in 1682 the decision was taken that the colony would be handed over to the West India Company which in turn had to pay 260,000 guilders to Zealand as purchase-money. The States-General granted a charter through which the inhabitants of the colony obtained numerous rights.[5] Taxes would be low and the colony would be ruled by a governor appointed by the West India Company, together with a Council of Policy consisting of ten councillors. The councillors were selected by the governor from double numbers nominated by all free inhabitants. Such councillors were to be among the "most prominent, sensible and moderate colonists". While the governor had the highest authority in political and military affairs, "in important cases" he had to

consult the Council of Policy, in which a decision was to be taken by a majority of votes. The Council of Policy was also a law-court for criminal affairs. In addition there was a Council of Justice, consisting of six members, which was a law-court for civil affairs. The Councillors of Justice were elected from double numbers drawn up by the Council of Policy. (The terminology of these councils is confusing to modern Dutch ears and even in the 18th century there was sometimes confusion about it in Holland.)

As the West India Company was not able to raise the purchase-money, the company, together with the town of Amsterdam and the nobleman Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, formed in 1683 a Society of Surinam, registered in Amsterdam. The Society was acknowledged by the States-General only after some years in a somewhat halfhearted way.[6] According to the conditions by which the Society had been established[7] Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck was appointed as governor of the Colony.

The manner of governing the Colony was a complicated one. It had much in common with, and was in fact the outcome of, the way the United Provinces themselves were ruled. It was riddled with ambiguities, if not inherent conflicts. For example, nomination of candidates for the Council of Policy by the colonists was free, but influencing the nomination by the governor was a more or less lawful practice. Although the complicated governmental system brought about a series of complaints, the colony nonetheless regained its prosperity, to the extent that by the middle of the 18th century Surinam was considered to be the most important Dutch overseas possession. One might defend the thesis that this recovery of prosperity was a consequence of the governmental system in which important merchant pressure-groups could exercise influence on economic policy. The Jewish population also shared in this prosperity. In addition to Sephardim who already lived there, many Ashkenazim settled down in the Colony. Along with the other colonists, they too took part in the nominations for the Councillors of Policy. However, the Jews never became Councillors, although they did have their own officers in the Civic Guard.

The privileges enjoyed by the Surinam Jews were not the outcome of an ideological liberalism. This becomes quite clear when one realizes that in neighboring Dutch colonies, such as Berbice and Essequibo no Jews were allowed to settle, while in Surinam the practice of Roman Catholicism was strictly forbidden. The Jewish privileges were the consequence of typical ideas prevailing under the *ancien régime*: one did not wish to meddle with established rights.

Frequently in Surinam's history clashes are discerned between the governor, as the representative of the Society, and groups of colonists who were generally represented in the Council of Policy and who wished for more say in the Colony's administration. While one cannot speak of political parties, one can distinguish constantly shifting opportunist alliances. Within this political climate the Jews, even when they were divided among themselves, figure as a more or less stable group, conscious of their privileges and who, as a rule, showed themselves to be loyal subjects. On the eve of nominations for the Council of Policy they generally asked the

governor which candidate he wished to be chosen and subsequently cast their votes for the governor's choice. As the Jews constituted one-third of the free population, their attitude was an important matter. It will be seen, however, that the governors could not always be certain of Jewish support. The clashes between governor and the Council of Policy became very serious during the late 1730s. Many complaints were brought against Governors Raye (1735-1737) and Van de Schepper (1737-1742). On several occasions such complaints reached the States-General. In fact when Van de Schepper in 1741 submitted his resignation, it was willingly accepted by the Society. For his successor as governor the Society approached Jan Jacob Mauricius, the Dutch envoy to Hamburg. Until that time all governors of Surinam had been relatively unknown persons, excepting Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck (1683-1688) who, as part-owner of the Colony, had accepted the post only because of his totally frustrated political career in the United Provinces. By appointing Mauricius, a man who had the reputation of being both erudite and competent, the Society's directors evidently hoped to put an end to tensions within the Colony. Born in 1692, Jan Jacob Mauricius was the son of a Dominican who had been coverted to Protestantism and had writted several books against Roman Catholicism.[8] The young Jan Jacob studied law at Leyden University and soon acquired a reputation as a man of letters. In 1716 he indignantly refuted the ongoing accusation of ritual murder brought against the Nijmegen Jews, his refutation taking the form of a report on the affair and publication of the documents on the case.[9] Mauricius defended the Jews selflessly and vehemently. In 1725 he was appointed the envoy of the Dutch Republic to Hamburg and in 1740 undertook a journey throughout Europe making the acquaintance, among others, of Voltaire. Mauricius was an interesting man – a well-known poet and essay-writer who was also a successful diplomat. As he was suffering from chest complaints and believed that the Surinam climate would be salutary, he accepted the offer to become Governor of Surinam.

Mauricius arrived in Surinam on 14 October 1742. In the beginning his governorship seemed to be successful as Mauricius tried to put an end to many conflicts that existed in the Colony. In particular he spent considerable time and energy on disagreements between the *parnassim* of the Sephardi community and the former *parnas* Isaac Carilho – disagreements which had become so violent that the *parnassim* of the Amsterdam community had been concerned about them. At last Mauricius worked out a reconciliation about which he expressed pessimism, feeling that it would not last due to the quarrelsomeness of the Surinam Jews.[10] Some months later Carilho was appointed Jewish captain of the Civic Guard.[11]

In dealing with the Christians Mauricius encountered more serious problems. A spirit of opposition already prevailed in the Council of Policy and the appointments of new councillors made matter worse. On 4 May 1744, Salomon du Plessis and Samuel Pichot were nominated. Du Plessis, who would earn the reputation of being Mauricius' most aggressive antagonist, was described by the governor as a competent and industrious man, but also an ambitious and violent one, who was an antagonist of

the Society and its representative in the Colony, i.e. of Mauricius himself. According to Mauricius, du Plessis was not a popular man. He had obtained his nomination thanks to "jackals willing to sell their vote in exchange for a rixdollar". One Jew had bought the vote of "the most rotten scum amongst the German sheenies". Sephardim "of the worst kind, owing money to a friend of du Plessis" had also influenced the nomination. An important Jewish family, good for twelve votes, had stayed at home for fear of reprisals from du Plessis' cronies. Mauricius did not choose du Plessis, but the other candidate, Pichot, a man who had studied law and was according to Mauricius "a moderate and modest man".[12] Ironically Pichot would become, next to du Plessis, the most important leader of the opposition formed against Mauricius. After some months Mauricius also chose du Plessis as a Councillor of Policy for tactical reasons. Mauricius hoped that his act of benevolence would make du Plessis less coarse.[13] This turned out to be a miscalculation. Backed by Pichot, du Plessis behaved very aggressively in the sessions of the Council of Policy during the year 1745. Pichot and du Plessis could make an inordinate amount of noise (literally) in the Council of Policy as they were among the richest inhabitants of the Colony. In addition to their own wealth, they administered the estate of a certain Pater to which many colonists were indebted. The Jews in particular were strongly pressured by du Plessis to vote for the opposition's candidates at the frequent nominations for the Council of Policy. On one occasion, however, du Plessis was not in the least successful. On 1 December 1745 the candidates favored by Mauricius were nominated, after which du Plessis went into a rage publicly voicing his anger at the Jews.[14] On the other hand, one Jew in particular, the aforementioned Isaac Carilho, was closely associated with the opposition against Mauricius. Together with the other captains of the Civic Guard he signed on 4 May 1746 a petition full of complaints about Mauricius' governorship. Perhaps Mauricius unfairly singled out Carilho as a scapegoat. At least he made use of the dissensions amongst the Jews by dismissing Carilho as captain of the Civic Guard after having received complaints from the *parnassim* about him.[15] After subsequent tactless behavior by Carilho, Mauricius expelled him from the country as the *parnassim* had requested him to do, an act which could be effected on the strength of the Jewish privileges of 1669.[16]

Disputes in the Colony had in the meantime become explosive, the situation threatening to become less and less controllable. Mauricius adopted a more authoritarian policy, in reaction to which the opposition sent du Plessis to Holland in order to complain to the States-General about the governor. On 31 July 1747 du Plessis petitioned the States-General, decrying Mauricius' policy as despotic and requesting that Mauricius be summoned to Holland in order to answer for his governorship. In his petition du Plessis also complained about the expulsion of Carilho.[17] In one of the appendices to du Plessis' petition there was a description of how the governor had manipulated the nominations for the Council of Policy by abusing the Jewish votes.[18] Carilho petitioned the States-General on the same day as du Plessis,[19] claiming that the governor had dismissed him from his post at the request of the *parnassim* who were his personal

enemies. The Governor had claimed that he could do this on the strength of the Jewish privileges, but, according to Carilho, these had become worthless after the charter of 1682. Mauricius had to defend himself against these complaints. The affair with du Plessis had become exceedingly personal and distasteful, especially as many of du Plessis' reproaches were absurd distortions. In his defense Mauricius conceded that Carilho was much more decent than the slanderer du Plessis. But he also considered Carilho's behaviour to be very strange, especially his contesting the validity of the Jewish privileges of 1669. Thanks to these privileges the Jews had two "churches" in Paramaribo as well as their own village of Joden Savanne, exclusively inhabited by Jews, a phenomenon unique in the world.[20]

The campaign against Mauricius reached a climax in 1750 when the decision was taken to despatch a committee of investigation to the Colony, together with a military force of 400 men. This was partly the result of the fact that du Plessis had turned to the Stadholder[21] and had found at the Court willing listeners.[22] The commissioners, amongst whom Major-General Von Spörcke was most important, arrived in December 1750. They very evidently lent a sympathetic ear to the opposition and on 24 March 1751 they sent Mauricius back to Holland. On 12 May 1751 Carilho was reestablished in his post as Captain of the Civic Guard.[23] In Holland, at last, Mauricius succeeded in defending himself and was cleared of all blame on 15 May 1753. He also obtained the right to prosecute du Plessis.[24] Although he had thus obtained a complete rehabilitation, he was not allowed to return to the Colony. A new Council of Policy was chosen uniquely by the Princess-Regent. Du Plessis was imprisoned at the Hague but soon pardoned. He too was not allowed to return to Surinam.[25]

In the meantime, not all the problems had been solved. The return of Carilho had rekindled dissensions amongst the Surinam Jews.[26] Important decisions were, however, being taken in Holland whereby J.H. de Barrios, Carilho's son (he used the name of his maternal grandfather) negotiated with Isaac Nassy, delegate of the Surinam *parnassim.* They managed to reach a compromise by which Carilho would give up his captaincy and a nomination for new *parnassim* would be made.[27] The Princess-Regent confirmed the compromise and herself chose new *parnassim.* At the same time the privileges of the Surinam Jews were partially revised.[28] The most important modification was that in the future the *parnassim* could only expel from the country "poor and fugitive people, not yet established in the Colony". Persons already established in the Colony and who were well-to-do could only be expelled after a two-thirds majority decision of *parnassim,* former *parnassim* and delegates of the Jewish community. Obviously this was at least a partial victory for Carilho.

In all other respects, Mauricius' antagonists had suffered defeat. Among the changes that were requested was one point that might have become very dangerous for the Surinam Jews. On 24 December 1750 the opposition had proposed to Von Spörcke a number of modifications in the way which the government was run. Mauricius, who was summoned by the directors to comment on this petition,[29] thought he recognized the hand of Pichot in it. Most of the requested modifications

were rejected in conformity with Mauricius' advice. Point 12 of the petition[30] contained the demand that in future the Jewish population would no longer be allowed to participate in the nominations for the Council of Policy. In no Christian country, the petition claimed, was such a thing allowed, and, furthermore, Jews were nowhere allowed to have their own courts of justice as they had in Surinam on the strength of "pretended privileges". Mauricius' comment was sharp. He pointed out that the Jewish privileges had been granted by the English in acknowledgement for Jewish collaboration in founding the Colony. The Jewish rights had been confirmed by the States-General and the Jews had always been allowed to participate in nominations. But Mauricius' comments were also personal. He insinuated that Carilho had been behind this proposed modification, as he had been expelled from the country on the strength of these privileges. Mauricius further expressed amazement at the fact that a Jew, in looking after his private interests, could act so very much against the interests of his own group.[31]

Whether Mauricius was right or wrong in his supposition that Carilho had collaborated in the petition cannot be established with certainty. More interesting is the question concerning Mauricius' motives in defending Jewish rights so vehemently. It is true that very often the Jews voted according to the wishes of the governor, although Mauricius, in particular, had on occasion Jewish votes against him. Did Mauricius wish to maintain the Jewish right to participate in the nominations because they were generally of benefit to the Society and the governor? Or was his motive a more noble one? Was he still the same idealist who had defended the Nijmegen Jews in 1717? Everybody, and Mauricius is certainly no exception, is full of contradictions, so perhaps both motives were present. But, no doubt, the most important thing was that Mauricius was a man of the law. He considered the Jewish privileges as legally entrenched and he objected to any infringement of the rights of the Jews.

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1. As yet there is no satisfactory monograph on Mauricius' Governorship. Still important are C.A. van Sijpesteijn, *Mr. Jan Jacob Mauricius, Gouverneur-General van Suriname van 1742 tot 1751,* ('s-Gravenhage, 1858); J. Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam, 1861), pp. 161-225 and the entry on Mauricius in the *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek,* vol. VIII (Leiden, 1927). Additional information is to be found in G.W. van der Meiden, "Het geschil over J.J. Mauricius als gouverneur van Suriname", in: *Spiegel Historiael,* XII, 1977, pp. 471-477. Many documents are printed in: *Recueil van egte stukken en bewijzen, door Salomon du Plessis (...) tegens Mr. Jan Jacob Mauricius (...)* 5 vols., (Amsterdam, 1752-1754).
2. *Historical Essay, On the Colony of Surinam 1788.* Translated by Simon Cohen. Edited by Jacob R. Marcus and F. Chyet (Cincinnati, N.Y. 1974), esp. pp. 79-80.
3. *Ibid.,* Appendix 2, pp. 188-189.
4. *Ibid.,* Appendix 5, pp. 192-194.
5. Resolution Staten-General, 23 September 1682 (A.R.A.). The charter (Octrooi) is printed among others in J.J. Hartsinck, *Beschrijving van Guiana* (Amsterdam, 1770), pp. 623-637 and in J. Wolbers, *op. cit.,* pp. 834-845.
6. Res. Staten-Generaal, 5 October 1686 (A.R.A.).
7. J.J. Hartsinck, *op. cit.,* pp. 638-645.
8. Universal Lexicon, vol. XIX, Halle & Leipsick, 1739, pp. 2220.

9. J.J. Mauricius, *Kort berigt wegens de historie van zekeren Isaac Saxel, en de beschuldiging der Jooden te Nijmegen, over 't slachten van een Kristenkind* (Amsterdam, 1716) and J.J. Mauricius (Ed.), *Remonstratie aan den Ed. en Achtb. Raad der stad Nijmegen, overgegeeven door de aldaar woonende Jooden, beneevens de annexe documenten* (Amsterdam, 1716). See also, G.W. van der Meiden, "Bloedbeschuldiging te Nijmegen", *Maatstaf,* XXVII, no. 10 (Oct. 1980) pp. 86-92.
10. Mauricius to Directors, 5 March 1743, Soc. Sur. 271 (A.R.A.).
11. *Historical Essay,* p. 69.
12. Mauricius to Directors, 31 May 1744, Soc. Sur. 273 (A.R.A.).
13. Mauricius to Directors, 12 February 1745, Soc. Sur. 275 (A.R.A.).
14. Diary Mauricius, 1 December 1745, Soc. Sur. 200 (A.R.A.) and *Recueil,* vol. II, pp. 53-64.
15. *Recueil,* vol. III, Carilho, p. 28.
16. Diary Mauricius, 8 January 1747, Soc. Sur. 200 (A.R.A.). *Historical Essay,* p. 193, Jewish privileges, art. 2.
17. Du Plessis' petition in *Recueil* I, pp. 1-6.
18. *Recueil* I, p. 36.
19. Res. Staten-Generaal, 31 July 1747 (A.R.A.) and *Recueil* III, Carilho, pp. 1-3.
20. *Recueil* III, Carilho, pp. 78-79.
21. As appears from his petition to the States-General of 25 August 1749, *Recueil* I, p. 274.
22. Cf. Charles Bentinck to Willem Bentinck, May 1750 in: C. Gerretson and P. Geyl (Eds.), *Briefwisseling en Aantekeningen van Willem Bentinck, heer van Rhoom,* vol. II (The Hague, 1976) pp. 388-390.
23. *Recueil* III, Carilho, p. 75.
24. Res. Staten-Generaal, 15 May 1753 (A.R.A.).
25. Res. Staten-Generaal, 23 July 1753 (A.R.A.).
26. Crommelin to Directors, 14 March 1753, Soc. Sur. 291 (A.R.A.).
27. Res. Directors, 19 December 1753, Soc. Sur. 43; Res. Directors, 2 January 1754, Soc. Sur. 44; Directors to Larrey, 20 December 1753, Soc. Sur. 107 (A.R.A.).
28. Res. Staten-Generaal, 24 June 1755, printed in *Historical Essay,* Appendix 15, pp. 203-207.
29. *Recueil* V, pp. 7-54.
30. Printed in *Historical Essay,* Appendix 12, p. 198.
31. *Recueil* V, pp. 18-19.

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Seal of a jurator of Surinam.

J.A. SCHILTKAMP

JEWISH JURATORS IN SURINAM

In 1667, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Breda, Surinam became a Dutch colony. During the subsequent decades the Dutch authorities implemented their rule through an elaborate systems of laws, intended to establish an organizational framework in which the local resources and colonists could be put to best use. As in the southern part of the American colonies and on British, French and Dutch islands in the West Indies, the society that was thus created was a plantation colony.[1]

Although the government was situated in Paramaribo, the colony was divided into five districts, each with a certain measure of autonomy. For the planters who lived in the various districts, it would have been very inconvenient to have had to go to the capital every time they needed notarial assistance. The administration of justice in petty cases in the districts was placed in the hands of a few local justices and a similar arrangement was made for notarial assistance.

One of the first laws proclaimed by Governor Lichtenberg, on February 19 1669, was the ordinance with respect to public deeds and instruments, granting a sworn person in the district the same notarial power the secretary of the government had.[2] The power of both was, however, restricted to matters in which the interest was no more than 1,000 pounds of sugar. Several months later, on May 1, 1669, a more extensive directive was issued for the sworn persons, or *jurators* as they were generally called.[3]

This directive gave not only a description of their notarial function, but also included part of the prosecutor's duty. As to the notarial function, the authority of the jurator was entirely in accordance with the former ordinance. Moreover, the directive ordered that the deeds be written by the jurator himself. The deeds had to be read to the parties and signed by the parties, two witnesses and the jurator.

The Jurator had to keep a protocol and was allowed to issue copies of deeds only to the interested parties and at their request. The originals had to be transmitted "from time to time" to the secretary for safekeeping. The notarial deeds carried conclusive force, "over and above all other (deeds) which did not have this solemnity," even if the latter were of an earlier date.

It appears that the restriction to 1,000 pounds involved objections of a practical nature. Furthermore,

many "verbal accords and contracts" were concluded. These were declared null and void in December 1670. All contracts relating to a value of less than 1,000 pounds of sugar had to be concluded by private deed, while all contracts relating to a higher value had to be executed before the secretary or a jurator. Based on the directive to jurators of May 1, 1669, two jurators were appointed on May 3, 1669, for each of the five districts – Opland division, Thorarica, Para, Surino and Paramoribo (Paramaribo) – which was made known to the inhabitants by placard the same day.[4]

Among the jurators who were appointed for the various districts by Governor Lichtenberg in 1669, there were no Jews. This is understandable since the Jews were not numerous at that time. Rens estimated their number at about 150, including women and children.[5] They lived in the Thorarica district, in the Joden Savanne along the Surinam river, where they had built a synagogue. At the time of the settlement of Willoughby, Thorarica was the capital of Surinam. Many English people still lived here, some of whom were appointed jurators by Lichtenberg.

After several years, the secretary complained that he had hardly any income from the notarial office he exercised. The reasons were that many English people had left the colony between 1671 and 1680 and the fact that all the notarial work in the district was done by the jurators. This resulted in Governor Versterre intervening in 1676 to prevent "the decay of the secretariat of this province."[6]

The notarial function was almost totally removed from the jurators; they remained "permitted only (in case of necessity) to write and establish all testaments and last wills which came up." In all other cases, only the secretary was thus entitled. It was furthermore stipulated that the jurators had to transfer to the secretariat within fourteen days "like also all private notaries," all original deeds executed by them. After being registered and signed by the governor, these had to remain with the secretariat.

This would also apply to all testaments to be executed in the future, "on penalty of annulment of these testaments and last wills." The secretary alone and not the jurator, would be allowed to issue copies of these deeds.

As to the notarial function, the duty of the jurator was, from now on, only to execute "emergency last wills."

The interest of the secretary was very clearly and unconcealedly the determining factor in these decisions. The fact that the institute of jurators had been established "to prevent all frauds and for the greatest comfort and least costs for the inhabitants of this province"[7] was completely ignored.

Since the appointment of the first jurators in 1669, 15 years elapsed before new jurators were appointed. The impression is that during this period the institution had almost died.

The letter of appointment of Cornelis van Luijk as jurator in the district of the Commawijne River in 1681 contains no mention of the restricted powers of the jurators since 1676.[8] Their function was "to serve the inhabitants at all times in the execution of all kinds of instruments, in particular in case of testamentary dis-

positions." The same description was used for the four jurators who were appointed in 1684.[9] The last appointment to take place was in 1714, when Gerard Kinkhuijsen, son of the secretary Abraham Kinkhuijsen, took office in the Perica district.

The reason for the institution of jurator no longer being viable can only be guessed at. As previously, it is certain that the interests of the secretary played an important part. These interests had already been respected in 1681, for the restriction was retained whereby the jurators were not allowed to issue copies of their deeds, this remaining a duty of the secretary. The jurators had to continue to transfer their deeds to the secretary "in order to be recorded there." This transfer had to take place, initially, two weeks after the execution, but later became one month and finally six weeks.[10]

The notarial function of the jurator initially embodied two restrictions. First, he was not allowed to execute deeds in which was vested an interest of more than 1,000 pounds of sugar. As mentioned above, this restriction was soon abolished. More important, however, was the fact that the jurator was limited to his district in the execution of his duty. This remained an essential feature of the juratorship, very different from the powers of the secretaries and those of the later professional notary, who could exercise their function in the entire colony.

After the English had left Surinam, the Jewish Nation became comparatively stronger. When Governor Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck again appointed jurators in the districts, it was understandable that a member of the Jewish Nation was appointed a jurator. Initially there was no difference between the Jewish and the other jurators. All were appointed to exercise the juratorship in a particular district.

The first member of the Jewish Nation to be appointed jurator – and thus becoming the first Jewish notary in the western hemisphere[11] – was Samuel Nassy. His appointment took place on May 3, 1684, and the governor referred to him as "not having found in the colony a more able, sensible and reasonable man."[12] His appointment was for the district of the Surinam river which was also called "the district of the Jewish Nation."

It does not appear that any special emphasis was attached to the nation "to which Nassy belonged." That was clearly the case when seven years later, Josua Servatijn was appointed a jurator. The governor and councils considered it necessary that, besides Nassy, another "jurator or sworn person of the Jewish Nation" should be appointed. Here, for the first time, mention was made of a jurator "of the Jewish Nation."[13] That nothing else was meant, other than the district where the Jews lived, became clear almost two months later when Servatijn took the oath of office. In that oath he was called "jurator in the (district of) the river of Surinam", without any reference to the Jewish Nation.

It is important to clarify this point in view of the appointment as jurator of Isaac Nassy in 1754. The Jews no longer lived exclusively in the Joden Savanne, but had, to a large extent, established themselves in the capital, Paramaribo.

Isaac Nassy was not, however, assigned a specific district under his jurisdiction, but was appointed "to exercise the said office among those of the aforemen-

tioned (Jewish) Nation." From now on this became the usual qualification. In contrast to the former jurators, the jurators of the Jewish Nation were no longer those who rendered their services to the inhabitants of a certain district, but to inhabitants belonging to a certain community. These were exclusively the members of the Portuguese Jewish Nation; even the German Jews, of whom there were significant numbers in the colony could not make use of this service.

Jurators other than those for the Jewish Nation were no longer appointed. During the 60 years that had elapsed since Servatijn was appointed, the clear understanding of the initial role of the jurators had apparently faded. The fact that Jews had acted as jurators in the district of the Surinam river, i.e. of the Joden Savanne, had led to the idea that these jurators had been appointed for the "Jewish Nation".

This is shown clearly in the petition that Isaac Nassy sent to the Directors of the Society and in which he requested to be "favored and appointed as notary or jurator of the Jewish Nation in the aforesaid colony, which office had also been attended and performed with all faithfulness by the great-uncle of the applicant."[14]

This idea is not at all surprising. Since 1665, the Jewish Nation had been authorized to have its own administration of justice up to an amount of 10,000 pounds of sugar and, later, to have its own Orphan Chamber and to contract marriages and *ketuboth* among its members.[15] The ability of the Jews to have their own legal institutions for their Nation led naturally to the conclusion that the juratorship had been and was nothing but one of their privileges.[16]

As a result of the difficulties which had arisen among the Portuguese Jews in the colony, Isaac Nassy travelled to the Netherlands in order to defend the interests of the Portuguese Jewish Nation against his co-religionist Carrilho. He spent three years in the Netherlands and left the care of his business to others. He suffered substantial losses and therefore approached the directors of the Society with the request to be appointed a notary or jurator of the Jewish Nation in the colony.[17]

He did not advocate the need for such an appointment because of the Jews living in a remote locality, but rather argued that most of his co-religionists did not understand Dutch, while, for their part, the sworn clerks of the secretary did not understand Portuguese or Spanish. This had led to many misunderstandings in the execution of last wills, marriage contracts and other deeds. It had even led to ruinous law suits.

Nassy argued that all this could be avoided if he were appointed as a jurator or notary of his Nation. He seemed to be fully aware of the reasons why the office of jurator had fallen into disuse and for many years no jurator or notary had been appointed. The reasons were "that the messr. secretaries sustained that is was disadvantageous to the secretariat" – an accurate comment.

In order to overcome the objections, Nassy devised an ingenious solution. His proposal was that he would be appointed a notary or jurator of the Jewish Nation and the deeds executed by him would be transferred to the secretariat. The financial compromise was that he would periodically render an account of all his fees to the secretaries and cede all fees to them. The secretaries, on the other hand, would be obliged to pay him a fixed

yearly salary, that would be no less than the amount a sworn clerk at the secretariat received.

In order to create a possiblity of increasing the income of the secretaries, Nassy indicated the desirability of a regulation that

> "henceforth in the aforementioned colony all testaments codicils and other deeds, which according the laws and practice (in the Netherlands) have to be executed before a notary, had to be executed (in Surinam) always before messrs. secretaries, their sworn clerks or before the jurator or notary and not by private deeds."

At the same time, a situation could be arrived at, under which "many frauds and illegal stipulations, of which more than enough took place in the aforesaid colony, could be prevented."

This was indeed a very considerate proposal, providing justice for all concerned. As such, the proposal was considered by the directors and the governor was informed that they had no objection to his provisional appointment of Nassy as jurator, provided the secretaries did not object and the governor himself held the opinion that the appointment would be in the general interest, and in particular that of the Jewish Nation.

Again, the importance of the secretaries' opinion for the directors was demonstrated. They could even veto the arrangement. Indeed the directors did not approve the definite appointment of Nassy before they had again convinced themselves that the secretaries had no objections.[18]

A directive was drafted for Nassy by the secretary Jan Nepveu.[19] He was allowed as "jurator in this colony and place" to execute all deeds for which he might be asked by the members of the Jewish Nation, and was allowed to issue copy of those deeds.

The latter was an expansion vis-a-vis sworn persons, for whom it was explicitly forbidden. On the other hand, the duty of the jurator of the Jewish Nation was more limited than that of the sworn person. The latter also performed certain activities of the prosecutor, while the jurator acted exclusively as a notary.

He was obliged to keep a protocol of all the deeds he executed and transfer the protocol every six months to the secretariat. This enabled the secretaries to check the accounts. He also had to pay the secretaries all the fees he had collected. If a fee had not been received for a deed already executed, he was not allowed to issue a copy. If he did so, he had to pay the fee due to the secretaries. In exchange, the jurator received a remuneration of 600 guilders per annum. However, if his fees were less than this amount, the secretaries were entitled to pay him no more than the amount received.

The fees to be declared by the jurator were the same the secretaries charged. The directive already took into account the change in the tariff which resulted from the "Points of Redress", presented in 1753 and in which Article 25 urged new regulations, since the existing ones were not adhered to, "the fees being calculated at the pleasure of the secretaries and their ushers."

The new tariff was published in 1755. Isaac Nassy served as a jurator until his death in 1774. In May 1765, the governor had approved he be assisted by his son David, who in this way was trained for the juratorship. Several months after the death of his father, David was

provisionally appointed by the governor as a jurator. The Council of Policy was not willing to ratify his appointment, however, "because this person did not have a good reputation with the public." It appeared that he was under suspicion of having withdrawn some slaves in the inventory of his assets.

Although the matter was settled, the Council was nevertheless of the opinion that he ought not to hold the function of jurator "since this is extremely dangerous for the public."[20] The Raad-Fiscaal was ordered to investigate the accusation against Nassy and he found reason to propose his temporary suspension, decided upon by the Council of Policy in August 1775.[21] Nassy thereupon accepted the consequences and resigned not only as jurator of the Jewish Nation, but also as sworn translator of the Portuguese and Spanish language.[22] Prior to the commencement of his duties, a directive had been issued for him, which was the same verbatim, as his father's, with two exceptions.[23] The annual income was reduced to a maximum of 400 guilders, while the reference to Article 25 of the Points of Redress was, naturally, omitted.

After David Nassy's resignation, three other jurators of the Jewish Nation were still appointed. It does not appear to me that there was any change in the directives for these jurators, as indicated in the *Historical Essay*. The "learned Jewish men" the writers of the book, were of the opinion that the value of the jurator's function "has, at present, become almost useless," because after the death of Isaac Nassy the jurators were no longer allowed to execute deeds in Paramaribo or to issue copies. They pointed again at the opposition of the secretaries, who "in order not to lose proceeds of 4 or 5 hundred florins which would accrue annually to the jurator to the disadvantage of the emoluments of the secretariat, opposed the contents of their act of admission."[24]

As previously, the jurators of the Jewish Nation continued to exercise their duties. There was, however, another reason, why their function indeed became "useless." The argument used by Isaac Nassy for his appointment, namely that most Jews did not know Dutch, had lost its force. In the protocol of Abraham Bueno de Mesquita, covering the years 1787-1799 as well as that of Carrilho de Barrios, covering the period 1814-1825, the great majority of the deeds were executed in Dutch; only occasionally does one find a deed written in Portuguese.

The end of the institute of jurators of the Jewish Nation came in 1825, with the publication in the colony of the Order of the Crown, no. 149 on April 2.

The Jews in the colonies were accorded exactly the same rights as the other inhabitants, while "all privileges, concessions and exceptions of whatever nature" were abolished. This terminated not only the independent administration of justice by the Jews, but also the institution of the jurator of the Jewish Nation.

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1. For Surinam as a plantation society see R.A.J. van Lier, *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague, 1971), esp. pp. 19-37.

2. J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, *Plakaten Ordonnantien en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname,* Vol. I (1667-1761). p. 32.

3. *Ibid.* p. 42. See also: J.A. Schiltkamp, *De Geschiedenis van het Notariaat in het Octrooigebied van de West-Indische Compagnie* (The Hague, 1964), p. 300.
4. Schiltkamp, de Smidt, *op. cit.* p. 42.
5. L.L.E. Rens, "Analysis of Annals," *supra.*
6. Schiltkamp, de Smidt, *op. cit.* pp. 80-81.
7. *Ibid,* p. 39.
8. May 7, 1681. Archives of the Council of Policy. 211 (A.R.A.).
9. Minutes Governor and Councils, May 3, 1684. Soc. Sur, 113, (A.R.A.).
10. There was no sanction on the infringement of this regulation. However, the appointment as a jurator of Jan Starberg was revoked in 1708, because he did not adhere to this stipulation. See Minutes of Governor and Councils, February 2, 1708, Council of Policy, 6 (A.R.A.).
11. The first Jewish lawyer in the new world was appointed also in an area controlled by the Dutch. Michael Cardoso was granted permission to practice law in Brazil in 1645. See Arnold Wiznitzer, *Jews in Colonial Brazil* (New York, 1960), p. 99.
12. Letter to Directors of the Society of Surinam, June 13, 1684. Soc. Sur. 113 (A.R.A.).
13. Minutes Council of Policy, March 13, 1691, Soc. Sur., 121 (A.R.A.).
14. Minutes Society of Surinam, April 3, 1754, Soc. Sur. 44 (A.R.A.).
15. See *Historical Essay,* pp. 188-189: Schiltkamp, de Smidt, *op. cit.* pp. 429-435, 469-470.
16. Compare for such a privilege Hugo Grotius' famous "Remonstrance": "they (the Jews) will exercise the office of notary only after advanced authorization of the Court and only among the Jews" (art. 41). See J. Meyer (ed.), *Remonstratie nopende de ordre dije in de Landen van Hollandt ende West Vrieslandt dijent gestelt op de Joden* (Amsterdam, 1949), p. 120.
17. See note 14.
18. Minutes Society of Surinam, April 10, 1755 and December 21, 1755, Soc. Sur. 45 (A.R.A.).
19. Schiltkamp, de Smidt, *op. cit.* pp. 616-617.
20. Minutes Council of Policy, February 13 and 17, 1775, Council of Policy, 91 (A.R.A.).
21. Ibid, August 15, 1775, 92.
22. Ibid, February 6, 1776, 93.
23. Instruction, February 13, 1775, G.S., 611 (A.R.A.).
24. *Historical Essay,* pp. 106-107.

ESSAI HISTORIQUE

SUR LA

COLONIE

DE

SURINAM,

Sa fondation, ſes révolutions, ſes progrès, depuis ſon origine juſqu'à nos jours, ainſi que les cauſes qui depuis quelques années ont arreté le cours de ſa prosperité; avec la deſcription & l'état actuel de la Colonie, de même que ſes révenus annuels, les charges & impots qu'on y paye, comme auſſi pluſieurs autres objets civils & politiques; ainſi qu'un tableau des mœurs de ſes habitans en général.

AVEC

L'Histoire de la Nation Juive Portugaiſe & Allemande y Etablie, leurs Privilèges immunités & franchiſes: leur Etat politique & moral, tant ancien que moderne: La part qu'ils ont eu dans la défenſe & dans les progrès de la Colonie.

Le tout redigé ſur des pieces authentiques y ointes, & mis en ordre par les Régens & Répréſentans de ladite Nation Juive Portugaiſe.

PREMIERE PARTIE.

A PARAMARIBO
1788.

Title-page of the original edition of Cohen Nassy's Essai Historique.

R. BIJLSMA

DAVID DE IS. C. NASSY, AUTHOR OF THE *ESSAI HISTORIQUE SUR SURINAM*

Little is known about the career of David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, champion of Jewish civil emancipation and publicist of the Sephardi Jews in Surinam. Nassy did draw the attention of the American Jewish Historical Society, but its Publications could impart no more than what could be learned from Nassy's printed writings themselves. "We know but little of Nassy," states Sigmund Seeligmann in his essay about "David Nassy and his *Lettre sur les Juifs.*"[1] I have been able to collect several details concerning Nassy's activities and career from the Surinam archives, presently kept at the *Algemeen Rijksarchief.* These provide us with a better knowledge of his multifaceted personality and confirm the soundness of Jewish historiography's interest in him.[2]

David de Is. C. Nassy was born in February 1747 (7 Adar 5507) in Surinam. His father, Isaac de Joseph Cohen Nassy had been practising there since 1754 as the Sephardi Jews' notary, with the title of *jurator* of the Jewish Nation.[3] Most Sephardim lived in or near Joden-Savanne, the Jewish settlement on the Surinam River and center of their plantations. In addition, Isaac C. Nassy held for some time the post of *adjutante-gabay* with the Sephardi Jewish congregation "Beracha Ve-Shalom" (Blessing and Peace) at Joden Savanne. As such, he was the permanent secretary who kept the minutes of the board's meetings and court sessions. He also assisted the periodically rotated *regent-gabay* (treasurer).

The father introduced the son to the notarial profession so that he could help discharge the jurator's duties. To that end a governor's decree of May 1765 made David adjunct to the jurator as a sworn clerk. By that time the young clerk was no longer a bachelor. In December 1763 Nassy married, according to the law of Moses and Israel, Esther Abigail Cahanat Nassy, a distant relative. He signed the Hebrew *ketuba* "David de Is. C. Nassy," as he would continue to do to distinguish himself from identically named relatives.

In 1770 Nassy took the major step that was to influence the future circumstances of his life. Around this time the Amsterdam money market offered the Surinam colony, for the second time, the broad opportunity to obtain land credit. Nassy responded to one of these offers and became a planter. He bought the coffee plantation *Tulpenburg* on the Surinam River for the approximate amount of 93,000 guilders. After increasing

the number of slaves, Nassy had the property valued. The appraisal of the plantation, together with inventory and a house in Paramaribo, came to 187,350 guilders.[4] Up to five-eights of this sum (some 117,000 guilders) could be mortgaged for a loan from the negotiation fund managed by Roelof Hageman in Amsterdam. Nassy did so and undertook to redeem the loan in twenty years at 6% interest. Products from the coffee plantation were to be shipped to the mother country solely on behalf of the Hageman fund.

The new plantation owner took up residence in the new property. Among his correligionists the young Nassy already enjoyed a certain status, as is shown by the fact that in 1772 he was chosen as *gabay* (treasurer) of the congregational board (*mahamad*). The plantation venture almost immediately floundered and "to supplement his living" Nassy had himself appointed by the Council of Policy sworn translator in Spanish and Portuguese when this function fell vacant in February 1773. Catastrophe followed that same year and Nassy was unable to continue the exploitation of the plantation. A terribly high death rate struck the blacks of *Tulpenburg*. Rumor had it that one of the blacks had poisoned his fellow slaves and the doctor who came to see Nassy found him depressed about the persistent loss of his workers. The court placed the plantation under sequestration. The inventory of June 1773 showed severe neglect of the 127.5 acres of grounds, each planted with 500 coffee bushes, and of the domestic farm itself, planted with food crops such as taja and bananas. The bushes were full of bad wood, the grounds unweeded, the ditches silted. The rear grounds were largely flooded, and the central water drain was unusable. According to Nassy, the crops were lost due to lack of manpower.

Shortly afterwards, the sale took place under execution. This coincided with the 1773 crisis on the Amsterdam exchange, which adversely affected Surinam. At the forced sale the real estate with the remaining slaves, etc., realized no more than 40,000 Surinam guilders. Thus, Nassy, from his own experience, knew only too well the financial debacle in the colony which he described in his *Historical Essay on the Colony of Surinam.*

Now Nassy had to find new employment. His circumstances improved somewhat in November 1774 when his father died while still *jurator* of the Jewish nation. The inheritance was disappointing: the principal item, more than 1,800 guilders in bills of exchange – the proceeds of sold timber grounds – had to be entered in the books as unredeemable. They had lost their value as result of the "unfortunate general discredit of this Colony." David Nassy managed to succeed his father as *jurator*. The Sephardi congregational board (*mahamad*) warmly recommended him to the governor and in February 1775 he obtained his appointment. The post was not lucrative: the newly appointed jurator was allowed to keep only 400 guilders of his income.

Nassy's notarial practice was to last for only a short time. His creditors, among them Hageman's agent, did not leave him in peace and, barely six months after Nassy's nomination, the first *Raad-fiscaal* of the Council of Policy asked for and received his suspension. From then on Nassy's misery began in earnest. In early 1776 he was forced to flee from Paramaribo to Joden Savanne

to avoid imprisonment for debt by one of his creditors. There the court's servants could hardly arrest him. At the same time, having been suspended anyway, he decided to resign as jurator and translator. He did this to bring an end to his dubious situation and to support "his poor and unhappy family" in some other way.[5]
Fortunately, amidst this situation of poverty and decay, the grandparents of his daughter, Sara, had given her five slaves, who could now be converted into cash. Further, Nassy seems to have traded on Joden Savanne. We can trace him through an account of a visit to Surinam in the summer of 1777 by a highly placed French functionary from neighboring Cayenne. The experienced statesman, Malouet, as royal commissioner-general and administrator, was then staying at Cayenne Colony to make inquiries. For that purpose he travelled to Surinam. His "Collection de mémoires et correspondances officielles sur l'administration des colonies et notamment sur la Guiane française et hollandaise"[6] gives an account of this journey, containing much of importance about Surinam conditions, government officials, etc. In August 1777 Malouet visited Joden Savanne to inspect a *cordon* which was being built against fugitive slaves. There he met a thirty-year-old inhabitant, whom he called Isaac Nassy. As no Isaac Nassy fits the description we may undoubtedly recognize David de Isaac C. Nassy.[7] About his acquaintance with this "homme extraordinaire" Malouet says the following:

> Le cordon commence dans la rivière de Surinam à la Savane ou ville des Juifs, quinze lieus audessus de Paramaribo; et pour rendre la promenade plus intéressante, la nation juive fut provoquée à nous faire les honneurs de la nouvelle Jérusalem. Ces bons Israélites dépensèrent pour cela beaucoup d'argent, et leur empressement, leurs attentions méritent ma reconnaissance. Je fis particulièrement connaissance avec deux Juifs dont l'érudition et les lumières m'ont fort étonné: l'un se nomme Joseph Barrios et l'autre Isaac Nassi. Le dernier est un homme extraordinaire, si l'on considère que n'étant jamais sorti de Surinam où il est né, il est parvenu à trente ans, sans autre secours que son génie, à s'élever audessus des erreurs de sa secte, à en approfondir l'histoire, a relever les fautes de Boulanger dans ce qu'il a écrit sur l'antiquité,[8] à apprendre méthodiquement l'arabe, le caldéen, l'hébreu rabbinique, et la plupart des langues modernes, qu'il parle et écrit purement. Et cet homme, qui passe huit heures par jour dans son cabinet, qui est en correspondence avec des hommes célèbres de l'Europe, s'occupe cependant, comme ses plus vils confrères, à acheter et revendre de vieux galons.

Thus Malouet. For his part, Nassy retained a pleasant memory of the French commissioner-general's visit, as is shown clearly from the remarks appended to his *Essai Historique sur Surinam.*

One might expect an educated and enlightened man like Nassy to support himself in a more scientific profession than as a dealer in secondhand goods (acheter et revendre de vieux galons). He succeeded in doing so

already before the end of 1777. There was at the Savanne a Jewish physician-chemist, whom we have already met as Nassy's family doctor. Apparently he trusted Nassy's ability, for the two men became partners. Together they kept a dispensary and practised medicine. Nassy seems to have been responsible mainly for the dispensary, although he too practised medicine. This is indicated by Nassy's later description of his profession, "chemist", as well as by a remark of the Sephardi *mahamad* which describes both "que praticao a medicina."

How did Nassy achieve the learning which had struck the visitor (Malouet) and where did he get his initial pharmaceutical knowledge? The catalogue of Nassy's library, included in his estate's inventory, provides the answer. This document is preserved in the Jewish jurator's protocol for the year 1782.[9] Nassy appears there as a book-loving, well-educated man, imbued with the ideas of enlightened French philosophy and ethics. The inventory mentions portraits of Voltaire and Rousseau, indicating Nassy's spheres of thought. The library consisted mainly of works in French or translated from it. It contained large collective works, such as the *Dictionnaires* of Moréri, Bayle, and Robinet, and the *Histoire générale des voyages.* In philosophy and ethics there were books of Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Bossuet, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Balthasar Gracian. French literature was represented by Corneille, Molière, Boileau, Pascal, Fénélon, Fontenelle, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Marmontel; classical translations of Homer, Demosthenes, Aesop, Ovid, Lucretius, and Boethius. The famous Spanish and Portuguese authors were also available: Camoens, Cervantes, and Lopez de Vega. In the field of history the library contained some classical works (Tacitus, Plutarch, Flavius Josephus) and several modern works, such as Linguet's *Annales* and his *Mémoires*, Rollin's *Histoire ancienne,* Mosheim's *Histoire ecclésiastique,* Prideaux's *Histoire des Juifs* and Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique.* Also in the library were found Isaac de Pinto's *Essai sur le luxe, Traité de la circulations, Précis des arguments contre les matérialistes.* The natural sciences were well represented: the library contained works of Pliny, Boerhave, Newton, Bonnet, Tissot, and others dealing with physics, chemistry, medicine, obstetrics, physiology, pharmacology, etc. Even a "machine electrica", albeit not functional, was mentioned. The enumeration of the catalogue of 433 titles ends with a few Hebrew and prayer books.

His dispensary and study notwithstanding, Nassy had the time to take on additional work. The post of *adjudante-gabay* of the Jewish community fell vacant and, following his application, Nassy obtained from the council (the so-called college of the *mahamad*), in August 1778, his appointment as salaried secretary. The performance of his duties was simplified by the fact that the *mahamad* held most meetings and all court sessions at Joden-Savanne in the *Beracha VeShalom* synagogue. The objections to visiting Paramaribo, where his creditors were waiting, disappeared when, in 1782, Nassy obtained his "Without Prejudice" in favor of his creditors. With that there ceased to be any danger of imprisonment for debt.

Nassy dedicated himself fully to his synagogue functions. He became convinced that the rules (*askamoth*), as approved in 1754 by the *Princess Regent*,

should be changed. Nassy sought the assistance of fellow Jewish notables in the mother country: the learned Isaac de Pinto and Benjamin Texeira. In 1783 De Pinto brought the case to the attention of Mayor Rendorp of Amsterdam, the influential director of the Surinam colony. Simultaneously, Jan Gerhard Wickers, former *Raad-fiscaal* in Surinam, interceded in favor of the Jews. Wickers had a high regard for Nassy. The Jews' case took a favorable turn when Wickers was appointed governor-general of the colony. The new dignitary arrived in Surinam at the end of 1784 and was soon able to take some steps on Jewish matters.

The necessity of reforming the *askamoth* was first brought up at the February 4, 1785 meeting of the *mahamad.* Nassy was instructed to compile a memorandum inteded to inform the *junta* (the board together with its past officers – Ed.). The *junta* approved the proposed revision and decided to ask for the governor's cooperation. A memorandum composed by Nassy, enumerating the considerations for a change in the regulations, was appended to the request. A passage in the memorandum dealt with the desirability of better education for the Jews. Says Nassy: "With great grief we see the languishing state of our community, its dire poverty and decay. Upon closer inquiry, we cannot but feel than one of the root causes has been the ignorance of the congregation that in former days had lived in abundance without paying the least attention to giving their descendants the necessary instruction. However much it may be near impossible to bring the aged to knowledge and science, we consider it our duty, so as not to leave our nation in blind ignorance, to introduce a public school here in Paramaribo."[10]

Governor Wickers supported the Jewish endeavor and appointed a board with six *parnassim* (regents) to serve for three-and-a-half years and carry through the reform of the *askamoth.* Nassy was one of the appointees. As *parnas* he could not keep the title of *adjutante-gabay*, but, with the approval of the congregational board, he continued as secretary. He thus kept his pay since his circumstances did not permit him to give up the *lucrativo* for the *honorifico.*[11] At the same time, the Sephardi Jews in Surinam began asserting their desire for cultural development. With this purpose in mind Jews in Paramaribo established a literary society for the common study of historical, philosophical, and ethical works. Nassy was one of the founders and probably the compiler of the prospectus (printed in the *Historical Essay*). Governor Wickers agreed to be the patron of the society, named *Docendo Docemur.*[12]

The first centennial of the founding of the *Beracha VeShalom* Synagogue fell on October 1785. The festive commemoration was celebrated at Joden Savanne. Nassy was the presiding *parnas* and, according to documents preserved in the congregational archives, took an important part in the preparation and arrangement of this jubilee (*festo do Jobel*).[13] Shortly afterwards we find David Nassy no longer living at Savanne. He settled in Paramaribo and kept a dispensary there. Living in the capital, he could regularly attend the meetings of *Docendo Docemur.* In the early months of 1786 the society read the French translation of *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* by the Prussian (von - Ed.) Dohm. Nassy considered the work, which expressed the spirit

of the *seculo de luzes da philosophia* extremely important. In the meeting of the *mahamad* he suggested that the *regenten,* as representatives of the Sephardi Nation in Surinam, should write a letter of thanks to the author. The *mahamad* agreed to the proposal and the letter, written in French by Nassy, was sent to Europe.[14]

Nassy's task of editing the new *askamoth* demanded a great deal of work. In the summer of 1787 the matter was settled, when the *junta* considered the draft and drew up the final text. But Nassy's work did not end there. The *mahamad* instructed him as sworn translator to make a Dutch translation of the Portuguese original in order to apply for the approval of the directors of the Surinam colony.

In the meantime, Nassy had taken up a new task in the interest of his fellow Jews. Dohm had answered the letter, requesting information about the position of the Jews in Surinam.[15] The *mahamad* discussed the letter in its meeting of July 4, 1787 and Nassy then informed them that he had already drafted a plan for an essay containing the information Dohm wanted. The *mahamad* approved the intention and thanked Nassy for the zeal and dedication with which he worked for the Jewish Nation. Towards the end of the year Nassy was almost finished with the French-written work. He informed Governor Wickers, who suggested dedicating it to the directors of the Surinam colony.

At the *mahamad* meeting of January 20, 1788 Nassy handed over the complete work, with appendices, as a history of Surinam and its Jews. The congregational board decided to start reading it as soon as possible and in July sent the manuscript to the directors of the colony. The directors objected to several passages of political tenor, so that Nassy and the congregational board were forced to agree to deleting them. The changes were introduced in Holland in a very clumsy manner. The *parnassim* later wrote to Dohm:

> L'auteur a eu le malheur de voir son ouvrage tombé entre les mains d'un inhabile correcteur en Hollande, que n'ayant pas eu l'art de racommoder les morceaux, que la politique fit ôter du manuscript, et d'interpoler dans leur place quelques petites frases pour enchainer les périodes dans l'ordre requis, confondit quelques notes avec le texte et mutila l'ouvrage jusqu'à le rendre méconnoissable à l'auteur et a ceux qui ont lu son manuscript.[16]

The *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam* went to press in the spring of 1789. It was published by Hendrik Gartman, an Amsterdam bookdealer. The work appeared anonymously but with a dedication, signed by the *parnassim,* to the directors of the colony of Surinam in Amsterdam. In March 1790 the first consignment arrived in Surinam and it became known that David Nassy was the author. The public reception was far from friendly. According to the *mahamad's* letter to Governor Wickers, "the alarm was sounded against the *regenten*" after the appearance of the *Historical Essay.* Nassy himself referred to his book as "my unhappy little work" and as an "ouvrage décrié dans cette colonie".[17] A Dutch translation of the essay was published in 1791 in the mother country apparently totally without the knowledge of the author.

Nassy's term as *parnas* ended in the fall of 1788. The congregational board then appointed him as secretary (as it was called in the new regulations) at a yearly salary of 1,000 guilders. The work on the *Essay* and a long illness initially prevented Nassy from devoting much time to the translation of the Portuguese original of the *askamoth.* He finished it in September 1789, and the board presented the new regulations to the governor to transmit to Amsterdam. However, the directors did not concern themselves with the matter any further, so that henceforth the regulations were observed by the congregation as projected *askamoth.*[18]

After the death of his wife in November 1789, Nassy once again entered a critical period. His business in Paramaribo declined through loss of clients and insolvency of debtors, and his health remained precarious. He therefore decided to leave the colony and, in the spring of 1792, he sailed with his daughter for North America. His departure was a great loss for the Sephardi community. Former Governor Wickers, having been informed by the *mahamad* concerning Nassy's plans, wrote them from the Hague: "I was sorry to hear of David Nassy's departure. The nation loses thereby, for he was truly a man who devotedly looked after the nation's welfare and interests. He often put aside his personal views for the common good. However, I wish him and his daughter God-speed. May he never regret having left the ashes of their fathers."[19]

Nassy was not destined to stay abroad long. He returned to Surinam before the end of 1795. The inhabitants of the colony learned of his arrival from an advertisement in the *Surinaamsche Courant.* David Nassy, coming from Philadelphia and the island of Saint Thomas, made an offer of all kinds of articles for sale: soft goods, shoes, razors, dry and wet victuals, etc. On January 31, 1976, Nassy once more attended the meeting of the *mahamad.* On that occasion, he told them about his stay in North America. First he had set up as a doctor in Philadelphia. He had been elected a member of the American Philosophical Society and was its correspondent for medicine. He had published a pamphlet about an epidemic in Philadelphia. From there he had gone to the Danish colony of Saint Thomas, where he had been examined and licensed by "the king's physician." Nassy asked the *mahamad* to grant him the title of Doctor. Considering the envy and prejudice against the Jews in Surinam, he did not think it wise to attempt matriculation at the Collegium Medicum of Paramaribo. The *parnassim* granted the request. In their opinion, they could not deny the title to a doctor who had enjoyed such a reputation in so notable a city as Philadelphia, the capital of the United States of America. Henceforth, the physician Nassy was known to his fellow Jews as Doctor Nassy.[20]

During his stay abroad Nassy had not lost sight of his native land. In Philadelphia he had drafted a memoir on the improvement of the colony of Surinam. It was sent to the new government in Holland in 1795.[21] After his return to Paramaribo Nassy again became secretary of the congregation and the governor admitted him anew as sworn translator in French, Low German, Portuguese, and Spanish.

With his customary dedication Nassy applied himself to the betterment of his correligionists in the colony.

He drafted a plan for founding a college of letters at Joden Savanne. A prospectus of it was printed and pubished in Paramaribo in 1796 in Portuguese, Dutch, and French.[22] Nassy remained active also as a publicist. A Dordrecht pamphlet against the emancipation of the Jews, which was being debated in the Batavian Republic, drew his attention. Although the matter had been settled favorably for the Jews by the September 2, 1796 decree of the National Assembly, Nassy wrote a counterplea, the *Lettre politico-theologico-morale sur les Juifs.* It was published in Paramaribo on December 10, 1798, with a dedication to the governor-general.[23]

In 1799 the fifty-two-year-old Nassy remarried the twenty-four-year-old Ribca de David de la Parra. They were the first bride and bridegroom whose *ketuba* was written in Dutch and not, as was customary, in Hebrew or Portuguese. A few months later Nassy resigned his congregational functions. He remained a member of the board as *adjuncto* (or former *regent*). In September 1805 he considered it time to retire altogether. In a melancholy letter he stated that his health, his advanced age and several other sad and unpleasant causes altogether prevented him from working for the good of the congregation.

David Nassy died in March 1806. He was buried at the cemetery of Joden Savanne surrounded by the ashes of his fathers.

(editorial notes are in brackets).

1. S. Seeligmann, "David Nassy of Surinam and his *Lettre politico-theologico-morale sur les Juifs,*" *PAJHS,* XXII (1914), p. 27.
2. I have consulted primarily the archives of the Dutch-Portuguese Jewish community (the documents are usually written in Portuguese), the old notarial archives, and the archives of the Council of Policy and the Government Secretariat. [At the time of the article's writing, the archives of the Dutch-Portuguese Israelitic Community in Surinam were not catalogued. An inventory was subsequently published (R. Bijlsma, *Archief der Nederlandsch-Portugeesch-Israelitische Gemeente in Surinam,* The Hague, 1920)].
3. [See J.A. Schiltkamp, "Jewish Jurators in Surinam." *Supra.*]
4. [Herbert I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, 1937), p. 162, names a higher sum, namely 213,272 guilders, 10 stuivers.]
5. [For a more detailed analysis and sources, see Schiltkamp, *op. cit.*]
6. [Paris, 1802, 5 vols. The following quote is in vol. III, p. 52.]
7. This follows also from the minutes of the *mahamad,* July 26, 1777. [Archives of the Dutch Port. Isr. Congregation, no. 17 (A.R.A.)]
8. [Nicholas Antoine] Boulanger, *L'Antiquité Dévoilée dans ses Usages* (1766).
9. [Old Notarial Archives Surinam, no. 789 (A.R.A.), Deeds passed 27 June – 9 July 1782.]
10. [Draft minutes of meetings of *mahamad* and *junta,* 1785, Archives of the Dutch-Port. Isr. Congregation, no. 20 and 33.]
11. *Historical Essay,* appendix 23b, pp. 221-222.
12. [*Ibid.*, appendix 21 and 22, pp. 213-219.]
13. [See *Beschrijving van de plechtigheden nevens de lofdichten en gebeden, uitgesproken op het eerste jubelfeest van de Synagoge der Port. Joodsche Gemeente op de Jodensavanna in de colonie Suriname genaamd Zegen en Vrede op 12 van Wijnmaand 1785* door Joseph Wallach (Amsterdam, 1785). It was reprinted in the *Periscoop,* February 1928ff. See also Fred. Oudschans Dentz, *De kolonisatie van de Portugeesch Joodsche Natie in Suriname en de Geschiedenis van de Joden Savanne* (Amsterdam, 1927, repr. 1975), pp. 35-37.]
14. [See *Ibid.*, appendix III; also *Historical Essay,* I, pp. 11-12.]
15. [*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.]

16. [Archives of the Dutch-Port. Isr. Congregation, no. 93, Letter of 25 August 1791.]

17. For particulars see, among others: Memorial of Nassy to Governor Wickers, June 11, 1790 (Draft in Portuguese Isr. Archives). [Probably no. 34, which is in an extremely bad state and cannot be consulted. The phrase "the alarm was sounded against the *regenten*" appears in a letter of the *regenten* to Lieutenant-Governor Friderici (government secretariat archives, no. 528: Request of *mahamad,* 19 August 1790). See also Nassy, *Lettre politico-theologico-morale sur les Juifs,* p. lxxv (p. lxxvi Dutch edition) as quoted in Seeligmann, *op. cit.,* p. 29.]

18. A copy of the translation, signed by David De Is. C. Nassy, secretary and sworn translator, is in the archives of the Portuguese-Israelitic Community. From 1790 Nassy signed in abbreviated form: Dd. Nassy. [See No. 114, 115.]

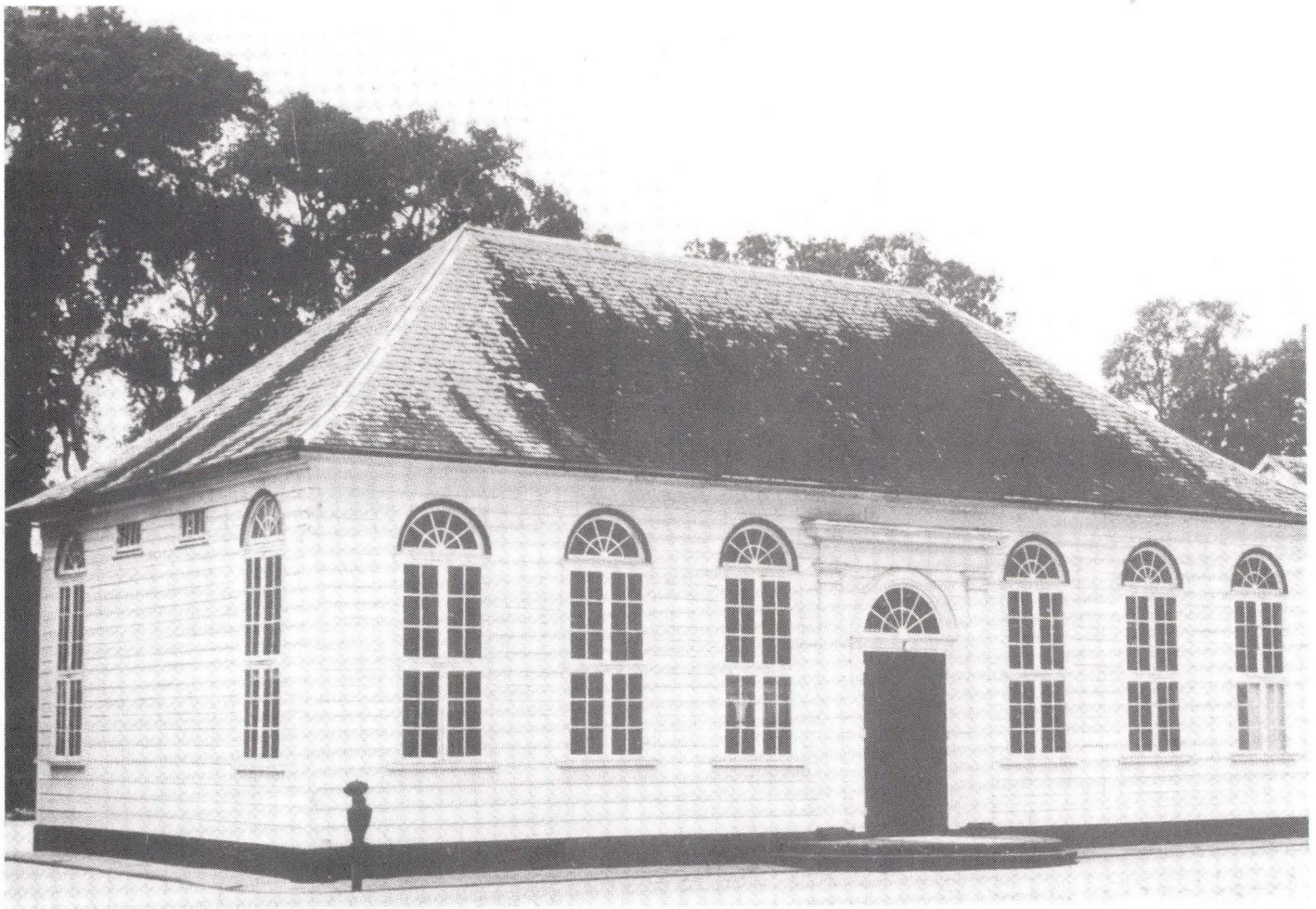
19. Archives of the Dutch-Port. Isr. Congregation, no. 34. See preceding note.

20. [For Nassy's American period, see Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew* (Detroit, 1970), pp. 171-173; Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 193-195 and *passim*; Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, *The Jews of the United States, 1790-1840: A Documentary History* (New York, London, 1963), pp. 459-464; Jacob R. Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati, 1959), pp. 465-473; Samuel Oppenheim, "A Letter of David Nassy of Surinam, "*PAJHS,* XXIII (1915), pp. 185-186; H. Bloch, "Dr. David d'Isaac Nassy," *Journal of the American Medical Association,* CCVII, No. 6, pp. 1228-1229.]

21. [Memoire sur les moyens d'améliorer la colonie de Surinam" with a dedication to the directors of the Society of Surinam, dated 12 February 1795, plus an "Avis de l'auteur," dated at Philadephia, 20 April 1795. A.R.A., acquisition, first section, 1935, viii.]

22. A written prospectus is kept in the archives of the Portuguese Israel. Community. [See also *The Surinaamse Courant,* June 27, 1797, quoted in J. Meyer, *M.J. Lewenstein's Opperrabbinaat te Paramaribo, (1857/8 - 1864)* (Amsterdam, n.d.), pp. 12-13, and Ph.A. Samson, "De Kweekschool op de Jodensavanna," *Teroenga,* XVII, No. 7 (July 1956), pp. 7-8.]

23. Seeligmann, *op. cit., passim.*



The Portuguese synagogue at Paramaribo.

Z. LOKER AND R. COHEN

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PRAYER OF THE JEWS OF SURINAM

The archives of the American Jewish Historical Society contain an interesting manuscript related to the history of Surinam Jewry.[1] The incomplete manuscript,[2] in clear Hebrew letters on yellowish paper of quarto size, consists of ten pages – a nine-page long specially compiled prayer followed by a *Mi She'Berach* blessing.

This special prayer is the work of the cantor David Hisquiau Louzada,[3] as we learn from an acrostic, cleverly inserted by the author into the evocation of the Gates of Heaven (*she'arim*) blessings. Using only twelve of the blessings, he thus reveals through the letters of his name his full identity to be *'David Hisquiau hazan.'*

The text contains verses from the Psalms, Proverbs, Exodus, and Samuel II, as well as two quotations from Jeremiah and Isaiah. Parts of the travellers' prayer are also included. The verses were selected in accordance with two central themes: fear and the victory over evil. The Biblical passages quoted are taken primarily from such popular books as the Psalms and Proverbs. These are traditional invocations – pleading for strength, the Lord's protection and the destruction of the wicked (in this case, the enemy). The *hazan* sounds a call for battle (see Psalms 18:39 and 144:1), and asks for protection for all those going to war.

Hazan Louzada also utilizes verse form to add poetic rhythm and render his prayer easier to remember.[4] It would appear that the prayer was rather haphazardly recorded. The compiler worked eclectically, apparently relying more on his memory than on direct references. This is evident from the author's own corrections, the unequal size of the characters used, the omission of letters and various grammatical errors. The faulty punctuation, only partly attributable to the particular Sephardi-Portuguese pronunciation, is yet another indication of the circumstancial character of the composition.

Although we do not know the exact date of the prayer's writing, as the cover pages are missing and there is no colophon or any other indication, the general situation that occasioned the composition is known and its date can be estimated. From the beginnings of the plantation colony, slaves fled the plantations to live in the almost inaccessible forests. After intermittently raiding plantations for weapons, food, and women, three different groups of Maroons, as they were called, made peace with the settlers in the 1760s: the Djuka, living along the Marowyne River in 1760, the Saramacca

along the Surinam River in 1762, and the Matuarie along the Saramacca River in 1767. Other Maroons, however, did not accept the peace and continued their raids, that periodically imperilled the plantations. The Boni Maroons, named after the surname of one of their leaders, threatened the colony between 1765 and 1793.

Preventive or punitive expeditions, particularly under the leadership of Colonel Fourgeoud between 1773 and 1776 were ineffective. A military cordon (*Cordon-pad* in Dutch) around the cultivated area of the colony proved a better defense. It ran past Joden Savanne, which thus became militarily important.

The Boni crossed the Marowyne River in 1776 into French Guyana, and except for a brief period between 1788 and 1793 never again posed a real threat to the colony.[5]

The military character of the prayer puts the date of its composition most likely during this period. It clearly does not refer to the earlier expeditions of Fourgeoud, since Louzada only became *hazan* in the summer of 1777 and the last Fourgeoud expedition took place during the winter of 1776-77.

Occasionally, rumors of a Boni attack startled the colony. In 1782, for example, "at the least suspicion of the movements of the runaway slaves of Boni, the Jews took up posts in the Savanne and mounted guard on Saturday and on holidays of the month of September 1782, without distinction..."[6]

Although the prayer may have been written during this or similar periods of panic, it seems more likely to refer to later events. In 1788 four plantations along the Upper Surinam River (near Joden Savanne) were attacked and others followed in 1789 and 1790. Those were years of direct military confrontation, and it seems likely that the prayer was written then.[7]

The events inspired the learned cantor to seek the Almighty's assistance as well as to provide his flock with spiritual consolation and hope. The salient feature of his plea is the reference to "our enemies, the cruel and rebellious Blacks" (on page 1) and then the request for the "conquest" and "destruction" of the *Cushim,* based on verses of Psalms 27 and 33.

Following the second mention of the source of danger, i.e., the runaway Negroes, the author utilizes the well-known prayer of *kiddush levanah* in order to "transfer", in a manner of speaking, the terror and fright from the white planters to the Negro raiders, praying that "terror and dread shall fall upon them." This passage is followed by the opening verse, in Aramaic, of the famous Sabbath song of Najara.[8]

This is a liturgical prayer, partly in the form of a *piyyut,* reflecting an actual historical situation. It is short and attractive in form, and was presumably read on Sabbath, near the end of the service.

The fact that such an original and topical text was produced by a native Jew in this distant and relatively isolated community testifies both to the degree of Jewish culture in the earliest surviving Jewish community on the American continent and to the quality of its Hebrew usage.

In this case, as the prayer was intended for internal use only, Hebrew, as the sacred tongue, was the appropriate vehicle to express the dual sentiments of dread and encouragement. The possibility of its somewhat

extra-liturgical application by a local *talmid hacham* is, in itself noteworthy, regardless of whether or not his congregation was able to follow every word of it.[9]

What is surprising is that such an extraordinary religious and historical document emerged from the "Wild Coast of South America." Over and above its intrinsic historical interest, this prayer serves as additional proof, if such is needed, of the vitality of the Jewish Hebraic tradition, even in so remote and relatively recent an outpost of the Jewish people.

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1. The manuscript is part of the "Lyons collection" (Box 3, No. 205), and is marked "Old Hebrew Prayer in Time of Revolt of Negroes." It is described in *PAJHS,* XXVII (1920), pp. 223-224.

2. Several pages, including the cover plates, are apparently missing; the first available page is somewhat impaired, but despite the deterioration of the paper, the whole is still readable.

3. David Hisquiau Baruch Louzada. He was born at Joden Savanne on 22 Tevet 5510/1750. Died in Surinam, April 1825, and was buried at Joden Savanne. His Spanish epitaph manifests an acrostic "Hazan Louzada" formed from the first letters of the verses. The epitaph was published by Oudschans Dentz, "Wat er overbleef van het kerkhof en de Synagoge van de Joden Savanne in Suriname," *W.I.G.,* XXIX (1948), p. 217.

4. See page 1: "Ha'el hamelech hagadol
Hagibor vehanora
Haboreh kol nivra
Veha'oneh le'itot betzara"
And further: "Al oyveynu hashehorim
Ha'achzari'im vehamordim
Shehem mipahad oyev yere'im veharedim."

5. For an extensive bibliography on the Maroons, see Richard Price, *The Guiana Maroons: A Historical and Bibliographical Introduction* (Baltimore, 1976). For the Boni Maroons, see Silvia W. de Groot. "The Boni Maroon War, 1765-1793, Surinam and French Guyana," *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe,* XVIII (1975), pp. 30-48.

6. *Historical Essay,* p. 108.

7. de Groot, *op. cit.,* p. 46.

8. The *pizmon* entitled "Ya ribon olam ve'olmaya" is the work of Israel ben Moses Najara, a sixteenth-century *paytan.* See *Encyclopedia Judaica* 12:798-799.

9. In Barbados, at about the same time, another liturgical booklet, "Blessings for circumcisions," was produced by a local *hazan,* Moshe Lopez; it is another manuscript worthy of publication.

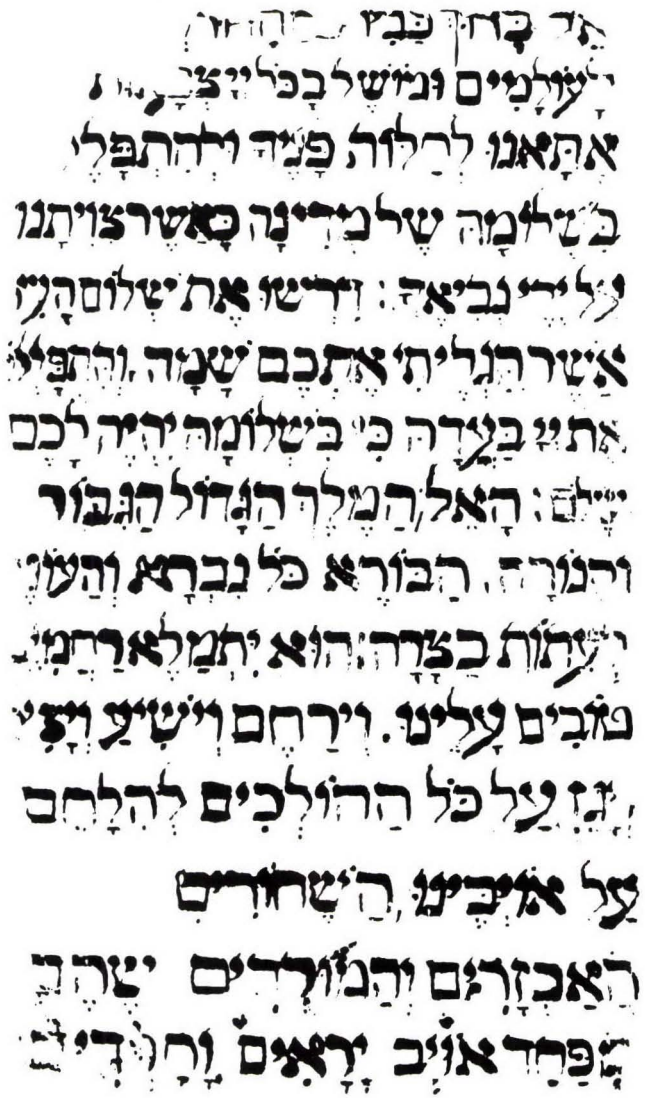
*English text**

Blessed and powerful God, eternally [ ][1] universal ruler, Lord of Hosts; we have come to beg of you and pray for the safety of the state, as you ordered us through your prophet: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."[2] God, the great, mighty, and revered king, creator of all and savior in times of distress will show mercy to us and pity, save, succor, and protect all those who, going to war against our enemies the cruel and rebellious Blacks, are fearful of the foe.

1. Lacuna in text.

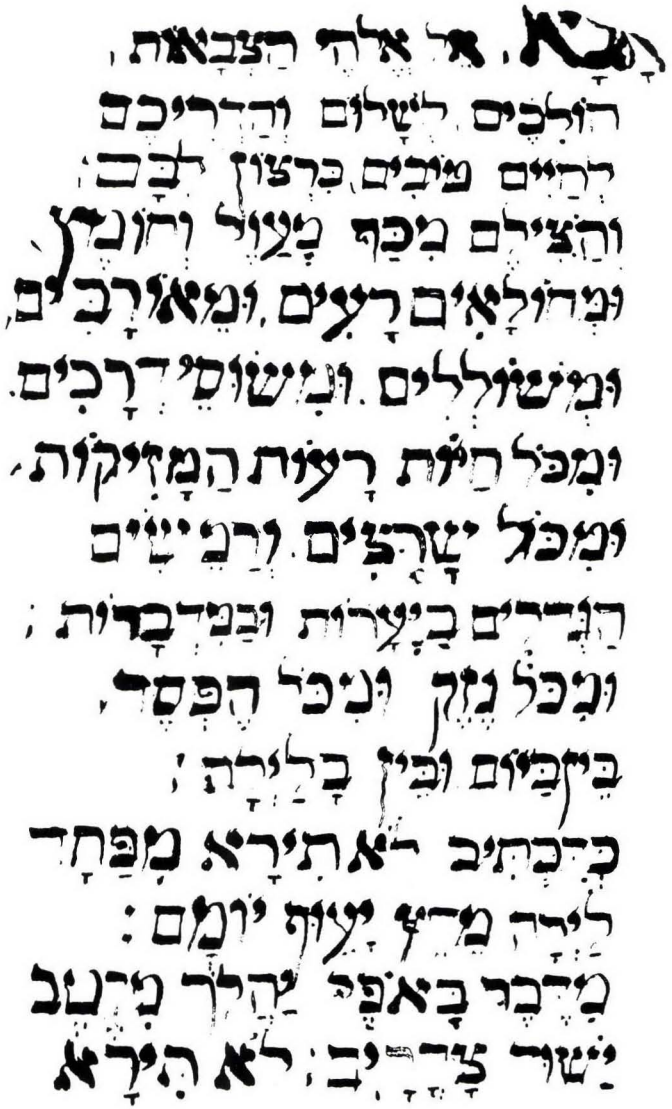
2. Jer. 29:7. All biblical quotations are translated according to the revised standard version of the Bible.

An 18th century prayer of the Jews of Surinam



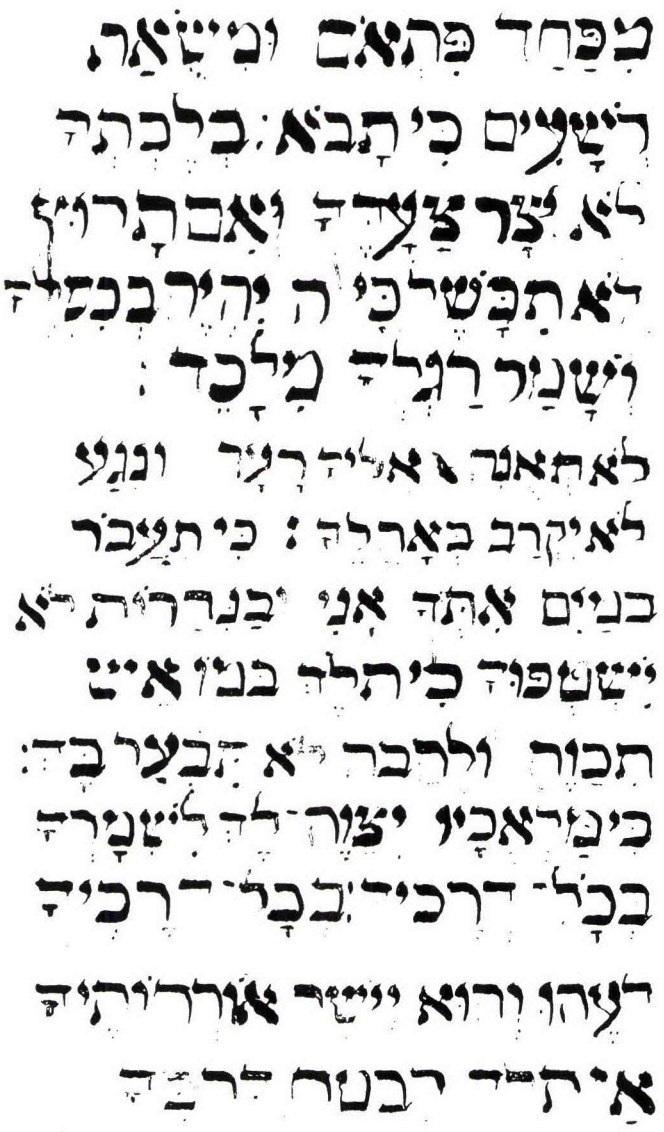
We beseech you, Lord of Hosts, lead them in peace, guide them to a good life as they desire, and save them from the hands of the evildoer and the spoiler, from evil diseases, from liers-in-wait, despoilers and bandits, and from all harmful wild beasts, insects and reptiles that thrive in the woods and deserts; and from all damage and loss, by day and by night, as it is written: "You will not fear from the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day; nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness nor the destruction that wasted at noonday".[3] Do not be afraid

3. Ps. 91:5-6.



of sudden panic or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes.[4] When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.[5] For the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.[6] No evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.[7] When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.[8] For He will give His angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.[9] In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths.[10] Then you will walk on your way securely

4. Prov. 3:25.
5. Prov. 4:12.
6. Prov. 3:26.
7. Ps. 91:10.
8. Is. 43:2.
9. Ps. 91:11
10. Prov. 3:6.



and your foot will not stumble.[11]

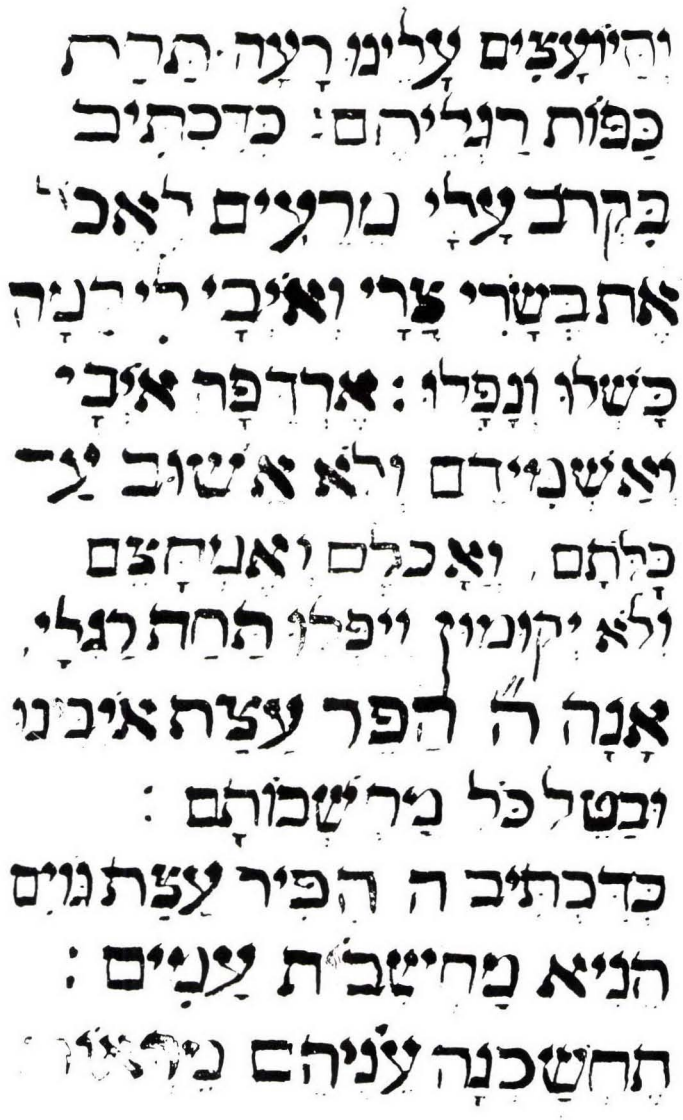
We beseech you, God, bolster their strength, shore up their courage, speed their nimbleness with no laxity or weakness, as it is written: "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle.[12] For You did make my assailants sink under me."[13] Instruct and guide them with sound advice and the spirit of knowledge; be a refuge and a citadel to them, so that they may put down, conquer and destroy under their feet all the enemies, the rebellious cruel Negroes who plot



11. Prov. 3:23.
12. Ps. 144:1.
13. Ps. 18:39.

against our welfare, as it is written: "When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall.[14] I shall pursue my enemies and destroy them; and shall not turn back until they are consumed. I shall consume them; I shall thrust them through, so that they will not rise, they will fall under my feet."[15]

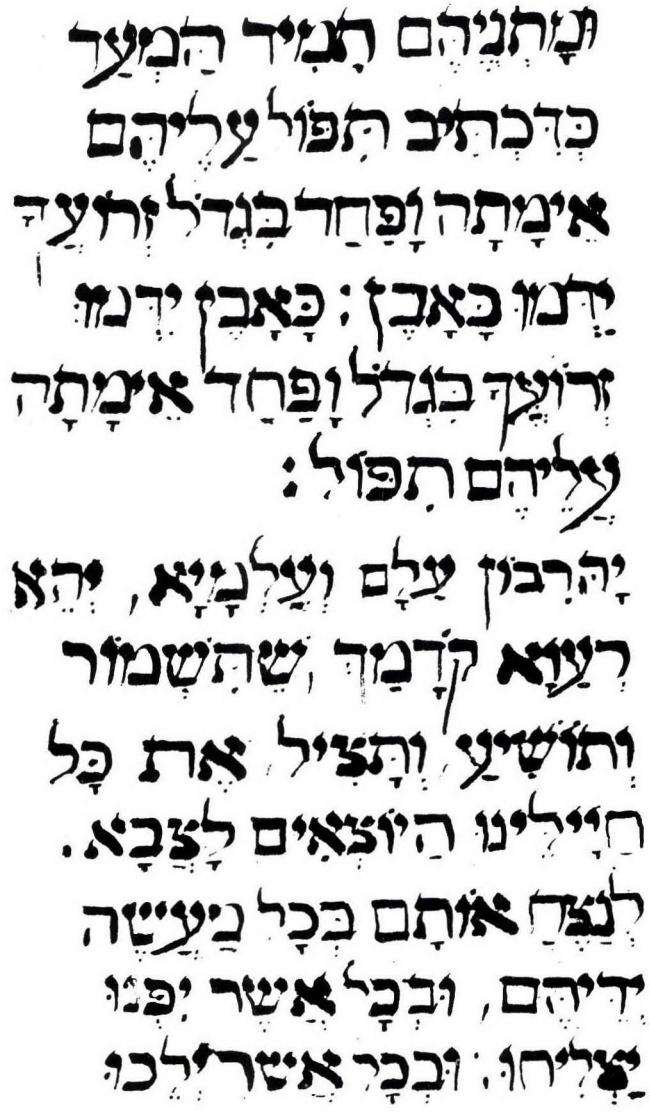
We beseech you, Lord, bring to nought their counsel and frustrate all their plans, as it is written: "The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought; He frustrates the plans of the peoples."[16] May their eyes be dimmed,



14. Ps. 27:2.
15. 2 Sam. 22:38-39.
16. Ps. 33:10.

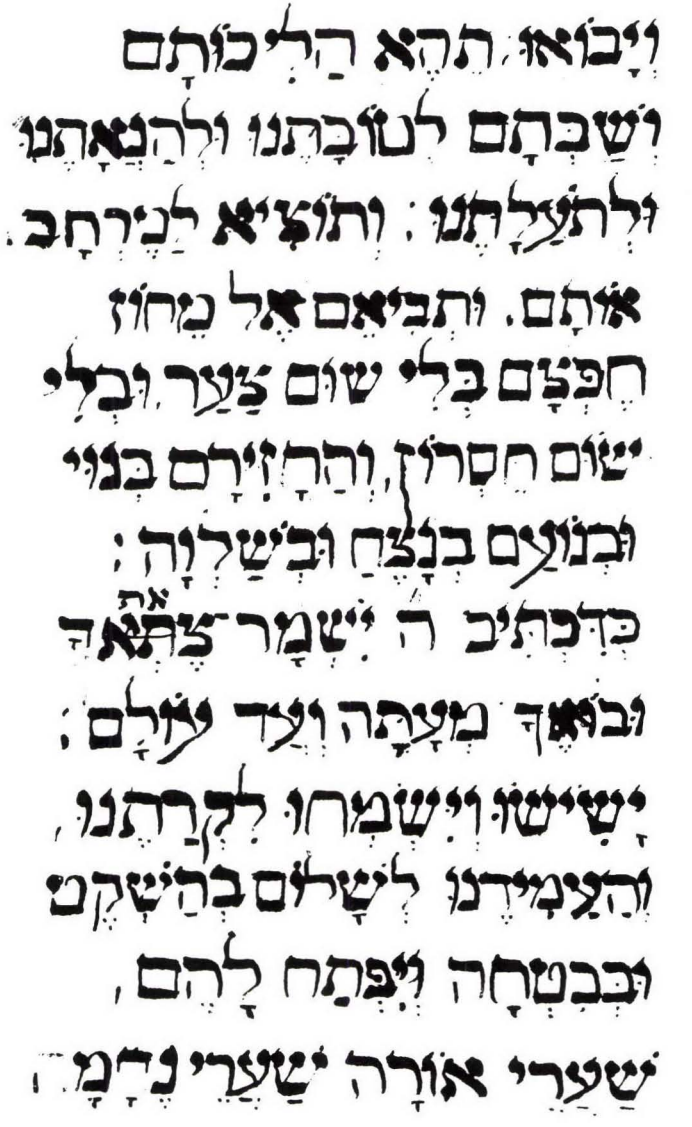
and make their loins continually to shake,[17] as it is written: "Terror and dread shall fall upon them because of the greatness of your arm they are as still as a stone.[18] They shall be still as a stone, and terror and dread shall fall upon them."[19]

God, Lord of the world,[20] let it be Your will so that You may guard, save and succor all our soldiers who are going to fight in the army; make them win in all their undertakings and succeed wherever they turn and go



17. Ezek. 29:7.
18. Ex. 15:16.
19. *Kiddush Levanah,* Blessing on the appearance of the new moon. See article, p. 76.
20. *Ya ribon olam ve'olmaya.* See article, n. 8.

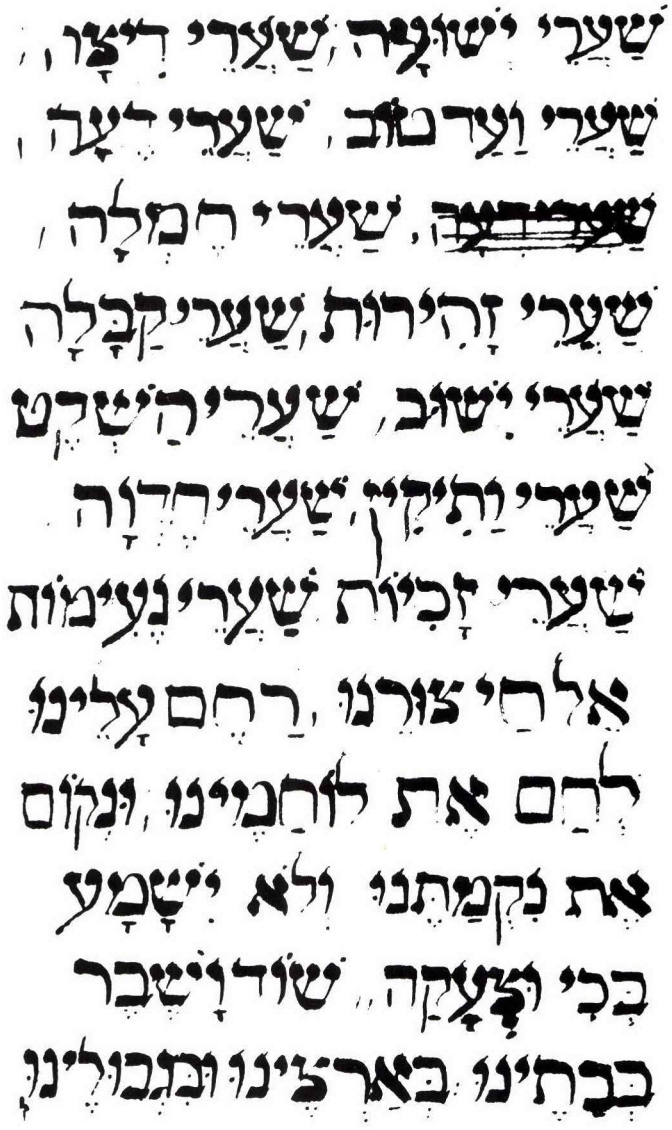
and come; let their going and coming be to our benefit, profit, and enjoyment; take them out into the vastness, bring them to their destination painlessly and without loss, and return them in fairness, pleasantness, victory, and peace, as it is written: "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore."[21] Let them feast and rejoice when they come before us; prepare us for peace, quiet, and safety, and open for them the gates of light, gates of consolation,



21. Ps. 121:8.

gates of salvation, gates of joy, gates of good summons, gates of knowledge, gates of mercy, gates of care, gates of reception, gates of settlement, gates of quiet, gates of experience, gates of happiness, gates of purity, gates of pleasure.[22]

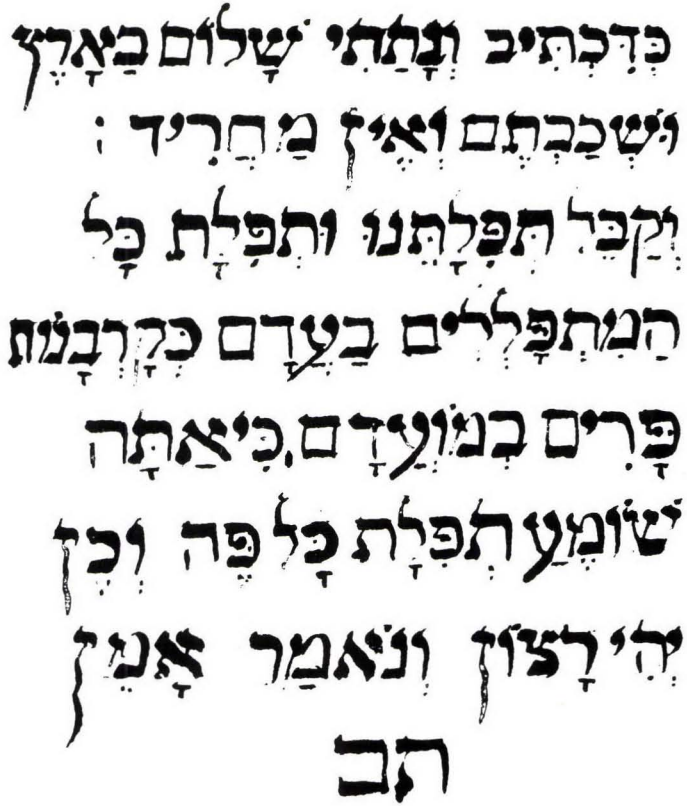
Living God, our rock, take pity on us, fight with our warriors, wreak our vengeance, so that no screaming and wailing might be heard, desolation and great destruction in our homes, lands, and borders,



22. Table hymn for Saturday night, *"Ribon Ha'Olamim, Av Ha'Rahamim,"* See Israel Davidson, ed., *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1930), vol. III, p. 364.

as it is written: "And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid."[23] May our prayer and that of all those who pray for them be as agreeable to you as offering of oxen in their prescribed times, for You hear the prayer of every mouth, and thus, may it be Your will, and let us say amen.

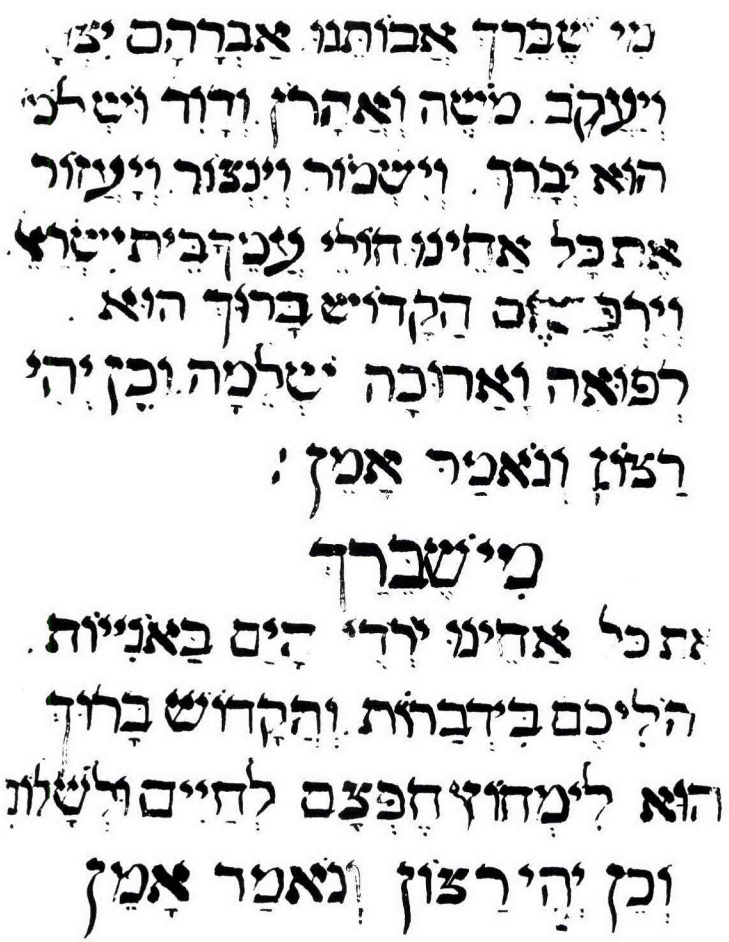
END



23. Lev. 26:6.

He who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Aaron and David and Solomon will bless, guard, preserve, and help all our brethren, the sick of Your people the house of Israel; the Holy One, blessed be He, will heal them with perfect health and thus, may it be Your will, and let us say amen.

He who blessed all our brethren who sail the sea in ships and who go on rafts; may the Holy One, blessed be He, lead them to their destination in life and peace, and thus may it be Your will and let us say amen.


מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצ
ויעקב משה ואהרן ודוד ושלמ
הוא יברך וישמור וינצור ויעזור
את כל אחינו חולי עמך בית ישרא
וירפא להם הקדוש ברוך הוא
רפואה וארוכה ישלמה וכן יהי
רצון ונאמר אמן
מי שברך
את כל אחינו ירדי הים באניות
הליכם בידבורות והקדוש ברוך
הוא לימחוץ חפצם לחיים ולשלות
וכן יהי רצון ונאמר אמן

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Wedding ceremony of the Portuguese Jews at Amsterdam, by B. Picard, 1730.

R. COHEN

PATTERNS OF MARRIAGE AND REMARRIAGE AMONG THE SEPHARDI JEWS OF SURINAM, 1788-1818

When Joseph del Castilho and Abigail Hoheb Brandon married on January 5, 1794, they linked two old Surinam Sephardi families. Joseph del Castilho, who had adopted his mother's surname, was the son of Moses Robles de Medina and belonged to one of the oldest Jewish families in Surinam. The bride's father was Samuel Hoheb Brandon, a *Parnas* of the Sephardi community and a founding member of the *Docendo Docemur* literary association. He was also a signatory of the letter to von Dohm which indirectly led to the writing of the *Historical Essay*.

Abigail and Joseph were still children when they married, he 15, she less than 14. But wealth and status could not keep death away and three years later Abigail died, leaving a young widower and no children.

Within a year and a half Joseph del Castilho remarried. His second choice, Rachel Henriques d'Acosta, was also socially prominent. Her ancestors had been spokesmen of behalf of the Jewish community before Governor Lichtenberg in 1669 and again before Governor Van den Schepper in 1741. Still, the d'Acostas' social position probably had less to do with Joseph's choice than two other factors: Rachel's mother was his father's cousin and, more pertinent, the bride was pregnant. On August 18, 1799, she gave birth to a son named Moses after his paternal grandfather and, less than three years later, to a daughter named Sarah after both her grandmothers.

Before Sarah's second birthday, the children lost their father. Joseph del Castilho died on January 25, 1804 at the age of 25. A short but very intense life cycle had reached its end: married at 15, widowed at 19, remarried at 20, a father at 21, dead at 25. Joseph's widow, left with two small children, remarried a widower with three children of his own.

The story of Joseph del Castilho outlined here shows several interesting facets generally true for the entire Sephardi community.

The excellent and reliable records of the Sephardi Jewish community in Surinam enable us to ask questions about marriage and remarriage in that community without the pitfalls of "typical" examples. The method employed – family reconstitution – creates a composite picture of all Jewish Sephardi marriages contracted between 1788 and 1818.

Where did the partners in these unions come from?

Was Surinam indeed part and parcel of the great Atlantic market, not only for trade but also for brides? At what age did they marry? To what extent was intermarriage with Ashkenazi Jews prevalent? When one spouse died, did the survivor continue alone or with a new partner? If he or she remarried, what were the reasons for this step? Questions like these enable us to study the demographic dynamics of the Jewish community, and ultimately lead to a very basic question about the Sephardi Jews in Surinam: How different were they from the other white settlers?

Sources and Method

Although Surinam had no civil registry until 1828, vital events did not go unrecorded. The law required registration of births, baptisms, and deaths in church registers. From the earliest beginnings of the Jewish settlement, Jews were allowed to marry "according to their usages," and marriage contracts (i.e. *Ketuboth*) were held valid in every respect. Although this right was sometimes challenged, it remained in force till 1828. The only restriction was the requirement of marriage registration before the secretariat of the colony according to religion.[1]

We have used these registrations, comparable to church banns, as the basis for our research. The entries list the date and place of registration and of the subsequent marriage, the names of the bride and groom, their parents or guardians (if they were minors), their place of origin and residence, and their ages at the time of registration.[2] These data were then linked with the registers of the Jewish community.

It is an interesting fact that social and religious groups considering themselves as separate units keep their own genealogical data precisely *because* of their sense of separateness.[3] The Jews of Surinam were no exception to this rule. Their marriage contracts in particular were registered and kept, not only because they were binding legal contracts between spouses, but also because they defined who had married according to the Law of Moses. Similarly, circumcision records were meticulously kept. When the civil registry was instituted, the Jewish community, in the person of their *hazan*, David Hisquiau Baruch Louzada, could hand over a full register of deaths going back to 1777 and a somewhat less reliable birth register going back to the very first settlement. All these registers were copied twice, once for the civil registry and once for the archives of the Jewish community.[4]

The lists are alphabetical, according to first name and date. Besides the name and date of birth, the birth registers list the names of the parents, including the mother's maiden name. In addition to these registers, the Jewish community archives kept birth and death registers, again beginning in 1777 and continuing chronologically until 1865-1866.[5] Using these registers, we were able to reconstitute 196 families who married between 1788 and 1818. The picture presented here is thus of the generation following the composition of the *Historical Essay.*

Country of Origin

The Sephardim of the New World were often perceived as a mobile group.[7] Voluntarily or by force, they

moved from Brazil to the Caribbean and thence to North America, as well as back and forth between the Old and New Worlds. Surinam in particular was considered a station in this migratory pattern. It was also seen as a logical dumping-ground for the poor. In 1748 Isaac de Pinto published his pamphlet "Reflexoës Politicas," in which he painted a sad picture of the economic situation of the Amsterdam Sephardim:

> "In the past 25 years the number of the contributing members to the Portuguese Jewish Congregation fell from 629 to 610. The number of needy families rose within these years from 450 to more than 750 ... The present state of affairs could not go on much longer ..."[8]

De Pinto concluded that emigration to the colonies, particularly to Surinam, was the answer to the Sephardi community's problems, and many agreed with him. The Amsterdam *Mahamad* and the City Council financially supported those willing to leave. Between 1759 and 1814 at least 138 Sephardim migrated to Surinam, often with their families. The preference for Surinam as a destination is most clearly seen in the *Livro dos Despachos,* which, though regularly listing Curaçao, Bordeaux or London, uses Surinam as destination in the formula provided as an example to assist the scribe.[9]

One might thus expect the Surinam Sephardi community between 1788 and 1818 to be a typical immigrant society. However, the opposite is true. Of the 196 couples who married in Surinam during this period only 39 men and 19 women were born elsewere, most often in Amsterdam (see Table 1). Even these newcomers were no immigrants in the usual sense of the word. Most often, they were children of new immigrants who, though born elsewhere, had grown up in Surinam. For example, Moses Ferares Gabay Isidro, who married his cousin Jael Gabay Isidro in 1797, had arrived in April 1787 from Amsterdam with his parents and at least one sister. This sister, Judith Ferares, was only 11 years old at the time of her arrival and she married Emanuel Jessurun Junior five years later. Likewise, Gideon Acohen left Amsterdam on September 22, 1774 with his wife and two children. The eldest, Pinhas (named after his paternal grandfather), who was five years old at the time, married Ribca Jessurun in Paramaribo in 1792.

There were, of course, some who came as young adults and married in Surinam. Matathias Della Bella, for example, left Amsterdam in September 1791, aided by a fl. 120 grant from the community for his fare, given on the condition that he keep away from Amsterdam for at least 15 years. Della Bella never returned. In 1798, aged 30, he married the young, native-born widow Ribca Romanel. He died in Paramaribo in 1827 almost exactly 36 years after his arrival.

Others took even less time to get married. Legally, new immigrants could not marry unless they had resided in Surinam for at least 18 months, but occasionally this law was waived.[10] Isaac Cortissos from London married Reina de Raphael Cohen within a year and a half of arrival. Moses Finsy from Curaçao, married a local woman, Esther Mendes Noble, in 1809, and the law was waived for him too.

The Surinam Sephardim of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were thus largely a native-born group. Very few new immigrants arrived and even those

listed as born elsewhere, in many cases came as children with their parents. But at whatever age they arrived, once they married in Surinam they stayed there. Only 2% of the persons born abroad and married in Surinam were not buried there. The Sephardi community of Surinam was thus a closed society whose growth depended almost entirely upon the difference between fertility and mortality.

Age at first marriage

Historical demographers have devoted much attention to the demographic aspects of marriage. The average age at which women marry for the first time, the age difference between husband and wife and the duration of marriage are important factors in explaining demographic behavior. Family reconstruction studies in France, for example, have shown a correlation between the average age of the woman's first marriage and the number of her children.[11] Therefore, an early or late first marriage can disturb the equilibrium between births and deaths, or function as a kind of regulatory mechanism for population growth.

Abigail Hoheb Brandon, the bride of our introduction, was the youngest woman to marry and her groom the youngest man. The average Jewish woman married when she was 21.6 years old. Her husband was usually considerably older; the average age for men was 26.2 years. Half the women married before they were 20 years old, while for men the median age was 24.5 years. Women thus married relatively early, although none as early as Abigail Hoheb Brandon. Joseph del Castilho was clearly an exception, as Table 2 shows. Over 70% of the men who would eventually marry were still bachelors at the age of 22, while almost two-thirds of the women were already married at that age.

A single woman over 25 must have been considered an old maid. If she was not married by then she had a number of options open to her. The first one, of course, was not to marry at all. Unfortunately, family reconstitution does not allow us at this point to determine the number of women who chose this course, but two other possibilities are supplied by the data. A woman could, if she had passed the age at which most women married, decide to choose a man younger than herself. Alternatively, she could marry a widower. Both options were taken by Jewish women in Surinam. Almost 60% of the women who married after age 24 either did so with a younger groom or with a widower. Abigail Joseph de la Parra, the oldest bride in our study, was 40 when she married Samuel Baruch Louzada, 27, the son of *Hazan* David Hisquiau Baruch Louzada. Similarly, when Esther Isaac Fernandes took Abraham Bueno de Mesquita, Sr. as her husband in 1810, she was 27 and he only 17.

Rachel de Isaac Bueno de Mesquita is typical of the other option. Her sister Ribca had married David Nahar when she was 18 and died 11 years later, leaving her husband with four children ranging from ten to two. Nine months later, David remarried to Rachel, his sister-in-law, who was then 36.

Normally then, Sephardi women would marry relatively young. Their marriages were heavily concentrated around the ages of 18, 19 and 20, when almost two-fifths of all women married. At those ages, only one-eighth of all men were married. They started a family predomin-

antly between the ages of 22-27 when almost half of them married.

Intracommunal and extracommunal marriage

Two other behavioral strategies were available to Jews of marriageable age. They could marry outside the Sephardi group or, alternatively, outside the Jewish community altogether. Both possibilities encountered strenuous communal disapproval. A 1772 rule of the Ashkenazi community, doubtlessly shared in spirit by the Sephardim, explicitly stated that "those marrying mulattos or Portuguese will be discarded as members and will be lowered to the status of congregants."[12] Significantly, the 1772 rule did not consider the possibility of a Jew marrying a *white* Gentile, and we have found only one instance of this type of mixed marriage.[13]

Of course, intracommunal and extracommunal marriages did take place. Marriages between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews did occur, but their rarity indicates that they were frowned upon. Only in five cases did a Sephardi man marry an Ashkenazi woman and in three cases a Sephardi woman an Ashkenazi man. All these marriages took place in the last decade of the period under consideration. On June 24, 1811, Joseph Haim Baruch Louzada, 22, born and residing in Surinam, "lying in bed being very sick but having total use of his mind and senses and being assisted by his mother Esther Jessurun, widow," married Marianne Eleazar, also a native of Surinam. He died soon afterwards, and his childless widow remarried with Moses Jacobs, like her of Ashkenazi origin, in January 1815.

Marriages between Sephardi males and female blacks or mulattos are almost as difficult to find, partially because such unions were officially prohibited until 1817. As early as 1686 all inhabitants were strictly forbidden to have dealings or sexual relations with Negro and Indian women. Although repeated in 1725, 1759, and 1761, the law was a dead letter and by 1784 its impact was considerably weakened, only to disappear altogether in 1817.[14]

The fact that such unions took place, however, is indisputable. Colored Jews founded in 1779 a "siva", or society, called *Darke Jesarim* and established their own synagogue.[15] The community did not last, and in 1800 the synagogue was pulled down. The birth register of the Sephardi community also provides proof for interracial relationships. Particularly after 1817, when the prohibition was rescinded, the birth register occasionally lists the offspring of Jews with slaves or free blacks, usually some years after birth.

In November 1808 Abraham Nunes Monsanto Fils married Esther, the daughter of Joseph d'Anaria, a prominent surgeon in the Sephardi community. The marriage lasted until Abraham's death in 1825. But in 1814 a Mulatto woman, Betje, gave birth to a son, Mosseh, who was circumcised at the age of four and a half and recognized by his father. Two years later Abraham Nunes Monsanto had another child, this time a daughter by his legal wife. In one extreme case, David Bueno de Mesquita recognized three sons as his own between 1814 and 1825. They were all circumcised and received the names of Jacob, Semuel, and David Pierre. They were born of three different slaves, Cornelia, Elisabeth, and Marie. It should be emphasized, however, that such occurrences

were rare, and by 1830 there were only 50 colored Jews in Surinam.[16]

Duration of Marriage

An early first marriage for women is a significant determinant of a large family, but the duration of marriage is equally important. The fact that women married young could only influence their fertility if the marriage lasted at least for most of their child-bearing years. The breakup of a marriage while the woman was still in her twenties or thirties could greatly reduce family size.

Jewish marriages in Surinam did occasionally endure. Salomon Hishias Arrias and Ribca de Benjamin Henriques da Costa, for example, married in April 1802. He was 22, she 15, and their marriage lasted 56 years. Such long-terms unions were, however, extremely exceptional. Almost one in every three marriages lasted no more than 10 years and almost half the marriages no more than 15 (see Table 4). If all marriages are taken into account, the average duration was 18 years.[17]

Marriages ended most often with the husband's death, but the percentage of such unions (52.4%) is much smaller than might be expected, considering the age difference between husband and wife. This initial gap explains why the husband's death usually broke up the marriage after 20 years. However, in the first 10 years of marriage, the wife predeceased her husband twice as often, clearly as a result of death in childbirth. The remaining parent was then again confronted with a choice: whether to remarry, and if so, with whom. The process of marital selection was repeated, but obviously with different results.

Remarriage

The most famous of all Surinam Jews, David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, was not yet 16 when he married Esther Abigail Cahanet Nassy. After her death in November 1789, following almost 26 years of marriage, Nassy and his daughter spent some years abroad and 10 years after his wife's death he married again. At age 52 he chose Ribca de la Parra, 24, daughter of a colleague of the bridegroom in the *Mahamad.* After Nassy's death in 1806, his young wife remained a widow for a year and a half. In September 1807 she remarried Samuel Haim Cohen Nassy.[18]

The marriage pattern of David de Isaac Cohen Nassy was atypical: He was the oldest of all widowers to remarry and the period between his first and second marriages was the longest. Only the fact that he did remarry was typical. Almost a quarter of all unions in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Surinam involved at least one partner who had been married before (23.5%).

Two main factors determined whether a surviving spouse would remarry: his or her age, and the presence of children. If a widower remarried, he usually did so quickly. On the average, only 23 months elapsed between the wife's death and the husband's remarriage. If women remarried, they did so only after 39 months on the average. Still, remarrying women were younger than remarrying men. The average widow was only a little over 31, the remarrying widower 35.5 years old.

Clearly, this pattern was largely determined by the age at which one entered widowhood. The average age at death for married Jewish men around the turn of the

nineteenth century was 53 years, and for Jewish women 49.3 years. If we consider that Surinam is a tropical country, with only primitive health conditions, at the time, these figures may seem quite favorable.[19]

For our purpose, it is much more important to know that 16.7% of the men were widowed before the age of 30, and 42.3% before the age of 40. For women, the percentages are roughly similar. Over a fifth of all married women were widowed before they were 30 (22.2%) and exactly the same percentage lost their husbands before 40. In other words, in more than two of every five marriages the union was broken up before the surviving spouse had reached his or her 40th birthday. In the context of the data presented on the duration of marriage, it is hardly surprising that remarriage was a common phenomenon in the Surinam Jewish community.

Moreover, because of the large proportions of young widows and widowers, the surviving spouse was often left with small children, who were an additional incentive for remarriage. The widow would need a breadwinner to support her and her children, the widower a mother for his children. In the colonial, slave-oriented society of Surinam in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it might have been supposed that the former reason would be much more important than the latter. After all, a widower could raise his children with the help of a female slave or a free mulatto without needing a new wife, but although such situations undoubtedly existed, they were outside the Jewish norm.

More than two-thirds of the men widowed before thirty (69.2%) and almost half of those widowed before forty (47%) remarried. After that age, a new union was very unusual. We have seen already that David de Isaac Cohen Nassy's second wedding at age 52 was a unique case.

Women whose husbands predeceased them also had a much larger chance of remarrying while young. Of the women widowed before 30, more than one-third (35%) wedded again. However, for older women remarriage was as exceptional as for men over 40. Of all the women who took a second husband, only one – the widow of David Pereyra Brandon – remarried at age 40 with a widower two years her junior.

The pattern of remarriage was thus uncomplicated. Young widows and widowers often remarried, while older ones did not. The relatively young widower could remarry, thus providing his children with a mother and himself with a wife. We have already cited the case of David Nahar, who was left with four young children when 34 and, within a year, remarried his sister-in-law. These widowers usually chose women who were younger than themselves (see Table 3), sometimes also widows. Rachel Henriques da Costa, the second wife of Joseph del Castilho, took for her second husband Abraham Bueno de Mesquita, himself a widower. They started their marriage with five children ranging in age from eight to 19.

The pattern for the widow was similar, with one important difference. Two-thirds of the women who entered a second union chose a man younger than themselves (see Table 3), and this for good reasons. It should be remembered that the average woman was widowed at age 31, by which age more than four-fifths of all the

men were married (see Table 2). They were thus forced to marry younger men.

In addition, almost half the remarrying widows chose for a second husband a foreign-born man. Earlier we noted that these newcomers were usually children of new immigrants, but even for these it may have been difficult to penetrate the long-established community. Marrying a widow may have been a means for attaining acceptance and status in the community, together with possible economic advantages.[20]

Conclusion

The marriage pattern of the Sephardi Jews in Surinam between 1788 and 1818 resembles those found in European societies. On the average, a woman married when she was 21 and her husband 26. Their marriage lasted 18 years and remarriage upon the death of one spouse was quite common, as long as the survivor was still relatively young. The Jewish marriage pattern only becomes remarkable when compared with the society in which it existed.

Demographically speaking, late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century Surinam was far from normal. As a result of the economic crisis of 1773, the social structure of the colony had changed considerably. Even before 1773 the sex ratio was unfavorable, but afterwards men greatly out-numbered women. The crisis of the 1770s caused the transfer of many plantations to absentee owners abroad, who left the land in the hands of overseers. These *administrateurs,* as well as the managers in their employ, were predominantly single. In fact, managers could be dismissed for marrying.[21]

The ranks of single men were further swollen by the military population, also overwhelmingly celibate. As late as 1830, there were 218 white men to every 100 white women. Even in Paramaribo there were 140 men for every 100 women. Moreover, by then the situation had already improved in comparison with the last decades of the previous century, when the sex ratio must have been even more disproportionate.[22]

In such a society, with a large number of single white men and a colored population containing a large number of marriageable young women alternative life styles developed. This usually meant taking a colored woman, either free or a slave as a quasi-legal "wife," or, if the man was already married, by taking a "secondary wife." Both alternatives were extremly common in Surinam society. "Marriage Surinam-style," as it was usually called, became "... a social institution which possesses all the characteristics of marriage, but in which the class difference and the difference in origin of the two partners seem to consitute the chief obstacle to giving the woman the legal and social status of a lawfully wedded wife."[23]

We have seen already that concubinage and marriage Surinam-style were rare among the Jews. The *Historical Essay* attributes the more moderate behavior of the Jews to the "constant care and ... assiduous efforts"[24] of the parents. It is far more likely that the Sephardi community in Surinam was not forced to adopt such a behavioral pattern. Already in 1788, only 26.2% of the Sephardim lived outside Paramaribo, most of them at Joden Savanne. From then on, Joden Savanne declined sharply in importance and, by 1827, only eight families

remained, so that Surinam Jewry became exclusively Paramaribo-based. The urban character of the Jews was in sharp contrast to the rural pattern of the general population. By 1788, three quarters of all Sephardi Jews and one-fifth of the general population lived in Paramaribo.[25]

The Jews were thus city-oriented, while the general population was plantation-oriented. In addition, the sex ratio of the Jews was much more balanced than that of the general white population. The 1830 census shows a sex ratio for Jews of 96.5 men per 100 women. Obviously, this ratio resulted from the stable character of the community, which absorbed few new immigrants.[26]

As a stable urban group, evenly divided among men and women, the Jews in Surinam were able to maintain a relatively normal marriage and remarriage pattern. This was not particularly because they were Jewish, but rather because their socio-demographic pattern was free of the singular factors affecting the general white population in Surinam.

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1. Historical Essay, p. 189; J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, *Plakaten. Ordonnantien en Andere Wetten, uitgevaardigd in Suriname 1667-1816.* (Amsterdam, 1973), pp. 469-470, 737, 1026, 164-165.

2. Register van aangiften tot ondertrouw, gedaan ten overstaan van Raden van Politie, Joden (1778-1817), Old Archives Civil Registry, no. 6 (A.R.A.).

3. T.H. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1969), p. 199.

4. See R. Bijlsma, *Archief der Nederlandsch - Portugeesche - Israelitische Gemeente in Suriname* (The Hague, 1920), pp. 2-5.

5. The following registers were used to reconstitute families:
   a) List of births from 1662-1723 and 1723-1777. Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community (A.R.A.), no. 416.
   b) List of births 1777-1812, continued till 1825 by D.B. Louzada. Ibid., no. 417.
   c) List of deaths 1777-1812, continued till 1825 by D.B. Louzada. Ibid., no. 418.
   d) List of births 1777-1833, continued till 1866, Ibid., no. 419.
   e) List of deaths 1777-1833, continued till 1865, Ibid., no. 420.
   f) List of deaths 1777-1788, Ibid., no. 421.
   g) Burial register of cemetery on Joden-Savanna, kept by M.M. Quiros till 1777. Ibid., no. 422.
   h) Idem, 1777-1833, Ibid., no. 423.

6. The technique of family reconstitution requires reliable and reasonably complete data about the dates of births, marriages and deaths of all the inhabitants of a parish, village or town. This information is then arranged by families. The methodology is described in Michel Fleury and Louis Henry, *Nouveau Manuel de Dépouillement et d'Exploitation de L'Etat Civil Ancien* (Paris, 1976^2).
   See also, D.E.C. Eversley, P. Laslett, E.A. Wrigley, *et. al.*, eds., *An Introduction to English Historical Demography* (London, 1966), chapter IV.
   The registers of the Jewish community in Surinam have a remarkable completeness. The death date was available in 90.8% (for husbands) and 85.7% (for wives). Only in 4% of all the cases was no death date found for husband *and* wife together.
   The birthdates were less complete but if the age at marriage is used also to obtain the year of birth, birthdates are available for 91.8% of all husbands and 98% of all wives.
   Comparison between the birth registers and the marriage register also shows a very high accuracy rate. In 73.7% of all the marriages the age of the spouses is accurate. In another 15.3% the deviation is less than a year. Only in 4.6% is the deviation more than two years.

7. "The mobility of Jews in the Caribbean and in South America during the 1600's and 1700's is a source of never-ceasing wonder to the present day historian living in an age of supersonic flight." Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew 1492-1776* (Detroit, 1970), p. 150.

8. Herbert I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, 1937), pp. 214-215; J.S. da Silva Rosa, *Geschiedenis der Portugeesche Joden te Amsterdam 1593-1925* (Amsterdam, 1925), p. 117.

9. Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam, Municipal Archives of Amsterdam, no. 978-979. The following examples are all from the *Livro.*

10. The law of April 26, 1731 appears in the marriage register, but not in Schiltkamp and de Smidt, *op. cit.*

11. See Daniel S. Smith, "A Homeostatic Demographic Regime: Patterns in West European Family Reconstitution Studies," in Demos Lee, ed., *Population Patterns in the Past* (New York, 1977), pp. 19-51.

12. H.D. Benjamins and J.F. Snelleman, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indie* (The Hague, 1914-17), p. 388.

13. In April 1820, a young Christian girl, Rebecca Lynch Pindy, converted and married Abraham de Moses Bueno de Mesquita. They already had a daughter, aged four and a half, and a son, four months old at the time.

14. Schiltkamp and de Smidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 168, 383, 669, 724, 1069-1070. R.A.J. van Lier, *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague, 1971), p. 76. The penalty on sexual contact between the two groups was 2,000 lb. of sugar, not 2lb. as in Van Lier, *ibid.*

15. See Fred. Oudschans Dentz, "Joodse Kleurlingen in Suriname", *WIG,* XXXV (1955), p. 234; Van Lier, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-111.

16. Oudschans Dentz, *op. cit.*

17. The median duration was 15 years.

18. See R. Bijlsma, "David de Is.C. Nassy, author of the "Essai historique sur Surinam," *supra.*

19. Still in 1925 the average life expectancy in Surinam was 32 years and two months. See Van Lier, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295.

20. See for comparative data on remarriage in selected villages in France, Alain Bideau, "A Demographic and Social Analysis of Widowhood and Remarriage: The Example of the Castellany of Thoissey-en-Dombes, 1670-1840," *Journal of Family History,* Vol. V, no. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 28-43. It is particularly important to note that in Thoissey between 1790 and 1839 *all* men who were widowed before thirty remarried, but only 57% of the women did. Until the age of forty 78% of the men, and 60% of the women remarried. After that the remarriage rate for men diminishes *gradually,* but for women it shows as sharp a decline as for the Sephardi Jews in Surinam.

21. See for a general description of the social climate in Surinam at the time Van Lier, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-44. In 1788 only 80 to 90 owners of plantations were living in Surinam out of a total of some 500 plantations altogether (see *Historical Essay,* p. 98). In 1813, 297 of the 369 estates belonged to absentee owners (see M.D. Teenstra, *De Negerslaven in Suriname* (Dordrecht, 1842), p. 15).

22. Van Lier, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

24. *Historical Essay,* p. 155.

25. Van Lier, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 74-75.

26. *Ibid.*

Table 1

Places of Origin, other than Surinam, of Sephardim marrying in Surinam 1788-1818

	MEN	WOMEN	ALL
Holland:			
Amsterdam	19	8	27
The Hague	1	–	1
France:			
Bayonne	3	2	5
Bordeaux	1	–	1
England:			
London	3	2	5
West Indies:			
Curaçao	5	1	6
St. Eustatius	2	1	3
St. Croix	2	–	2
Barbados	–	3	3
St. Kitts	–	1	1
Jamaica	1	–	1
Cap François	–	1	1
Others:			
Gibraltar	2	–	2
Total	39	19	58

Table 2

First Marriages – Proportion by Age

	WOMEN			MEN		
Age	N	%	Cumulative %	N	%	Cumulative %
13	1	0.6	0.6	–	–	–
14	1	0.6	1.2	–	–	–
15	8	4.6	5.8	1	0.6	0.6
16	9	5.2	11.0	1	0.6	1.2
17	8	4.6	15.6	3	1.8	3.0
18	22	12.6	28.2	4	2.4	5.4
19	25	14.4	42.6	6	3.7	9.1
20	19	10.9	53.5	10	6.1	15.2
21	9	5.2	58.7	8	4.9	20.1
22	10	5.7	64.4	15	9.1	29.2
23	6	3.4	67.8	18	11.0	40.2
24	10	5.7	73.5	9	5.5	45.7
25	9	5.2	78.7	13	7.9	53.6
26	9	5.2	83.9	18	11.0	64.6
27	7	4.0	87.9	8	4.9	69.5
28	4	2.3	90.2	6	3.7	73.2
29	7	4.0	94.2	11	6.7	79.9
30	–	–	–	5	3.1	83.0
31	2	1.1	95.3	2	1.2	84.2
32	5	2.9	98.2	5	3.1	87.3
33	–	–	–	1	0.6	87.9
34	1	0.6	98.8	2	1.2	89.1
35	–	–	–	3	1.8	90.9
36	1	0.6	99.4	2	1.2	92.1
37	–	–	–	2	1.2	93.3
38	–	–	–	1	0.6	93.9
39	–	–	–	3	1.8	95.7
40 & over	1	0.6	100.0	7	4.3	100.0
Total	174	100.0		164	100.0	

Table 3

Difference in Age of Husband and Wife (All Marriages)

	First Marriage Both	Consecutive Marriage Men	Consecutive Marriage Women	Consecutive Marriage Both	Total
Wife Older by:					
10 or more	3	–	1	–	4
5-9	3	2	2	–	7
1-4	18	–	5	1	24
No Difference	9	1	2	1	13
Husband Older by:					
1-4	39	4	–	–	43
5-9	56	3	1	–	60
10-14	13	2	–	1	16
15-19	3	2	2	1	8
20-24	3	3	–	–	6
25 & over	1	3	–	–	4
Unknown	2	6	2	1	11
Total	150	26	15	5	196

Table 4

Duration of Marriage (First Marriages Only)

Years	Husband died first		Wife died first		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under 1	1	1.5	5	8.5	6	4.8
1-4	4	6.2	6	10.2	10	8.1
5-9	8	12.3	13	22.0	21	17.0
10-14	14	21.6	6	10.2	20	16.1
15-19	7	10.8	10	16.9	17	13.7
20-24	11	16.9	4	6.8	15	12.1
25-29	3	4.6	3	5.1	6	4.8
30-34	6	9.2	2	3.4	8	6.5
35-39	6	9.2	5	8.5	11	8.9
40-44	1	1.5	3	5.1	4	3.2
45-49	1	1.5	1	1.7	2	1.6
50-	3	4.6	1	1.7	4	3.2
Total	65	99.9	59	100.1	124	100.0

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