Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha

Against the Oblivion, Becoming Maroon

In Charvein, French Guiana, in an open area near a Catholic church, a memorial is erected to the *lowéman* – as the first fugitives are called in Okanisi language. But this is not a historic site to honor the first Ndyuka runaways, one of the six Guianese Maroon peoples (Saamaka, Ndyuka, Paamaca, Kwinti, Aluku/Boni, and Matawai) or African and Creole groups of enslaved people who fled the plantations and fought against punishment and enslavement.[1] At the end of the twentieth century, the monument to the *lowéman* reenacts another connection, one that involves diverse pasts and many presents. The stone-made monument also recalls the marks of Maroon territories and bodies, composed of demarcated places owned by matriclans' gods and spirits. It also situates and inscribes the presence of the ancestors on the ground, somehow reminiscent of the sacred artifacts that peopled the Maroon villages. But instead of wood and the traditional Maroon fabrics with which the flagpoles (*faakatiki*) and discrete offerings, deposited under sacred plants and trees, signal the ancestors' presence in the villages, the *lowéman* monument is a warning of the impossibility of forgetting the ancestors in a new spatiality created out of the refugees' movements and relations with their clan gods (figure 1).

Thirty years after the end of the War of the Interior (*Binnenladse Orloorg*, 1986–1992), the rural neighbor on the outskirts of Saint Laurent du Maroni is one of the three deactivated refugee camps where many Maroons escaping from the Surinamese Army's persecution and violence have found shelter, humanitarian support,

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1 The six Maroon societies occupy areas near large rivers and cities in Suriname and French Guiana and speak Creole Maroon languages that are to some degree mutually intelligible. Linguistic diversity is directly linked to the unique relationships of these peoples to the plantation universe and the slave economy of the coast. In Guiana, in 2018, these groups comprised approximately 23% and 26% of the population of Suriname and Guyana. There were 263,300 Maroon people (Saamaka, Ndyuka, Paamaka, Aluku, Kwinti and Matawai "tribes") living in Suriname (75,600), in Guyana (99,200), and the Caribbean, Europe and the United States (24,350). Richard Price, "Maroons in Guyane: Getting the Numbers Right," *New West Indian Guide* 92, no. 3–4 (2018): 275–83; for a bibliographic review, see Richard Price, "A Half-Century of 'Bush-Negro' Studies," in *Maroon Cosmopolitics*, ed. Olivia Gomes da Cunha (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 35–53.

Fig. 1: Moiwana Memorial erected by survivors in Charvein. French Guiana (photo by the author).

healthcare, and official recognition as "PPDS" (*Populations Provisoirement Déplacées du Suriname*) in the face of the government's refusal to recognize them and thus grant them refugee prerogatives.[2] The strong presence of Cottica Ndyuka in the Eastern Suriname, living in villages along the Cottica River and its affluents in Eastern Suriname encompasses western French Guiana and the shores of the Lower Maroni River, where many families have found temporary shelters. The War of Interior was the culmination of a long history of discrimination that separated the Surinamese coast from the country's interior. Maroons, who lived in villages and forests until the early 1970s, were historically depicted as "primitive," "inferior beings," and resistant to development policies by the coastal population and state authorities. These animosities in-

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2 "Ce statut de personnes provisoirement déplacées, contrairement au statut de réfugié, n'offre pas la possibilité de rester dans le pays d'accueil quand le retour dans le pays d'origine devient possible." In Grégory Beriet, "Le Corps du Fleuve: Mobilités et Stratégies Sociales sur le Maroni," *Labor e Engenho* 11, no. 2 (2017): 165–75; and Elluard Cédric, *Etude Socio-économique d'une Communauté Bushi-Nengue de l'Ouest Guyanais: cas de la Communauté Djukas de Charvein* (Beauvais: ISAB, 1999): 18.

cluded a sharp separation from the so-called Creole, the descendants of enslaved people who won freedom in 1863, and other ethnic groups with representation in the political setting. This opposition also increased government attempts to violate colonial treaties that secured Maroon autonomy, land rights and projects to explore mining and logging in their traditional territories.

In the Cottica region, the war was preceded by attempts to control transportation, land, and food, and the Cottica Ndyuka has been particularly affected. The suspected association of all Surinamese Maroons with the Maroon guerrilla force, then known as the *Jungle Commando*, transformed the always tense relationship with Surinamese non-Maroons into an open armed conflict. Mining and other industrial projects in the Cottica area became part of the same contact history with the *bakaa*, as the non-Maroons, whites, or foreigners, are called.[3] From July 1986 onwards, the Surinamese army's searches for guerrillas hiding in the villages resulted in a growing exodus. The only rural-urban reference in the region, a small town that grew out of an industrial plant, Moengo, was occupied by the Maroon guerilla force and, later, by the national army. Founded in 1916 by the US bauxite industry and Dutch capital, the facilities of the ALCOA (later transformed into Suralco) plant were destroyed. Bauxite production ceased and the concession was abandoned. Javanese, Creole and Hindustani workers for ALCOA/Suralco, who had family ties with Moengo since the early twentieth century,[4] migrated to Paramaribo or other countries, leaving behind abandoned houses.

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3 See Ben P.C. Scholtens, *Bosnegers en overheid in Suriname: de ontwikkeling van de politieke verhouding 1651–1992* (Paramaribo: Afdeling Cultuurstudies/Minov, 1994); Wim Hoogbergen and Thomas Polimé, "Oostelijk Suriname 1986–2002," *Oso: Tijdschrift Voor Surinamistiek* 2, no 1 (2002): 226; Thomas S. Polimé and Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, *Vluchtelingen, Opstandelingen en Andere Bosnegers van Oost-Suriname, 1986–1988* (Utrecht: Instituut voor Culturele Antropologie, 1988); Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, "The Maroon Insurgency: Anthropological Reflections on the Civil War in Suriname," in *Resistance and Rebellion in Suriname: Old and New*, ed. Gary Brana-Shute (Williamsburg, VA: Department of Anthropology, William & Mary College, 1990): 159; Richard Price, *Rainforest Warriors: Human Rights on Trial* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Fergus MacKay, ed., *Moiwana Zoekt Gerechtigheid: de Strijd van een Marrondorp Tegen de Staat Suriname: Inclusief Vonnis* (Karlsruhe: KIT Publishers, 2006); Clémence Léobal,"From 'Primitives' to 'Refugees': French Guianese Categorizations of Maroons in the Aftermath of Surinamese Civil War," in *Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour: Historical and Contemporary Issues in Suriname and the Caribbean*, ed. Maurits S. Hassankhan, Lomarsh Roopnarine, Cheryl White and Radica Mahase (London: Routledge, 2016): 213–30; and Clémence Léobal, *Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni. Une porte sur le fleuve* (Matoury: Ibis Rouge, 2013).

4 Anouk de Koning, "Shadows of the Plantation? A Social History of Suriname's Bauxite Town Moengo," *New West Indian Guide* 85, no. 3–4 (2011): 215–46; Fergus MacKay, "Mining in Suriname: Multinationals, the State and the Maroon Community of Nieuw Koffiekamp," *in Human Rights and the Environment: Conflicts and Norms in a Globalizing World*, ed. Lyuba Zarsky (London: Routledge, 2002): 57–78; Olívia Gomes da Cunha, "In their Places: Cottica Ndyuka in Moengo," in *Ethnographies of U.-S. Empire*, ed. Carole McGranahan and John Collins (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018): 173–93; and Robert J. Connell, "Maroon Ecology: Land, Sovereignty, and Environmental Justice," *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2020): 218–35.

Moengo became a ghost town, haunted by the memories of Maroon bodies victimized by the Surinamese army. At the same time, the surrounding Maroon villages and the region's rivers and forests became the sites of memories of the killing of Maroon men, women, and children.

Between September 1986 and June 1987, thousands of Cottica Ndyuka and other Maroons officially received shelter in the French territory. Others still went to villages on the Tapanahoni River or stayed in *kampu* along the Maroni River.[5] The peak came on November 29, 1986, following the massacre of the inhabitants of Moiwana – a hundred-year-old Maroon village along the road to Albina. In the wake of the conflict came destruction and fear. Maroon and traditional indigenous territories were destroyed and abandoned. The villages that had first begun to be opened by Ndyuka migrant men searching for work in logging, river transportation, and mining in the Cottica region since the early nineteenth century were abandoned. Those dwelling in them were forced to take refuge in camps opened by the French government in the north of Saint Laurent du Maroni or the interior, in the traditional villages along the Tapanahoni River – the traditional territory of the Ndyuka since the Colonial Government agreed to their land rights and political autonomy in 1760.

By 1990, it was estimated that approximately 10,000 to 13.000 refugees had reached French Guiana, where they were concentrated and controlled in various refugee camps.[6] Among the dramatic effects of the conflict, marked by attacks on villages and plantations, the murder of approximately three hundred civilians, chemical bomb attacks, and the contamination of rivers and forests, Maroons suffered the consequences of flight and displacement. In the refugee camps, the war made interclan and intervillage affinities possible. It transformed the everyday lives of countless families whose members began to live dispersed among villages, border areas and cities located in various national territories both during and after the conflict. The memory of the violence and persecution of the war and the recollection of life in the refugee camps created a dialogue between the slavery era and the modern period of extractivist capitalism.

Many Businenge never returned to Suriname. Fear and memories of the Moiwana attacks were frequently cited to convince the French government to legalize their con-

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5 Kampus are temporary settlements near agricultural gardens owned by a matrisegment or family. Kampus are distinct from villages because they lack sacred flagpoles or shrines and are not subject to the village authority (kabiten). See Hoogbergen and Polimé, "Oostelijk Suriname 1986–2002": 226; Polimé and Thoden van Velzen, *Vluchtelingen*; Thoden van Velzen, "The Maroon Insurgency": 159; Price, *Rainforest Warriors*; MacKay, *Moiwana Zoekt Gerechtigheid*; Léobal, "From 'Primitives' to 'Refugees'": 213–30; and Léobal, *Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni*.
6 See Frédéric Piantoni, *L'enjeu migratoire en Guyane française: une géographiepolitique* (Matoury: Ibis Rouge, 2009): 194. On Moiwana case and the victims' accounts, see MacKay, *Moiwana Zoekt Gerechtigheid*.

dition and right to work.[7] Despite the compensation offered by the French government to those who would leave the country. Many still live on the French border of the Maroni River – which divides Suriname and French Guiana – some officially, others as *sans-papiers*, undocumented temporary migrants, generally living in public housing or small houses or shacks in unhealthy conditions, with restrictions on their movement.[8] In October 1992, when interviewed by a Dutch journalist, those who insisted on staying complained about the persecution and threats.

> 'I have to go back to Suriname, I'm a terrorist.' The boy who says this is barely twenty years old. He has a bandana tied on his forehead. The group of boys starts giggling. 'If this camp gets closed, we will revolt, we will have to leave this refugee camp Charvein.' As dusk sets in, they drag cooking utensils and bags along. Half-naked children are running around joyfully. The smell of charcoal spreads. Charvein is the last camp in French Guiana where Surinamese refugees remain.[9]

Following the ceasefire in 1992, and upon receiving the French government compensation, some families began to leave Charvein and other camps, heading back to Suriname. Although the Suriname government had agreed to shelter the returnees in new dwellings in Moengo, Cottica Ndyuka also began to occupy abandoned houses and a few of the company's derelict facilities. Maroons who had lived in the Cottica before the war moved to live in the Suralco's abandoned industrial plant. Invaded houses were later transformed, directly or indirectly shaping the town landscape. This landscape of destruction, which connected the traditional village territories with the memories of a violent war against the Maroon population, began to inscribe Moengo in the Cottica Ndyuka vocabulary and imagination.

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7 See Cédric, *Etude Socio-économique d'une Communauté Bushi-Nengue de l'Ouest Guyanais*: 18. See also Frédéric Piantoni, "Les recompositions territoriales dans le Maroni: relation mobilite environnement," *Revue Europeenne des Migrations Internationales* 18, no. 2 (2002): 11–49; and Léobal Clémence, "'Osu', 'Baraques' et 'Batiman': Redessiner les Frontières de l'Urbain à Soolan (Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, Guyane)" (PhD diss., Université René-Descartes, 2017).
8 Marie-José Jolivet, "Approche Anthropologique du Multiculturalism Guyanais. Marrons et Creoles dans l'Ouest," in *Pratiques et Representations Linguistiques en Guyane*, ed. Isabelle Leglise and Bettina Migge (Paris: IRD Editions, 2007): 87–107. "Par ailleurs, les PPDS ont un droit de circulation restreint: ils peuvent se déplacer uniquement sur les communes de Mana et Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, à l'Ouest d'une limite passant par le bourg de Mana, le camp de l'Acarouany et le carrefour Margot à l'intersection de la RN1 et la route de Mana." In Léobal, *Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni*: 198.
9 Linda Otter, "Binnenland De laatste Surinamers moeten snel de Marowijne over," De Volkskrant. 's-Hertogenbosch, 20.10.1992, https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010866165:mpeg21:p013 [accessed 14.12.2024]. My translation. As reported the Eddy Pinas, a Ndyuka and Charvein kabiten, "les 1 700 personnes n'ayant pas accepté la prime au retour sont alors pourchas-sées: leurs champs sont inondés de pesticides, leurs pirogues tronçonnées,leurs magasins d'artisanat brûlés, et les habitant·es sont arrêté·es par les forcesde l'ordre françaises." In Clemence Léobal, "'Manger des deux pays': habiter le fleuve Maroni, frontière amazonienne de l'Europe (Guyane/Suriname)," *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 40, no. 1 (2024): 179.

In this chapter, I mobilize diverse accounts that have appeared in ethnographies and non-academic reports concerning the War of Interior to access Maroon's understanding of their movements and routes of escape and the impossibility of forgetting slavery and the war. To my interlocutors, Cottica Ndyuka women and men living in Moengo and surrounding villages, the war recollections, and understandings of their lives as an ongoing fight for becoming Maroon against all hardships articulate their ancestors' and their parents' experiences of fleeing. My explorations do not intend to connect archival or oral histories, whether about the time of the enslaved and the runaways and the ancestors (the *lowéman*) or about the war events that led mainly the Cottica Ndyuka to leave their villages and become refugees in French Guiana. Instead, in the first part, I seek to highlight the words – as they appear in the human rights reports and interviews conducted with Cottica Ndyuka refugees – through which these happenings are mutually understood. In the second, I reflect on the images, objects, metaphors, and language used by Cottica Ndyuka to incorporate the presence of ancestors and ancestors in their territory and fight against oblivion.

1 Earlier Paths

Guianese Maroon societies have been described, with some variations, as segmented into clans and matrisegments in which the rights and obligations of women and men, as well as the exercise of authority at the village level, are established through the person's matrilineal bonds, including in order to honor, through rituals and bodily care, gods, spirits and specific ancestors. This is a composite ontology in which spirits, gods, landscapes, rivers, animals and non-human beings and persons from different clans are implicated in relations and processes of conception and death, in the observance of food taboos and spatiotemporal interdictions, ritual obligations, and the continuous attention paid to the presence and action of the ancestors. Relations that acquire form through vital processes of transformation, associated both with lifecycles and the return of the dead through their *nêseki*, and with the participation of forces with which Maroons have made a pact for their survival in the forest ever since the *lowéman* left the plantations. Associations *with* and the participation *of* ancestors and kin also encompass a topology populated by plants, trees, rivers, and waterfalls – places where alliances were forged, where substances, foods, and affinity with certain divinities are shared and continually actualized in taboos, bodily care, and the interdictions on sacred places.[10]

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10 Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2013); and Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Images of Nature and Society in Amazonian Ethnology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (1996): 179–200. On Maroon societies, I have explored

Diverse authors have described the transformation of Maroon societies as a result of the territorial, clan and magical disputes between distinct groups of fugitives and their contacts with enslaved people living under the control of the plantation systems and representatives of the colonial forces. The Cottica Ndyuka – as the first migrants were called who left the interior and the official territory of the Ndyuka (or Okanisi) whose autonomy was recognized by the Dutch Colony in a Peace Treaty signed in 1760 – began to settle in the coastal area by 1803 and before the official end of slavery in 1863. Ndyuka men left their villages and crossed borders searching for work and access to tools, fabrics, and other goods in frontier areas dominated by plantations, enslaved workers, and colonial resource exploration and extraction. After settling in remote and provisory camps in flooded areas, they brought wives, sacred objects and shrines, and opened the first villages by 1820.

Although Ndyuka were prohibited from dwelling in the Cottica region by the Dutch Colony, mainly because they could serve as a refuge for new groups of runaways, migrant villages were settled on the riverbanks, not very far from the plantations and the enslaved African and creole populations. The colonial economy depended on the Maroon people's skills and knowledge of the forest as the main suppliers of timber. Although the migrants continued to follow the traditional rules that oriented life and death in their original territories in the interior, the Cottica Ndyuka villages were in some senses the unique site for a slow transformation in the relationships between Maroon and non-Maroon worlds in the Surinamese coast. Since then, in contrast to their peers in the interior, the Cottica Ndyuka have become identified by outside observers as breakers of taboos and authority due to their undesired proximity to the world of the plantation and the *bakaa*.[11]

In the twentieth century, two other phenomena deeply transformed Maroon lives directly in the Cottica region. Firstly, the intervention of the mining industries, particularly bauxite exploration, in the region. Secondly, the outbreak of the Civil War mainly involved young Ndyuka from the Cottica region and the Surinamese army. Moengo and villages along the Cottica witnessed the destruction of many buildings. At the same time, the region's rivers and forests became the sites of memories of the killing of Maroon men women, and children. Invaded houses were later transformed, directly or indirectly shaping the town landscape.[12] Memory of the violence and persecution of the war and of life in the refugee camps was set in dialogue with the "slavery times" and the modern period of extractivist capitalism. Mining and other industrial projects in the Cottica area became part of the same contact history with

these imbrications in Olívia M. Gomes da Cunha, "Guianese Maroons in Amazonian Ethnological Landscapes," in *Lowland South American World*, ed. Casey High and Luiz Costa (London: Routledge, 2024).

11 André J.F. Köbben, *In Vrijheid en Gebondenheid: Samenleving en Cultuur van de Djoeka aan de Cottica* (Utrecht: Centrum voor Caraïbische Studies, 1979).

12 See Thoden van Velzen, "The Maroon Insurgency": 159; Polimé and Thoden van Velzen, *Vluchtelingen*.

the *bakaa*. In this landscape of, destruction, suffering, mourning and fear, the "time of slavery" (*katibo*), the Maroon struggles against the *bakaa* world, and the violence of the Civil War overlap; they are part of the same history and landscape.[13]

In Maroon cosmology, an event is a particular bundle of affections that mobilize human and non-human actions. A kin death, childbirth, a family illness are all related to what we could call a "spatial reference." They happen *where* these affections are at work. Anthropologists have explored the relations between space and time among Guianese Maroons differently, however, their emphasis has been on the production of history. The time of *the* first escapes and the first fugitives – in Saramacan, *fésiten*, in Okanisi, *fositi-tén* or *fositen* – is instantiated by words.[14] The names of people, non-human beings, and places disclose alliances. Words are forbidden knowledge about how bands of fugitives became bush people through a language (*lespêki*: gloss, respect) in which ancestors and spirits are consulted and "presentified" in the shrines. The *Fositén* historicity appears centered not on a specific event, but on the duration of a process of territorialization. It involves narratives about the epochs during which certain human and non-human dialogues occurred. Instead of abstract categories, notions of time and event are personalized and enunciated alongside spatial inscriptions.[15] As R. Price has pointed out concerning the construction of Saamaka historicity, "geography in Saramaka becomes a great repository of historical traditions." The early experience of flight, taking possession of new land, conceptualized tales of coming to terms with local gods and spirits, remains a central text of these early years".[16] If, from a cosmological and sociological point of view, the experience of flight is embodied and remains the central axis that guides conviviality, ensuring the maintenance of a sociality made up of living, and dead relatives and kin, then territorialization in villages is the finalization of spatio-temporal movements in which the first *lowémen* become people (*sama*), people linked to the same flock, flesh and blood from the same womb. This transformational aspect, evoked in various narratives told by

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13 Saydiya V. Hartman "The Time of Slavery," in *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*, ed. Saurabh Dube (London: Routledge, 2009): 432; and David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 7–8.

14 Since Richard Price's seminal book – *First Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) – few other original studies have tracked the concepts of history, narrative and popular accounts used by Maroons to recount what happened in the past but also to conceal its knowledge from outsiders and to spread moral teachings about witchcraft. See Price, *First Time*; Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, "Dangerous Ancestors: Ambivalent Visions of Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Leaders of the Eastern Maroons of Suriname," in *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, ed. Stephan Palmie (Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 112–44.

15 Richard Price, *First Time*. See also Kenneth M. Bilby, "Time and History Among a Maroon People: The Aluku," in *Time in the Black Experience*, ed. Joseph K. Adjaye, Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies 167 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994): 141–60.

16 Richard Price, *Alabi's World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990): 286, note 7.

elders and shamans, involved other sentient and divinized beings. It is not chronological inscriptions or ephemerides that recount the saga of the heroes, but the enunciation of esoteric knowledge, because it is words that instantiate and provoke spiritual action. The "stories of the early times" (*fositen toli*, in Okanisi) are something more than a knowledge about the past: they potentiate, and "actualize," a Maroon *becoming* in the bodies and territory of the villages.[17]

2 Traversing Fearful Landscapes

But how can an existential landscape tell the painful stories of the war and its everyday impacts? By not only situating the places where the acts of violence against the Businenge were perpetrated, but also reminding us that the earth beings that inhabit the forest and the rivers, but are also entangled in each maroon person's existence, were insulted. Earth and rivers, beings, and sacred dwellings have been profaned. How have Maroons coped with the memories of violence against their relatives and earth spirits? How does the war that their ancestors fought against slavery offer the concepts, the metaphors and the language with which to understand and talk about the events of the *féti* (in Okanisi, the War of Interior)? In the Maroons' accounts of the war, experiences that translate as suffering, loss and pain are always associated with a place (*peesi*), a sentient environment. It is precisely in connection with this *peesi* that human can vocalize their feelings, expressing the relations that constitute each person. These relationships involve not only relatives and friends. They affect animals, rivers, soil and rocks: everything that exists above the earth. These sentient entities are part of the environment where human and non-human beings have roots and histories. Maroon land is made of these presences.

Thomas Polimé, a Ndyuka man born in Moitaki Village, on the Tapanahoni River, who graduated as a social worker with a master's degree in cultural anthropology at Utrecht University in 1984, worked for the *Zeister Zendingsgootschap* – one of the humanitarian and religious institutions that assisted the refugees. Polimé collaborated also as an interpreter at the hearings of Moiwana victims promoted by the IACHR. A substantial portion of these interviews, as well his further attempts to collect material about the refugees' experiences – including letters, children's drawings, and photographs for an exhibition that would be held in Saint Laurent in 2017 – were referred to in book chapters, as well as featuring in human rights reports produced by the *Moiwana' 86 Group*, composed by Maroons and non-Maroon Surinamese human rights activists, which investigated the responsibilities of the Surinamese government for

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17 Price, *First Time*; Thoden van Velzen, "Dangerous Ancestors"; and Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, *Prophets of Doom: A History of the Okanisi Maroons* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

the 39 deaths in Moiwana and other human rights violations.[18] As Polimé stated in preliminary observations in his affidavit to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) made in support of Moiwana's victims: "Ndyuka maintain relationships with their ancestral lands and the spirits that occupy these lands – these lands are recognized by Ndyuka and other Maroon and indigenous people as Ndyuka lands."[19] Three important ideas appear connected here. First, the land is not the object but the subject of a relationship. Second, these ties singularize and differentiate the former as "Ndyuka land." Finally, there are no "unoccupied places"; the interaction between human and non-human entities makes up a *peesi* as a sensible experience.

It is remarkable that most of the victim testimonials presented to the IACHR referred to the work on the traditional land used for food cultivation, *goon*, places often used as a hideout while the army was searching for them in the villages. When the soldiers found an abandoned village, these sites became the main target of destruction and the profanation of its shrines. As Polimé explained to the Court: "Ndyuka believe that every human originates from certain places on a river, or in the forest. At these places, offerings are brought to the gods by those who trace their origins. Someone's place of origin can be found by consulting an oracle [. . .] this place becomes a regular place, where the person will take offerings at important moments. Places in and around Moiwana Village have been identified as the originating location for many of the survivors of the massacre."[20]

These statements thus reinforce the argument – also sustained in the demands for reparation contained in the report's following pages – that the beings with whom Maroons share their existence are a plethora of gods (*gadu*) that own and rule the paths, forest, waters, air and earth. And they too were affected by the military violence. For the Maroon, *peesi* are inhabited and protected by *goongadu* (a class of earth spirits, such as the papa-snake, the Boa Constrictor, a *papagadu*), *busigadu* (a class of forest spirits, the *ampuku*, who command legions of dark wild pigs and peccaries), and birds and predators considered warriors (the *kumanti* spirits). Maroon women, who are usually the *papagadu* mediums and who work in the *goon*, are diligent in not harming certain kinds of snakes. And when the papa-snake is provoked,

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18 Polimé and Thoden van Velzen, *Vluchtelingen*; Stefano Ajintoena et al. petitioners v. The Republic of Suriname, Respondent – Affidavit of Drs. Thomas Polime Expert Witness, 20 August 2004. IACHR – Inter-American Court of Human Rights; Moiwana Village v. Suriname, Series C, No. 124, IACTHR (2005); and Thomas M. Antkowiak, "Moiwana Village v. Suriname: A Portal into Recent Jurisprudential Developments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 25 (2007): 268. In addition to the Moiwana case and the persecution of the Cottica Ndyuka, other Maroon and indigenous groups were also subject to violent attacks by the National Army. See David J. Padilla, "Reparations in Aloeboetoe v. Suriname," *Human Rights Quarterly* 17 (1995): 541; Richard Price, "Executing Ethnicity: The Killings in Suriname," *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 4 (1995): 437–71; and Price, *Rainforest Warriors*.

19 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 6.

20 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 9.

"he can take revenge by making the offender or another member of his family ill." Due to their war skills since the times of slavery, the *kumanti* gods were invoked to protect *Jungle Commando*'s soldiers, conduct ambushes, and turn Maroon bodies inviolable. Finally, a *peesi* may also be the dwelling place of an ancestor, a burial site whose desecration will inevitably attract the wrath of the deceased – all the movements through these sentient sites inhabited by gods and spirits generated effects. The fury of the deceased spirits (*yooka*) required spiritual treatment. Spirits and gods are also responsible for the process of creating all beings, including humans. The conception of human life, for instance, is an outcome of the agency of spirits and gods. The beginning of a human being is provoked by a spirit or a god who lives in a matriline territory, or on a *peesi* or a *goon* where a woman is cultivating the earth. By entering her body, the god connects the sacred *peesi* where he lives with the woman's belly (*bee*). Only later, along with food and bodily care practices, do men participate with semen and protection. Thus, these body process constitutes simultaneously the *peesi* where the life of a person (*sama*) and the continuity of a matrilineage (*bee*) occur. All matrilineal kin are part of the same *bee*, becoming a *bee sama*. As the earth and belly participate actively in the fecundation of a new being, each *bee sama* is the instantiation of this matrilineal relationship. Each *bee sama* is a distinct combination of earth and blood produced by obeying place/time and food taboos (*kina*).[21]

The connection with the *peesi* (a composition of presences and rules) and the *bee* (the continuity of solidarity and obligations through blood and food) during various eras or epochs constitute Maroon ontology. This link is an object of spiritual practices in which spirits, gods and ancestors (whose *yooka*, literally, "the soul," can act provoking life and death) must be honored by offerings, libations and shrines. Since the First Time – when the first runaways negotiated with the beings they encountered on dangerous and hidden rivers and in forests occupied by predators and illness – Maroons have honored those who succeeded and made their lives possible. To live in a Maroon village is to accept the presence of the ancestors and the obligations to honor them. The shrines and houses are thus carefully distributed by the *kabiten* and the matriclan's authorities; the rights and obligations of each matrilineal group also follow the rules instituted by the forebears and ancestors. The history of each group is then inscribed in the ground and remembered through the flagpoles that remind each person who they are. Life and death are subject to rules and caring practices. As the Maroon anthropology emphasizes, the fear of *wisi* (witchcraft) and *kunu* (avenged spirits that return to vindicate a death perpetrated by someone and inherited by their matrilineal descendants) ensures that such practices are followed. Staying in a unknown *peesi*, working at hours and in places protected by taboo, cutting down sacred trees,

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21 On notions related to "place" and "landscape" among the Cotti Ndyuka, see Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, "The Earth is Sweet. On Cottica Ndyuka (de) Compositions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 66, no. 2 (2024): 242–66.

fishing for forbidden species, or disrespecting the need for libations and permission to enter a location, can all raise the *kunu*'s fury. In Maroon ontology, all places "feel," "know," "act" and express their agency through rules of conviviality taught to all beings. What modern thought has defined as landscape, marked by the emphasis on the perspective of what can be visualized, composing a relationship between topographic inscriptions, can be discussed if we engage in an exercise of "equivocation."[22] Suppose we swap the visual perspective – based on what *is seen* – for what *is felt* and the subject of unanticipated "becomings."[23] A *peesi* is a landscape only if it is understood as a set of forces not just felt by someone in the past but as a potential source of future effects. The past events that instantiate its present agency are constantly renovated each time human or non-human beings (the mining machines, for instance) break the rules that define the flows of relations that compose a *peesi* as a sentient landscape. The opposition between slavery and freedom, which marks Maroon historicity as analyzed by Price, Bilby, Thoden van Velzen and others, is directly associated with different ways of producing alliances and living in a responsive environment.[24]

The Civil War caused the Maroons to become "free people" in the same way that the flight from the plantations and the Maroon wars against enslavement during colonial times created the conditions for the fugitives to become *fiiman* (free people). A condition achieved after the Ndyuka signed a Peace Treaty with the colonial government in 1760. The runaways not only freed themselves from the violence of slavery but reinvented the terms by which notions of humanity and freedom, as they figured in modern and Western thought, would define their possibilities of existence thereafter. And, as the Ndyuka paramount chief, the *gamma* Gazon Matodja, observed in 2002: "Everyone who denies the value of the treaty denies the slavery that was imposed on the children of Africa, denies the hardships that we endured during slavery, denies our freedom and our existence as human beings."[25] Freedom did not appear as formal status, therefore, but as the affirmation of a form of existence. Rather than become "free-from" legal and violent forms of subjugation imposed by the whites, as *fiiman*, the Maroon involved themselves in ontological interactions that allowed them to be "free to." By creating socialities in sentient landscapes inhabited by other forms of agencies, the Maroon render indiscernible the relationships existing between the beings that inhabited the paths crossed by the fugitives and the spaces reached by the

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22 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation," *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2, no. 1 (2004): 1; see also Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993): 152–74.

23 On the Deleuzean concept of "becoming" (*devenir*), see François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event: Together with the Vocabulary of Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 96.

24 Bilby, "Time and History Among a Maroon People"; Price, *First Time*.

25 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 4.

fiiman. Both were made of consent and conformity with gods and spirits brought from Africa and discovered, or revealed to them, in the forest.[26]

Instead of being subject to others as they were while under slavery, the runaways recreated themselves as a composite of many other beings, ways of belonging and sharing substances, and respect. They became subject to other interactions. The Maroon reinvented the terms of "freedom" throughout the temporalities of the flight and the stories of the first runaways that mark the narratives of the "First Time" as explored in other ethnographies. My interlocutors, for instance, became aware of these entangled connections while they lived in the refugee camp. By observation and involvement in conflicts, she understood why the person, the families and their clan ties, the dead, the spirits, the gods and the ancestors were all connected. Thus, what from an outsider's perspective would appear as a "whole," strengthening the limits of "ethnic solidarity," from a Maroon point of view would involve difference and fear – sharing camps and tents exposed the villagers, clans and matrisegment members to old allegiances, spiritual debts, obligations, and food and sexual taboos that linked them to the earth, the village, and their different pasts. Above all, living together (*libi makandi*) in the camps under *bakaa* rules and surveillance highlighted older disputes and fears concerning vengeful spirits that have roamed in search of persons and *bee sama* since the time of the ancestors.[27] In her interviews with Charvein dwellers, sociologist M.J. Jolivet noted that the undocumented perceptions of insecurity and precarity were rather a new situation. As she emphasized: "ceux qui avaient choisi de rester après la fermeture des camps, la crainte ancestrale du fait que 'un jour, ces temps-là reviendront' [. . .] venait de se trouver singulièrement actualisée par la situation de clandestinité où les avait placés leur volonté de vivre en Guyane sans y être conviés."[28] If war brought pain and death, it also reminded the living about caring for the dead.

3 Many Dwellers

The Moiwana case exposed the fact that places "feel" and "know" through spiritual action re-actualized over various temporalities. The spirits of the Civil War's dead wandered over the land and demanded attention from the survivors. "Because the survivors are too fearful to return," observes Polimé, "as well as their lengthy absence

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26 Wilhelmina van Wetering and and Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, *In the Shadow of the Oracle: Religion as Politics in a Suriname Maroon Society* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004): 23.

27 As Strange pointed out in the title of his article, "it's your family that kills you." Stuart Earle Strange, "'It's your Family that Kills you': Responsibility, Evidence, and Misfortune in the Making of Ndyuka History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 3 (2018): 629–58.

28 Jolivet, "Approche Anthropologique du multiculturalism Guyanais": 100.

from their sacred places which will require extended stays to repair damages and to offer the requisite libations, they experience very real and terrifying torments from the spiritual worlds."[29] And to return implies renewing contact with different landscapes, those inhabited by the ancestors, domesticated by the *fiiman,* and where relatives succumbed to death. In the Okanisi language, "to found a village" is to produce a separation, through the recognition of other existents, by cutting down the forest with the *peesi* spirit's permission. It means *koti wan peesi* (literally, cutting a place), transforming a *peesi* into a village (*konde*) through the enthronement of a *kabiten,* an offering, a libation to the ancestors, and the erection of shrines.[30]

> In the beginning of the 19th-century, people made use of the many waterways (rivers, and creeks) to establish settlements in the Cottica area. People traveled by boat through the Wane Creek and the Komontibo to the Cottica River. Along the Wanecreek, and its tributaries, the Moiwana Creek and the Komontibo, in particular, extensive logging took place in the mid-to-late-19th century. Ndyuka from the Tapanahoni River were the larger part of the labor force employed in the logging operations. Consequently, a series of different camps and villages came into existence along the mentioned rivers. These camps eventually, became fully-fledged villages.[31]

However, the ancestors of the Moiwana residents arrived in another epoch (*ten*),[32] even before the end of slavery (*katibo*). They became *fiiman* through a treaty with the oracle that protected the first runaways to flee the plantations – the *Sweli Gadu. Sweli* allowed the *Misidjan-lo* (*lo* means clan and comes from *lon* or *lower* in Sranantongo, run and flee) migrants to share the Wane Creek area with the Kalina and Lokono Amerindians, establishing Mungutapu village – where the ancestors of Brunswick's kin settled. Another segment of *Misijean-lo* followed and settled at Moiwana, firstly in a *kampu.* Only after opening a road between Mungo and Albina – a construction project that employed more Maroon migrants in logging work and the settling of other *kampu* with people from other *lo*'s – did Moiwana become a village as a union of distinct *kampus* owned by *lo*'s (between 1890 and 1910. Thanks to the 1760 Treaty, the Tapanahoni migrants also won the right to own lands in the region: "We could set off freely to the interior and cut wood. The wood was also sold on the plantations. In the Cottica area where we live at present, these *fii* also apply; we have the right to practice agriculture to hunt and fish the rivers and lands belong to us."[33]

In the explanations that precede the details about the situation and claims of the victims of the Moiwana Massacre, Polimé delineates the lines of force that connect the

29 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 28.

30 Wilhelmina van Wetering and and Hendrik Ulbo Eric Thoden van Velzen, "The Making of Ancestors in a Surinamese Maroon Society," in *Passages and Afterworlds: Anthropological Perspectives on Death in the Caribbean,* ed. Maarit Forde and Yanique Hume (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018): 80–108.

31 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 15.

32 Roy Wagner, *Symbols that Stand for Themselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

33 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 36.

dead, the living and the places they inhabit. The absence of proper funerary treatments for the dead haunted the living relatives. "Ndyuka have specific funerary rites that must be observed and these rites are an important part of determining whether and how the disease is buried; full burials are reserved for their righteous, serious sinners are buried in shallow graves, and those posthumously convicted of witchcraft and other serious crimes are dumped in unholy places in the forest to be devoured by wild animals."[34] The survivors knew that their return to Suriname and the destroyed village, in the course of a possible process of return and reparation, would not contain the spiritual action that had affected Moiwana. Those who succumbed had not received from their surviving relatives the funerary ceremonies that ensured the complete separation of *yooka* (the spiritual matter of the dead) from the places inhabited by the living. As Thoden van Velzen notes, "that spiritual part (that usually hovers near the corpse but may wander about during the night. This Yooka (spirit or ghost) may not take leave of humanity to join the company of ancestor spirits until the first of the funerary rites has been properly executed."[35]

As Polimé describes the psychological, material and physical effects of the war, he highlights a sense of continuity that traverses the temporalities that compose the places where Maroons created their modes of existence. Moiwana's survivors feared to return to the old and destroyed village site, but they also did not stay in the deactivated refugee camps. As he observes, "they feel invisible and believe that they have been returning to the suffering of slavery-times, but contrary to their ancestors, they have no means to escape their suffering nowhere to run. Moreover, they have never had an explanation for why the massacre took place, leaving them unaware of the killers' motivations or the likelihood that they may be targeted again and otherwise uncertain about the future."[36] In the testimonies of victims, survivors and refugees, the fear that the times of slavery were returning seemed to be rather a psychological effect of the violence of war in their lives.

To some extent, they all sought safe shelter in the interior, in Paramaribo, or fled to French Guiana. Their movements toward a safe place were understood, therefore, as a reaffirmation that, like their ancestors, they also were *lowemen*. Léobal's observation that many people in the refugee camps called themselves *lowéman* reveals something more than an analogy.[37] After Charvein was closed as a refugee camp, Cottica Ndyuka dwellers won the right to work outside to plant and sell foodstuffs in the vicinity and transform the entire place into a Maroon *peesi*, although not a village

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34 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 30.

35 Wetering and Thoden van Velzen, *In the Shadow of the Oracle*: 80.

36 Ajintoena et al. v. The Republic of Suriname at 28.

37 Léobal also mentions the existence of a newspaper that circulated in Charvein, published in Dutch and Sranantongo, entitled *Loweman Boskopu* (newspaper). Clémence Léobal, *Politiques Urbaines et Recompositions Identitaires en Contexte Postcolonial* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 2014).

(*konde*). However, the French authorities and the Ndyuka *gaama* recognized the presence of a Maroon authority who could resolve the community demands and adjudicate conflicts, and Cottica Ndyuka who live in Saint Laurent received public housing and working rights. Those living in Charvein were not allowed to conduct funerary ceremonies.[38]

4 Against the Oblivion

In 2005, the IACHR decided that the Moiwana's surviving victims had the right to honor their relatives and neighbors murdered by the erection of a monument. The Court obliged the Surinamese State authorities to build a memorial in a "suitable public location". In response, the State informed that a memorial "has been constructed to the satisfaction of the victims and subsequent to agreement with the neighboring indigenous peoples" and "delivered" on November 27, 2007.[39] In line with similar international laws and rulings that have established other tools aiming transitional justice, the creation of monuments and "sites of conscience" as a policy of reparation for the populations and groups affected, the IACHR decision required that the violence not only be symbolically repaired but, above all, that it not be forgotten. As Mégret points out, Suriname agreed to "establish a memorial" referring to the events of Moiwana to serve as "a reminder to the whole nation of what happened and what may not [be] repeat[ed] in the future."[40] It, therefore, created not just a material record of

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38 A *kabiten* who does not represent a matriclan cannot take care of funerary rites accordingly. As Jolivet has observed: "il doit son statut au rôle qu'il a joué dans le camp de réfugiés, durant la guerre. De toute façon, un *kondee* ne ferait pas à lui seul une nouvelle reproduction du pays ancestral." In Marie-José Jolivet, "Territorialisation et Historicité en Guyane," *Cahiers de l'Urmis* 18 (2019): 21. On the *bushinengue* and housing policy in Saint Laurent, see Clémence Léobal, "Devenir 'Libre' Grâce au Logement Social? Appropriations Bushinenguées à Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni (Guyane)," *Etnográfica. Revista do Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia* 24, no. 3 (2020): 703–24.
39 Interamerican Court of Human Rights (IACHR). Case of Moiwana Village v. Suriname, Judgment of 15 June 2005, Series C No. 124: 20.
40 In addition to the construction of the monument, among other measures ordered by the Surinamese court to provide reparations for the victims, was the creation of a $1.2 million fund for the construction of houses and community development and the payment of compensation to the families of the dead. See Fréderic Mégret, "Of Shrines, Memorials and Museums: Using the International Criminal Court's Victim Reparation and Assistance Regime to Promote Transitional Justice," *Buffalo Human Rights. Law Review* 16 (2010): 1–56; and Richard Price, "Maroons and Indigenous Peoples versus the State in Suriname: Since Independence, Extractive Industries and Government Corruption Have Threatened Traditional Territories and Autonomy. Forest-Dwelling Communities are Still Defending their Land," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 55, no. 3 (2023): 279–85. Compensatory actions, imposed by the ICHR, never materialized and remain the subject of disputes. See Fergus MacKay, *Moiwana Zoekt Gerechtigheid.*

the event but a physical intervention, a geographical inscription of the village's existence and its inhabitants – the living and the dead.

The decision not only recognized the effects of the Moiwana massacre but also required that the measures relating to the definition of the site and the criteria that would guide construction had the backing of the community ("design and location shall be decided upon in consultation with the victims' representatives").[41] Unlike the emphasis on memory – because, as we shall see, the intention was not to "remember" Moiwana and its residents by erecting a memorial – the sense of reparation opened up space for the materialization of a cosmopolitics. Since, from the victims' point of view, the most terrible effect of the massacre was the impossibility of performing funeral rites, treating the bodies, and burying them according to the community's rules, without which the dead and the violent way in which they were victimized ran the risk and danger of being forgotten, thus arousing the revenge of the kunus. After the massacre the area of the village was completely abandoned. Due in particular to the impossibility of burying the victims' bodies with the proper ritual treatment, their families avoid residing in the nearby area. I his study about the building of monuments as part of transitional justice and reparative policies, Mégret remarks that "monuments, most notably shrines, memorials and museums, are really a metaphor for something bigger that the ICC [International Criminal Court] and the Fund [Trust Fund for Victims] should be more interested in".[42] In the case of the Moiwana Monument, the metaphorical work crossed temporalities and specialties that are imagined to be directly associated with the event, becoming an artifact against oblivion. The monument therefore opened up a space for the dead to participate in a cosmopolitics against forgetting (figure 2).

The first time I visited the 'Moiwana 86' monument, in 2009, I went with my main interlocutor, Tresna Pinas, who had lived in Charvein with her family for five years and her children. She had known various victims and the week before, the space was visited by relatives of the victims who left flowers and bottles of rum (sopi) there. Her constrained attitude contrasted starkly with the noise produced by the children as they ran over the gravel. The stone supporting the iron is spread across the ground. Boxes of iron and gravel produce an astonishing sound. The noises allow the visitor to perceive that the open-air space resonates with the presence of those walking and the silence. An effect of depth produced by movement and visualization: the noise amplifies and reveals the absence of those who do not speak and the presence of those who listen. The moment was conceived and built by another interlocutor, the Cottica Ndyuka artist, Marcel Pinas. Born in Pilgrim Konde village and a boarder at the Catholic school of Abado Kondee in the Cottica region,

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41 Interamerican Court of Human Rights (IACHR). Case of Moiwana Village v. Suriname, Judgment of 15 June 2005, Series C No. 124: 218.

42 Mégret, "Of Shrines, Memorials and Museums": 56.

Fig. 2: Moiwana'86, the monument created by the Cottica Ndyuka artist Marcel Pinas (photo: Marcel Pinas).

Marcel Pinas fled with part of his family to Paramaribo when the war broke out. In the city, he frequented the Nola Hartman Academy, and later, during the first two years at Edna Manley College in Kingston (Jamaica), he heard about Ndyuka inscriptions called "afaka" and began, little by little, to populate his paintings, at first in dark colors. It was in the gardens in Abado Kondee School, on the road that connects Paramaribo to Albina and close to the old Moiwana village that the artist used, for the first time, enormous sculptures of afaka scripts posited under trees. In 2005, Marcel was invited by the president of Suriname, Ronald Venetiaan, to make a monument in homage to the Moiwana victims.

A few kilometres away from Abado Konde School, a monumental *afaka* sign invades the green-blue horizon on which forest and sky meet. Names written in *afaka* honour the Moiwana dead victims, the majority children and civilians. The monument was inaugurated in 2008 and, ever since, the presence of the *afaka* signs has definitively impressed its mark on the horizon of the Cottica as an emblem of the violence perpetrated against the Cottica Ndyuka. It should be noted, however, that the relation between the signs and the events of the war was not planned like a seal that impinges on memory through an iconic artefact. Since the ceasefire in 1992, it has been difficult to speak about and remember the war. Due to its form being simulta-

neously 'exoteric' (given that it is unknown to many) and open to different experiments in translation, but also its status as 'writing,' the *afaka* is a powerful and effective sign as a mnemonic artefact that connect the ancestors and the refugees.[43] Like so many other *bakaa* objects-ideas, traditionally incorporated into Maroon sociality – *pangies*, metal and plastic utensils – after its inscription as large object set on traditional territories, *afaka* signs begin to appear in school drawings, on bags, t-shirts and embroideries or hand-painted on *pagnies* and bodies produced for festive events or funeral ceremonies. As the Trinidadian artist and curator points out, "Pinas has built a large-scale monument on the actual site in a forceful declarative manner. It is a site for personal remembrance of lost friends and relatives, for ethnic and national reflection, and also an aesthetic/experiential artistic site-specific-work." In his interviews, Marcel Pinas disregards finding precise meanings for the use of *afaka*, whether in the literature produced by the specialists on afaka scripts or in his artistic work. Instead, he stresses its use as an expression of the creativity and invention, "art speaks about the things that took place in the twentieth century, and also slavery.[44]

<p style="text-align:center">∗∗∗</p>

In Charvein and the Cottica region, the runaways and refugees interact in the times and spaces of slavery, evoking the ancestral fugitives and the victims of the civil war perpetrated by the State and its tentacles articulated to the extractivist, mining, and logging industry. I inquired about some ways of talking about slavery through personal stories about flight, resettlement, and limited possibilities of existence. In an attempt to emulate the divinatory practices through which Maroons consult their gods and ancestors – we could call a bundle of affects that overlap, evoke, and connect relations between people and places, enunciate temporalities that reject the times of the histories told by non-Maroons. The overlapping of recollections of events that cannot be forgotten potentializes the modes of existence and the relationships among the people and the places.

By reading human rights reports and ethnographic accounts related to the War of Interior (1986–1992), in this text, I have sought to explore ways of connecting temporalities and places that constitute the Guinese Maroon ontology. I focused, then, on how places can articulate, compose, and offer other perspectives on what it means to become Maroon. It involves paying attention to the meanings credited to the places and how they remember and enact relations between living and dead. The reference to the loweman, the flight from slavery in the time of the first ancestors, did not

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43 I have explored the first accounts by travelers, missionaries, Ndyuka and non-Maroon specialists, and some of the current uses of afaka script in the Cottica context in Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha, "Escrevendo e Criando a Diferença: os Maroon Ndyuka e os usos da arte no Cottica (Suriname)," *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24, no. 3 (2019): 787–804.

44 Christopher Cozier, "Notes: On Monuments and Moments," Paramaribo Span, 19.02.2010, https://paramaribospan.blogspot.com/2010/02/notes-on-monuments-and-moments.html [accessed 13.03.2025].

imply taking the practices and events that comprehend it as constitutive elements of the same "historical context," a "time," and a "chronology" of colonial regimes. On the contrary, by highlighting slavery as a temporal inscription in the site of the late twentieth-century war, I intended to stress the effects of the relations between the forest and the non-human forces that animate bodies dehumanized by the violence of the plantation and colonial regimes. The two events – the flight and, par cause, the pacts with spirits and gods during the slavery, and flight from the violence perpetrated by the Surinamese Army – make the *businenge* person a composite of relations between distinct forces on which they depend in order for the relationship between the living and the ancestors to be preserved – a mode of existence founded on the impossibility of forgetting, a weapon against the fear of re-enslavement.

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