

# LA EDUCACIÓN EN EL DESARROLLO NACIONAL DE SURINAM, 1850-1950

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## RÉSUMÉ

Dans ce travail, l'auteur expose l'idée que dans le processus de transformation de l'État qui a suivi l'abolition de l'esclavage dans cette ex-colonie hollandais, les institutions éducatives ont joué un rôle fondamental de médiation entre l'État colonial et la société nationale. Un système éducatif différent a permis que le statut colonial de cette économie de plantation ne soit pas modifié tout en favorisant une "mobilité dirigée" à l'intérieur du modèle colonial. Avec le temps, et de façon paradoxale, ce système éducatif fournit des réponses intellectuelles de résistance face au statut colonial. Autour du facteur éducatif, des groupes ethniques et des individus ont nourri des projets d'émancipation et contribué à la transition de l'État colonial. En même temps, l'État colonial lui-même utilisait avec de bons résultats le système éducatif afin de perpétuer la division entre les groupes ethniques, retardant ainsi le processus de construction d'une nation supra-ethnique.

## SAMENVATTING

In deze ex-Nederlandse kolonie speelden onderwijsorganisaties een belangrijke bemiddelingsrol tussen de koloniale staat en de nationale maatschappij tijdens de opbouw van de staat na de afschaffing van de slavernij. Enerzijds had het onderwijssysteem bijgedragen tot de handhaving van de koloniale status van de plantage-economie en tot een zekere sociale differentiatie binnen het koloniale model. Anderzijds had hetzelfde onderwijssysteem intellectuele vormen van verzet tegen de koloniale status bevorderd. Etnische groepen en individuen hadden naar aanleiding van het onderwijsvraagstuk emancipatie-doeleinden nagestreefd ter verwezenlijking van de opheffing van de koloniale staat. Tegelijkertijd had de koloniale staat met succes het onderwijssysteem gebruikt om de scheiding tussen de verschillende etnische groepen in stand te houden waardoor de vorming van een supra-ethnische natie werd tegengehouden.

# BUILDING A NATION THROUGH EDUCATION? SURINAME, 1850-1950<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper it will be argued that in the process of state- and society formation since the abolition of slavery in the Dutch colony of Suriname, education became a crucial mediating institution between colonial state and society. A differentiated education system had to ensure that the colonial status quo of this plantation economy was not disturbed, while at the same time it functioned as a vehicle for "sponsored mobility" for those who wanted to make a career in the colonial system. Meanwhile, the same educational system provided the intellectual means to oppose that colonial *status quo*. Education became a means as well as a goal for personal and (ethnic) group emancipation and, as a consequence, it played an important role in the transition of the colonial state. On the other hand, this same colonial state successfully used the education system to keep the different ethnic groups divided, thereby hindering a process of supra-ethnic nation building.

## RESUMEN

Este trabajo plantea que en el proceso de formación del Estado que sucedió a la abolición de la esclavitud en esta ex colonia holandesa, las instituciones educativas desempeñaron un papel fundamental de mediación entre el Estado colonial y la sociedad nacional. Un sistema educativo diferenciado contribuyó a que el *status* colonial de esta economía de plantación no fuera modificado, a la vez que favoreció una "movilidad dirigida" dentro del modelo colonial. Paradójicamente, tal sistema educativo proporcionó con el tiempo respuestas intelectuales de resistencia ante el *status* colonial. Alrededor del factor educativo, grupos étnicos e individuos albergaron propósitos de emancipación e impulsaron hacia la transición del Estado colonial. Al mismo

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, Paramaribo, April 1998.

tiempo, el propio Estado colonial empleó con buen resultado el sistema educativo para perpetuar la división entre los grupos étnicos, aplazando con ello el proceso de construcción de una nación supra-étnica.

When slavery was abolished in the Caribbean, all of a sudden civil society included large numbers of people who had been there all the time, but who had been no more than movable property. Now legal bonds, civilization campaigns, and money came to substitute the violent bonds of slavery. All this happened at the cost of the old elite's power and stimulated the growth of a supervising colonial state, which, however, by definition could never achieve the role of a state *tout court*. Political independence and complete sovereignty over their own territories finally resulted in the transformation of these colonies into full blown states. But then they were already well into the second half of the twentieth century.

In this paper this process of state- and society formation and the interaction between the two will be explained by education as a form of mediation between state and society in Suriname. I will concentrate on formal education and training in schools, and leave the informal, usually oral transmission of cultural values and attitudes aside (Smith in Miller, 1991, 11).

This analysis of education in Suriname as a mediator between state and society finishes around 1950. By then, after almost three centuries, Suriname obtained autonomy in its internal affairs. Consequently the state as well as education had to change.

Education means socialization. However, the question is, who controls this channel and to what purpose? Since the beginning of the nineteenth century (formal) education by way of public schooling became a highly efficient tool for the state to mould and control society. Some have gone as far as to define "education as an inexpensive form of police".<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, schools not only educate for continuation of the *status quo*, but — unintentionally — for revolutionary change too. In Giroux's words: "Schools produce social formations around class, gender and racial exploitation, but at the same time they contain contradictory pluralities that generate possibilities for both mediation and the contestation of dominant ideologies and practices" (Giroux, 1983, 115).

<sup>2</sup> See Ross in Giroux (1983, 169). This standpoint is more or less expanded by Bourdieu (1996) who stated that not only has the state a monopoly on physical violence, but on symbolic violence too, particularly via the education system.

In less radical, but equally interesting theories school systems are seen as mechanisms of social differentiation and upward mobility. Scholars have contrasted the “contest mobility” of the American system with the “sponsored mobility” of the British system.<sup>3</sup> In the former, it is possible to acquire elite status by one’s own efforts in a fierce, highly competitive, but generally open contest. In the British system, on the contrary, one can only acquire such status, if it is given to you by the ruling elites. They “grant or deny upward mobility on the basis of whether they judge the candidate to have those qualities they wish to see in fellow members” (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1977, 290). More detailed research, however, has shown that the American system is not as open as it pretends to be. Also in America, differential treatment has been common practice too, *e.g.* through sponsorship of students by school personnel (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1977, 291). This was openly admitted in the 1980s, when so called “affirmative action” was instituted by law to “sponsor” relative outsiders such as Afro-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and women in their educational and societal careers. Hence, on further consideration sponsored mobility characterizes both the British and the American system, and the difference is only in degree. This is not surprising as

[a]ccess to education and differential education achievement are important topics in any society, since all societies must strive to cope with [...] the social selection process as a societal functional problem [Layne, 1991, 75].

Mobility for some, sponsored or otherwise, automatically signifies immobility for others. If this is true for “free” societies and independent states, it is even more likely to characterize the social structure of colonies, which are by definition subsidiary to the colonizing states.

The British West Indies are a case in point. Gordon states that despite “much educational activity” since the abolition of slavery

there never was adequate provision for everyone, but also [...] there was seldom a coherent idea of what public education was intended for, beyond establishing a limited personal status for a minority. [...] It was not associated with a drive for improved living standards for the community at large [Gordon, 1971, 6, 8].

<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Stanley Wassenaar who made me familiar with some of the theoretical discussions in education, and who particularly pointed at the sponsored mobility thesis.

In fact she suggests that in colonies such as the British West Indian islands only a few were permitted to move upward in society, and the overall majority were not, both as part of the colonial task they were obliged to perform.<sup>4</sup>

Recent findings show that at the end of the nineteenth century levels of mass participation in primary schooling in these non-industrialized West Indian colonies were only surpassed by nine sovereign and industrialized countries of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Canada (Benavot & Riddle, 1988, 191-210). Miller attributes this remarkable circumstance to the fact that these countries had one important feature in common: they were newly created societies with heterogenous populations. This had particular consequences for the development of education. According to Miller "[t]hese new societies were not imitating Western Europe. They were undergoing the same generic transformation promoted by different reasons" (Miller, 1991, 230).

What these reasons were, and how this transformation occurred will be examined in concern to the Dutch Caribbean colony of Suriname. This was a newly created society too, it had a very heterogeneous population, and compulsory education was introduced in 1876-1877, a quarter of a century before its introduction in the "mother country". Compulsory education also coincided almost exactly with the final abolition of the last remnants of slavery (1873). I should like, therefore, to regard the 1870s as a turning point in the history of education in Suriname. The questions I am addressing in this contribution at least, centre on the role of education before and after this watershed. What, for example, is the meaning of "sponsored mobility" in the transformation from a colonial state in which the majority of the population was at least formally excluded from society, to a situation in which suddenly a civil society had to be created. Did post slavery education bridge the socio-economic and cultural gaps that were symptomatic of societies based on "modern" slavery, and did it offer mobility for talented individuals; or was it a new means of maintaining structural inequality? And, finally, did education, as Giroux suggests, "generate possibilities for both mediation and the contestation of dominant ideologies and practices"? (Giroux, 1983, 115).

<sup>4</sup> This kind of educational attitude was not typical of the British West Indies only, but could also be found for example in the French West Indies. This is dramatically illustrated by Joseph Zobel's novel (1950) and the Euzhan Palcy's movie (1983) based on it *Rue cases nègres*.

## SLAVERY AND EDUCATION

Suriname's population probably has one of the most heterogeneous origins of all the Caribbean. Between 1667, when the Dutch conquered this colony on the British, and 1827, when a final stop was put on the import of slaves, about 213 000 Africans arrived in Suriname who came from different culture areas all over West- and Central Africa (Stipriaan, 1993, 314). They and their descendents constituted the overall population majority.<sup>5</sup> The white inhabitants of Suriname, who comprised never more than four per cent of total population, was no homogeneous group either. During slavery no more than half of the planters were of Dutch origin. The rest were Ashkenazy and Sephardic Jews, descendents of French Huguenots, a considerable number of British<sup>6</sup> and a number of planters from other European countries. Then there was the so called bush population, which consisted of several Amerindian and Maroon peoples, who lived in more or less autonomous communities in the jungle of Suriname's interior.<sup>7</sup> And finally, when slavery was abolished, several different ethnic groups of indentured labourers from Madeira, China, British India and Java were brought to this country.

TABLE 1. *Ethnic composition population Suriname 1834\* and 1950*

| 1834             |           | 1950             |         |
|------------------|-----------|------------------|---------|
| Europeans        | 2 638     | Europeans        | 2 283   |
| Free mulattos    | 3 947     | Creole           | 80 501  |
| Free blacks      | 1 094     | Javanese         | 37 598  |
| Total slaves     | 48 784    | Hindustani       | 64 715  |
| (Mulatto slaves) | (c 2 500) | Chinese          | 2 689   |
|                  |           | Bush population  | 25 700  |
|                  |           | Rest             | 2 638   |
| Total population | 56 463    | Total population | 216 124 |

SOURCE: Teenstra, 1842, 5, 10, 34; Lans, 1842, 197; Surinaams Verslag, 1950.

\* Bush population not included.

<sup>5</sup> From *circa* 95 per cent around 1750 to *circa* 70 per cent in 1863. Population figures do not include the bush population.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly since the British interregnum (1799-1802, 1804-1816) as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars.

<sup>7</sup> This bush population must have numbered several thousands of people, but until the 1940s they have never been included in official population figures. This shows the complete lack of interest by the authorities for these groups.

Interaction between all these groups, and particularly between Africans and Europeans, had two important consequences. First, the rather babylonian linguistic situation resulted in the creation, mainly by the slaves, of a kind of contact language, which soon developed into a full fledged language.<sup>8</sup> This became the lingua franca in Suriname, not only spoken by slaves, or between slaves and planters, but often also among whites. This linguistic dominance of Africa over Europe was rather exceptional in the Americas. Elsewhere the colonists formed culturally far more homogenous groups, which facilitated the dominance of English, French, Spanish and Portuguese in the respective colonies.

Second, sexual relations — ranging from (often) outright rape to (less often) “descent” concubinage — between these different population groups, and particularly between white men and black women, resulted in the emergence of an interethnic group. This group of so called mulattos, later called light skinned creoles, increasingly became an intermediary group, or buffer, between whites and blacks.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century education was mainly something for, and by, free whites. However, sometimes white planters gave their brown sons a “white upbringing”, by sending them to the best (private) schools in Suriname, and sometimes even to Europe. In the course of the nineteenth century this group of “light skinned creoles” became a rather powerful colonial sub-elite. However, the increasing rest of this interethnic group, who were not as privileged as the former one, was used by the plantocracy as a buffer against the black slaves. Mulatto slaves held the top positions in the plantation hierarchy, and free mulattos were increasingly used for administrative jobs in the expanding plantation economy, and later in the colonial state apparatus. Therefore, initiated by the Court of Policy and some church officials, a so called Mulatto School was opened around 1760. This was the first sign that the authorities were beginning to show an interest in education as an instrument of socio-economic policy.

Before the 1870s three important developments were well under way, which were of decisive influence for the growth of an intermediary role of education between state and society. These were expansion of state control, expansion and “civilization” of society, and in connection with the latter, continual attempts at dutchification of society. First, the until

<sup>8</sup> This completely creolized language is now called *Sranan Tongo*, or just *Sranan*, particularly older Surinamese still use the word “Negro-English”, or *Nengre*.

then hard to control planter elite who actually ruled the colony, was gradually replaced by Dutch professionals, particularly after new Government Regulations with that objective had been introduced in 1832. Consequently, the colonial state apparatus expanded and Dutchified. Since that time Dutchification became a necessary condition for those locally born who wanted to make a colonial career.

This transformation into a full fledged colony run by a professionalized and dutchified colonial bureaucracy was reflected in the reorganization of education. In 1834 the colonial authorities issued School Acts which, for the first time, included minimum requirements for school teachers, who were, according to their qualifications divided into a four-grades system. A government appointed Commission for Education saw to it that the quality of education was maintained. The changing composition of this commission over time, illustrated the diminishing political control of the planter class, and the professionalization of the colonial state. In 1818, for example, the commission consisted of four powerful planters, supplemented by a church minister and schoolmaster Batenburg. Almost forty years later the commission was presided by the Attorney-general. One member was a lawyer working as clerk of the civil and military courts, another was judge and, incidentally, the first coloured member of the commission. Batenburg now was an honorary member. The secretary was a lawyer, who also had a stake in two plantations, and only the treasurer remembered of former times being the (co-)administrator of ten plantations.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the substantial increase of the number of free, but relatively poor townspeople, mainly mulattos, who were not able to send their children to one of the privately owned schools, and who did not have much economic opportunities either, became a growing concern for the authorities. Therefore, they took initiatives to keep these children from idling about, and to make them useful to society. Free, so called Town Schools for the poor were opened in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Public education now became the direct responsibility of the colonial state. This is illustrated by the fact that the state, which had until then left the cost of education mainly to private and religious initiative, by the middle of the century paid for about one third of all school children.<sup>10</sup> Those who could not afford a private school were sent to Town

<sup>9</sup> Surinaamsche Almanak, 1818 and 1856.

<sup>10</sup> KV, 1849 and 1862.

School, and the new regulations authorized the Commission for Education to sent particularly bright, but poor pupils to the (private) Head School at the expense of the colonial state (Benjamins & Snelleman, 1914-1917, 591), an undisputable example of "sponsored mobility".

A considerable part of the mulatto group now gradually were making their way up in colonial society via education. Their socio-economic rise during the nineteenth century can therefore be characterized as "sponsored mobility", but intermediaries between state and society they were not (yet). Until well into the nineteenth century, whites as well as blacks, generally mistrusted, or looked down upon these people of mixed descent. However, education became a means, and a goal for them to become respected citizens. As a consequence they gradually penetrated the state apparatus as well as the educational ranks, which in due course led to their Dutchification since the higher administrative ranks were mainly occupied by officials coming from Holland. Furthermore, the curriculum at school was hardly related to the Suriname context, and almost completely oriented at Holland. An observer noted in the early 1840s:

They all learn the geography of the Netherlands very precisely; they know every river, or every village, as insignificant as it may be, of this country which only a few will ever behold with their own eyes, but they do not trouble themselves with the produce, the geography and other relations of their own rich country. This might be one of the reasons that agriculture and industry are being neglected so much [Kappler, 1983, 24].

Third, until the final decades of slavery, slaves in Suriname were kept as "apart" and as ignorant as possible, a situation which hardly differed from that in the British West Indies (Gordon, 1971, 12). Therefore no missionary or other educational activities were allowed among the overall majority of the Suriname slaves. Not only were they commodities by law who, formally speaking, could not be christened, nor receive any of the christian sacraments, but there was a general feeling among planters that literate slaves were dangerous slaves. However, when around the middle of the nineteenth century Suriname became encapsulated between two colonies where slavery was abolished (British Guiana in 1834 and French Guyana in 1848), the planters changed their minds. In this they were strongly stimulated by the colonial authorities who since the 1830s tried to improve the position and living conditions of slaves. The authorities particularly recommended the missionaries of the pro-

testant Moravian Brotherhood, because they strongly condemned violence, and preached obedience to the heavenly as well as the worldly master, and “patient endurance and satisfaction with the present destination”.<sup>11</sup> Now that it had become clear that the abolition of slavery was inevitable — and probably even in the near future — authorities and planters came to the conclusion that slaves had to be “civilized” in order to become disciplined members of society. Christian education by the Moravians seemed to promise the best results. Since that time an enormous christening and education campaign was set in motion, and it seemed a matter of time only that the colony would be completely Dutchified.

July 1, 1863 slavery was abolished in Suriname, and the so called Emancipation Acts became effective for 36 000 former slaves. They were legally free now, but following the British example of the Apprenticeship system, it was decided that for a period of 10 years the ex-slaves were obliged to hire themselves out as plantation labourers. This system was a bit less euphemistically called State Supervision (*Staatstoezicht*).

Meanwhile colonial government itself was also transformed again, when three years after Emancipation new, so called Government Regulations were introduced, which granted legislative power to the Governor and to the now installed Colonial States (*Koloniale Staten*). The Crown (Dutch Government) retained the authority to intervene in most matters of importance. However, the colony was given some autonomy in the sense that the Colonial States were granted the right to draw up their own budget. Furthermore, they had the right of amendment, initiative, petition and interpellation. Four members were directly appointed by the Governor, nine were elected on the basis of tax assessment. In short, the Colonial States can be interpreted as a kind of transitory political body between plantocracy and parliamentary democracy.

In the Emancipation Acts education for the ex-slaves received special attention. Article 25, for example, prescribed the colonial government to support and encourage religious and school education. Supervision was entrusted to the District Commissioners, who had to report yearly to the Governor. He, in his turn informed the Colonial States about the state of affairs.<sup>12</sup>

Public schools were opened in the plantation districts, and the number

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Stipriaan, 1993, 378.

<sup>12</sup> *Surinaamsche Courant*, 1862, no. 119.

of Moravian and Roman Catholic schools also increased.<sup>13</sup> The latter two were subsidized by the colonial state in order to provide the former slave children with free education, which was obligatory during State Supervision. Dutch was to be the teaching language at these schools, the curriculum was Dutch and christening was stimulated. This was a clear sign that Dutchification was supposed to be the only possible route to civilization and socialization. However, as most children were mono-lingual (only speaking Sranan Tongo) the teachers were permitted to use that language in the first classes of elementary school. It was not laid down when the transition to Dutch had to take place, nor was there any control worth mentioning on the use of Dutch in the higher classes. Moreover, many teachers in the districts did not have the necessary qualifications, and some did not even have command of Dutch themselves. Instead of homogenization the result was educational chaos.

After the termination of State Supervision, 1 July 1873, when the obligation to hire themselves to the plantations and send their children to school was abolished, one quarter of the former slaves immediately left the plantations, while another one third gradually followed in the years thereafter. Some of them went to Paramaribo, but the majority stayed in the districts, mostly as peasants. The number of school children in the plantation districts decreased correspondingly, if only because schools were all located at plantations.

TABLE 2. *Creole population in districts 1863-1890*

| <i>Year</i> | <i>On plantations</i> | <i>In total</i> |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1863        | 25 825                | 27 580          |
| 1872        | 23 811                | 27 220          |
| 1873        | 17 651                | 26 934          |
| 1882        | 9 786                 | 21 730          |
| 1890        | 7 727                 | 23 587          |

NB: Not everyone of the plantation population actually did plantation labour (like children or old people), for example in 1890 only 5 040 (65%) of the Creole plantation population actually worked in the fields or in the factory. (Source: kv, 1863, 1872, 1873, 1876, 1882, 1890.) Between 1870 and 1885 the number of school children in the districts dropped from 2 283 to 1 182, whereas in Paramaribo their number rose from 2 793 to 3 975 (Source: kv, 1886). This might be an indication that particularly those who were eager to make a career in society (for their children) left the districts.

<sup>13</sup> At the end of 1872 in these districts 925 children went to 15 public schools, 1 047 went to 17 Moravian schools and 162 to 3 Roman Catholic schools. The total number of people under State Supervision in the districts was then 26 107 (Source: kv, 1873)

Obviously, the system of education imposed by the Emancipation Acts as a means to tie the ex-slaves to the plantations — in other words sponsored immobility — had failed. Although education was probably not the first priority for most ex-slaves,<sup>14</sup> some of them may have gone to Paramaribo with the intention of getting a better education and of building a career in the colonial bureaucracy, or at least as an independent craftsman. The result of the labour drain was twofold. First, the loss of (cheap) plantation labour was compensated for by the import of Asian contract labour, mainly from (Northeast) British India and (central) Java.<sup>15</sup> Between 1873 and 1916 more than 34 000 British Indians, or Hindostani, arrived in Suriname, and between 1893 and 1939 almost 33 000 Javanese entered the colony.<sup>16</sup> After the end of their contract period (generally five years) most of these immigrants were, at least formally, free to return to their home lands. However, most of them remained — as peasants — in Suriname. This changed the composition of Suriname's population fundamentally.

A second result of the failure to tie the ex-slaves to the plantations was that, instead of leaving them alone from then on, the colonial authorities doubled their efforts to educate (*i.e.* to "civilize") them. One of the outcomes was the introduction in 1876-1877 of general compulsory education for all children between the ages of 7 and 12.<sup>17</sup> It was evident that this law was particularly aimed at the children of blacks, because the light skinned and white elites had long before found their way to (private) school as well as to education in Holland. The British Indian immigrants, on the other hand, were foreigners<sup>18</sup> for whom the colonial state did only have temporary responsibility within the limits of a contract with the British government, which said nothing about education. Although formally also subject to the same measures and regulations, in their practical outcome Asians were going their own way, sometimes by their own choice, often because they were kept apart by

<sup>14</sup> "General are the complaints about the irregular school attendance of pupils from the lower classes", stated the Education Commission in 1876 (Source: kv, 1877).

<sup>15</sup> Between 1853 (!) and 1873 planters and colonial authorities had experimented with the importation of contract labourers from Madeira (480), China (2 502 + 217 Chinese from Java) and Barbados (2 382) (Source: Surinaams Verslag, 1950).

<sup>16</sup> Surinaams Verslag, 1950.

<sup>17</sup> Gouvernementsblad, 1877, 10.

<sup>18</sup> In 1927 the Dutch law on Dutch Citizenship of 1910 became applicable on Suriname too. Since that time everyone born in Suriname, including children of foreigners like the British Indians, were Dutch citizens (Bruijning & Voorhoeve, 1977, 278).

the colonial state. Hence, efforts at homogenization — “assimilation policy” as it was called — meant Dutchification of Creoles only.

#### EDUCATION AND THE COLONIAL STATE

The education law of 1877 was meant to be only temporary, awaiting definitive arrangements. Apart from the article on compulsory education the law was based on the 1834 laws. The definitive arrangements, however, have never been introduced. Instead, each year amendments were made. Education thus became a controversial theme in the public sphere. Compulsory education only meant a first stage in the expansion of social control exerted by the state. On the other hand, emancipating groups in society increasingly wished to make use of education to reach that line.

Table 3 gives a few key indicators for the expansion of the state during the nineteenth century. The number of state officials grew considerably, whereas the size of the population remained stable. This was no more than a concomitant of the transition from a “simple” plantocracy where the rightless were ruled by the whip, to a relatively complex colonial state based on “trias politica”, and basic rights for everyone. During slavery the plantocracy had always relied on a combination of violence and a system of divide and rule, with the military as reinforcement. Of course, the army was meant against outside intruders, but far more often was it used against the internal enemy, *i.e.* slaves and maroons. Now that the slaves formally had become part of society, a police force should suffice to keep everything under control. The military, however, remained available in the background. The relative increase of the police points at the fact that society was (considered) rather unstable; the following relative decrease probably means that a new kind of *status quo* had been reached, and/or that other means of control now were at work.

The constantly growing number of qualified teachers (tables 3 and 4) might be an indication of the increasing role of education. Between the end of State Supervision and the middle of the twentieth century the population of Suriname almost quadrupled (table 4).

The number of children going to school in Paramaribo increased almost six times during the same period, and almost seven times in the rural districts (including a dip during the period that the former slaves left the plantations). And the number of qualified teachers even increa-

TABLE 3. *Officials, police and schoolteachers 1818-1950*  
(per 1 000 inhabitants)

| Year | Total officials | State police | Teachers population* | Officials |
|------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1818 | 51 100          | 1.7          | —                    | 0.1       |
| 1856 | 51 100          | 2.4          | 0.5                  | 0.3       |
| 1872 | 51 888          | ?            | 3.1                  | 0.9       |
| 1882 | 51 196          | 3.1          | 3.6                  | 2.2       |
| 1907 | 81 038          | 2.8          | 2.5                  | 3.1       |
| 1930 | 131 687         | 2.4          | 1.6                  | 3.4       |
| 1950 | 190 424         | ?            | 1.4                  | 4.2       |

SOURCE: Surinaamsche Almanak, 181 and 1856; Koloniaal/Surinaams Verslag, 1872-1950; Stipriaan, 1993, 311-314.

\*Bush population not included.

TABLE 4. *Number of schools, pupils and teachers in Paramaribo and districts 1849-1950*

| Year | School | Paramaribo (u) lo pupils | Schools | Districts qualified (u) lo pupils | Teachers |
|------|--------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1849 | 12     | 1 049                    | —       | (10)                              |          |
| 1862 | 20     | 1 807                    | ?       | ?                                 | 29       |
| 1872 | 22     | 3 246                    | 35      | 2 134                             | 49       |
| 1882 | 31     | 3 695                    | 30      | 1 429                             | 111      |
| 1890 | 24     | 4 286                    | 23      | 1 398                             | 117      |
| 1900 | 25     | 5 488                    | 32      | 1 652                             | 150      |
| 1910 | 25     | 6 441                    | 39      | 2 464                             | 275      |
| 1920 | 28     | 7 518                    | 45      | 3 337                             | 370      |
| 1930 | 31     | 9 013                    | 80      | 8 352                             | 442      |
| 1940 | 33     | 11 100                   | 86      | 10 435                            | 481      |
| 1950 | 43     | 18 436                   | 80      | 14 877                            | 794      |

SOURCE: Koloniaal/Surinaams Verslag, 1849-1950.

sed 16 times since 1872. These figures seem to confer Edward Ross' characterization (see note 1) of education as an inexpensive — or at least alternative — form of police. It can, however, be also interpreted as an indicator of change and professionalisation in a society which is becoming more complex, and which tries to make use of its talents. In short, sponsored mobility for the talented, while maintaining the *status quo* for the majority. It might even be interesting to know whether this state controlled growth of intellect leads to growth of opposition too; in other words did it lead to the emancipation of underlying groups in society.

#### EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Education in Suriname has always been closely, and obviously, linked to the economic interests of the planters, at least until the end of the nineteenth century. However, when "colonial democracy" — controlled by "The Hague" — gradually substituted plantocracy, a transition in this respect could be expected. Since the middle of the nineteenth century colonial authorities as well as (many) planters had become convinced that education and christianization of the slaves was probably the most effective way to prevent chaos and to bind them to colonial goals. These goals, which were still within the realm of export oriented large scale agriculture, gradually changed when the ex-slaves, and later the indentured labourers after their contract period, did not turn out to be very eager to hire their labour to the plantations anymore. Instead they started a life as independent peasants. Moreover, after the turn of the century gold digging, balata (rubber) bleeding and particularly bauxite mining became important alternatives for agriculture. Between *circa* 1905 and 1955 the relative number of people employed in agriculture declined from two-thirds to one third of the working population; industry, mining and construction increased from one-tenth to one third; and employment by the government rose from one-fiftieth to almost a quarter of the working population.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, gradually, the Surinamese economy lost (some of) its agricultural character, and consequently the plantocrats lost their political influence.

Meanwhile, the authorities could not afford to let the former slave population roam freely across the country. Control and disciplined la-

<sup>19</sup> kv, 1908; Gowricharn, 1990, 122-123.

bour were badly needed and that resulted in the early introduction of general compulsory education in combination with a colonial policy that was clearly characterized by sponsored mobility. Education not only was free for those who actually could not afford it, but the authorities and the now installed Inspector of Education also stipulated, that if a poor child turned out to be exceptionally talented the colonial state would financially provide for its further education at a ("paying") secondary school.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the colonial state in the figure of the Inspector of Education, and the successive Governors, strongly promoted the expansion of public schools at the cost of private schools. This stemmed from a desire to guarantee continuity and acceptable levels of education. As a consequence, of course, the state obtained more room for sponsored mobility for some talented pupils, and at the same time obtained more control over the school curriculum.<sup>21</sup>

The growing economic and technological complexity of this former plantation economy and the expansion of the colonial state is further illustrated by a diversification of secondary education, which, however, never reached maturity. Between 1877 and 1900 two large public ULO-schools<sup>22</sup> were opened, a private (night)course for artisans cum (day) training for carpenter was transformed into a public (junior) technical school, the colonial naval workshops started a course for enginemen, a public training college for teachers had to provide the growing number of primary schools with qualified personnel (see table 4), and finally the first — and for a long time only — (semi-)academic college was introduced in this colony, when the Medical School opened its doors to future physicians, surgeons, obstetricians, and pharmacists.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in the first two decades of the twentieth century an Association for Business

<sup>20</sup> kv, 1886. Secondary education had to be paid for.

<sup>21</sup> kv, 1886.

<sup>22</sup> These were schools for extended primary education. The first public ULO, the Hendrik school, opened in 1887 and counted 237 pupils in December. In 1908 an extra year was added to the existing seven, instead of five at primary schools, which brought this MULO [More extended primary education] at the same level as a three year HBS (High School) in Holland, and until the 1950s the highest secondary school available in Suriname. During the first three decades of the twentieth century secondary education expanded further, although private ULO-schools disappeared altogether. In 1930 there were four MULO- and also five ULO-schools (for each type one public, one Moravian, two Roman Catholic, boys and girls separate, and one ULO-school recently opened by the African Methodist Episcopal Church). (Sources: kv, 1889, 1900, 1910, 1916, 1920, 1930; Bruijning & Voorhoeve, 1977, 448; Polanen, 1982, 28-30; Themen, 1935, 90-94).

<sup>23</sup> See Thomson (1897, 44) and kv, 1900.

Education was founded which counted 59 pupils in 1920. And even (lower class) girls could learn a trade at two schools for plaiting (Panama) hats. In reality these schools were actually workshops where thousands of hats were produced yearly, and which counted 241 "pupils" in 1920.<sup>24</sup>

In 1910 a government commission consisting of nine educationists working in Suriname, stated that despite all the new post-primary education opportunities most of these were "almost inaccessible for children of the lower classes", and they criticized the general lack of practical education, particularly in agriculture.<sup>25</sup> It is remarkable, indeed, that in a colony in which agriculture still played an important role, education in that field never succeeded to become institutionalized.<sup>26</sup> Despite many calls for agricultural education, particularly in the districts, by (some) colonial administrators and missionaries,<sup>27</sup> the only measure taken by the colonial government was the introduction of "limited primary education" (BLO)<sup>28</sup> for district schools in 1928. This measure was intended to "take care that the children are not plied with all kinds of superfluous subject-matters of teaching" (Themen, 1935, 74). It was, however, a clear indication of the real motives underlying the lack of governmental support for agricultural education. Apart from the costs of education for a colonial budget which was never balanced, the colonial government was always afraid to provoke the interests of the still relatively powerful planter class. And, obviously, planters were not very much in favour of well educated labourers, who might substitute a career in town for a life as plantation labourer, or who might become independent agriculturalists and competitors in the export market. One of the speakers at the Colonial Education Conference (1919) stated that in general many planters were "very sceptical" about education in the districts. And he continued: "Maybe self interest plays a part here for some, because they will be of the opinion that better education will mean

<sup>24</sup> kv, 1920.

<sup>25</sup> Report Commission 1909, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> During the 1910s a few agricultural courses were given, mainly to teachers who only followed the course to receive the promised raise in salary (Plante Fébure, 1918, 87; *Rapport Suriname Studie Syndicaat*, 1919, 38-41).

<sup>27</sup> See *Koloniaal Onderwijs-Congres, 1919: Prae-adviezen en Stenografisch Verslag*, particularly speeches by Countess van Heerdt tot Eversberg, and by former Governor Van Asbeck. Also: kv, 1925 (Competition organized by Governor baron Van Heemstra on agricultural education), and *Rapport Commissie Onderwijs aan Aziatische Kinderen*, 1920, 28-29.

<sup>28</sup> *Beperkt Lager Onderwijs*.

higher demands, and even faster abandoning the plantations [by the labourers]".<sup>29</sup> Obviously, therefore, it was decided to meet the planters fears by limiting educational opportunities in order to keep a sufficient labour reservoir in the (plantation) districts.

Of course, the planters problems with the floating district population were understandable. Creoles had in the course of time massively deserted the places which reminded them of slavery times, and Asian immigrants, after their contracts expired, returned to their homelands, or tried to settle as independent peasants or farmers. Therefore, planters were not very cooperative with measures which, in their opinion, could lead to a further loss of (cheap) plantation labour.

#### EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

Since its founding years as a colony Suriname has always been characterized by two major divisions, one ethnic and one geographical. First, there was a strict division between white colonists and black slaves. The confrontation between these two resulted in the emergence of two other ethnic groups. One were Maroons, or Bush Negroes who lived in the interior of the country and became rather marginalized. The other were Mulattos, later called light skinned Creoles, who never became part of the white colonial superstratum, but nevertheless succeeded in becoming part of the colonial, urban elite. Later the influx of indentured labourers from China, British India (Hindustan) and Java further added to the ethnic complexity of this colony.

Second, alongside, and in the course of time also largely overlapping the ethnic division, there was a clear-cut division between the city of Paramaribo, commercial and political centre of the colony, and the rural districts where most of the colony's (export) production was realized. Apart from the small Chinese group, the overall majority of the Asian immigrants, lived in these rural districts, at least until World War II.

These divisions have always been a central element in colonial policy. During the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth century the *status quo* had been maintained by a combination of divide-and-rule and brute physical violence. Since the abolition of slavery had come within sight, and particularly since the influx of new labour immigrants made Suri-

<sup>29</sup> Koloniaal Onderwijs-Congres (1919), Prae-adviezen, 12.

nameese society ethnically more diversified than ever before, violence as a means of control disappeared gradually (but never completely!), and was substituted by (religious) education. However, the implementation of this new policy suffered of a considerable contradiction. On the one hand all ethnic groups were treated differently, and there was a continuous discrimination between town and rural districts. On the other hand, it was the official aim to homogenize this babylonian society by promoting general assimilation to Dutch culture. Education turned out to be the solution and became the main instrument in this paradoxical policy.

A few problems added to the continuous dilemmas which resulted from this policy. First, the colonial budget was eternally out of balance, and therefore money for innovations of any kind was always problematic. Second, some ethnic groups, particularly Maroons and Amerindians in the interior of the country, had been beyond colonial control for so long, that they were excluded from any policy whatsoever.<sup>30</sup> Third, one of the major ethnic groups, the Hindostani, were at least until the end of the 1920s still British subjects, which made it hard to promote a general assimilation policy.

The first problems showed when general compulsory education was introduced and the contents and quality of education became the responsibility of the colonial government. This responsibility and supervision were delegated in 1878 to the first Inspector of Education, H.D. Benjamins (1850-1933), who held this job for more than three decades. Benjamins was convinced that "improvement of education surely is a forceful means to increase prosperity of the people".<sup>31</sup> He strongly favoured the founding of as many public schools as possible, at the cost of the small, expensive, and often temporary (non denominational) private schools. He did so, not only as a logical consequence of the introduction of compulsory education, nor because the colonial state was his employer, but because he was convinced that only the state was able to guarantee a constant quality and continuity in education. Benjamins also became the driving force behind the foundation of public secondary schools, that had to be accessible for all talented children, moneyed or not. And as education for children from the lower classes was dominated by Moravians and Roman Catholics since slavery times, Benjamins also

<sup>30</sup> Until the 1940s their numbers were not even included in official colonial statistics.

<sup>31</sup> kv, 1886.

saw to it that their schools became substantially subsidized by the colonial state.

However, the population of these denominational schools, pupils as well as teachers, were mainly former slaves and their descendants, and education had always been in "Negro-English" (*Sranan Tongo*). The curriculum had been quite simple, and, as a result of its missionary background, education in these schools was generally adapted to its population as much as possible. As a consequence, in popular parlance they were called Negro schools, as opposed to non-denominational private and public schools, which were called "white" (Adja Ini, 1924, 14). Now, Benjamins, by order of the colonial government, not only forced a much more Dutch oriented curriculum on these, and actually on all schools, but also Dutch as the only language to be used in education in general.<sup>32</sup> This turned out to be a real problem for many of the teachers. In 1890 heated discussions took place on this matter in the Colonial States. As a result all teachers at Moravian schools received a letter from their supervisory board, but at the instigation of Benjamins, telling them the disappearance of "Negro-English" was "dearly wished", and should be replaced by Dutch gradually. "Furthermore, every school teacher should take it as his duty to communicate with his pupils in Dutch only, also during out-of-school hours, and if possible with all adults too" (Themen, 1935, 55).

The problem, however, was not only the language of education, its contents were problematic too. At the end of Benjamins years as Inspector of Education, the government appointed committee of 1909<sup>33</sup> reported that "generally our education is too theoretical and too little practical", and the educational material does not meet the spiritual needs of Surinamese children, because it is made for schools in the Netherlands.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Benjamins tried to guarantee his ideal of high levels of (Dutch) education by inviting teachers from Holland to work in Suriname, and by maintaining a strict hierarchical system of different graded teachers, who had to be trained at the colonial normal school. Since 1885

<sup>32</sup> The curriculum of elemental schools, according to article 17 of the new Education Laws, had to consist of: reading, writing, arithmetic, elementary geometry, the Dutch language, geography, history, biology, and singing (*Rapport*, 1909).

<sup>33</sup> This committee consisted of the head Inspector, the inspector of the Moravian schools, two members of the governmental Commission of Education, three teachers of the public MULO-school, a Roman Catholic clergy-man and head of an ulo-school, and a Protestant reverend.

<sup>34</sup> *Rapport*, 1909, 9, 16.

fourth grade teachers were only permitted to teach at district schools, while headmasters in town always had to have at least a second grade qualification. To obtain a higher grade meant making exams, and during Benjamins Inspectorship (1878-1910) a first grade could generally be obtained only in Holland. The result of his being so zealous, indeed, was an enormous expansion of the educational infrastructure, public as well as denominational, and thorough Dutchification of this same infrastructure. In Paramaribo four large public elementary schools, and two schools for secondary education were opened, and a technical school was taken over. Between 1876 and 1910 the number of schoolchildren in town almost doubled (table 4), and the share of public schools rose from seven to forty-five per cent.<sup>35</sup>

#### EDUCATION AND ASSIMILATION

It can not be denied that assimilation via education has eventually influenced Surinamese society. But this influence has been much smaller than was intended by the colonial state, or at least officially promoted. First of all, it mainly concerned the black and light skinned Creole population in the city of Paramaribo. The assimilation of the latter, however, had already been started much earlier as a result of their rise into the colonial (sub-) elite. For the Afro-Surinamese population it only became obligatory to assimilate to a certain extent for those who considered a colonial career it. As will be shown later, the only possibility for such a career was in education. Most of the remaining Afro-Surinamese population merely underwent this Dutch oriented education, but never completely internalized it. For example, almost all Creoles were christianized, but that did not mean that the Afro-Surinamese winti religion, which was officially forbidden, disappeared, nor that christian matrimonial ideals had become dominant (Van Lier, 1977, 216-217). This, in fact, was no new phenomenon either as Afro-Surinamese culture had been always based on an external dimension of intercultural mixture, which was developed in- and meant for contacts with 'white society', and a much more hidden, internal dimension, which was mainly Afro-Surinamese in character and for internal use only.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it must have been

<sup>35</sup> Colonial Reports of those years.

<sup>36</sup> See Stipriaan, 1994.

hard to assimilate to a culture one knew only from books and stories, and, for that matter, in a language which was not their own. The only internalization that took place was the feeling that Afro-Surinamese culture was far inferior to Dutch, and that one had to act "Dutch" in order to make a career.

Surinamese educationists were highly aware of this rather schizophrenic situation, and formulated their critique in many reports. For example, the Commission of 1909 concluded that it would be wrong if educational requirements were no more than a "slavish imitation" of Dutch regulations, because now the results of the children are already disastrous (*Rapport*, 1909, 16).

Critical remarks were also made about the contribution and position of Dutch teachers in Suriname. One Surinamese teacher, for example, mentioned the flourishing Van Sypesteyn school, which had an all Surinamese staff, as an example that teachers coming from Holland were hardly indispensable (Themen, 1935, 51); and another complained that only "experts" from Holland were listened to, while autochthonous teachers were considered stupid and lazy and were never consulted by the authorities. Bitterly he observed that they even earned three times the salaries of local personnel enabling them to "live like lords" whereas autochthonous teachers like himself "resembled beggars" (Adja Ini, 1924, 15, 34). This complaint, however, is a good example of the complications of a colonial situation, because high payments for Dutch teachers had been suggested at the Colonial Conference on Education in 1919 by one of the rare Surinamese present. This Mr. Plat had worked for Inspector Benjamins, and was of the opinion that all public schools in Paramaribo had to be headed by a schoolmaster from Holland, as a guarantee for the maintenance of high quality education in Dutch. And, he added, if they are not very eager to come to the colony: pay them well, for instance three times a Dutch salary for a three year contract.<sup>37</sup> Thereby, Plat seemed to be even more Catholic than the pope, probably because he owned his career to the Dutch dominated colonial system, whereas Adja Ini's ambitions were frustrated by the same system.

A second factor in the failure of assimilation by education, was the way Paramaribo and the rural districts were kept divided from each other. Although many schools were opened in the interior and the rural districts, Dutch oriented education was limited there, or not even prac-

<sup>37</sup> Tweede Koloniaal Onderwijs-Congres (1919), Stenografisch Verslag, 30-31.

ticed at all. Maroons, for example were of no importance to the colonial economy and were therefore continued to be taught in their own language. In the districts, where Asian immigrants gradually had become the majority,<sup>38</sup> everything was geared towards the maintenance of a sufficient and disciplined labour force for the plantations. Fourth grade teachers (*i.e.* the least trained) were considered sufficient for these schools, and before 1890 Hindostani children were probably not even sent to school at all, although it was officially decided in 1878 that all children between 7 and 12 years of age were subject to compulsory education, including those of "parents who have been, or will be imported as immigrants".<sup>39</sup> After all they still were British subjects and their stay was considered to be temporary. Therefore, at first, no urgent need was felt to invest in their education. Nevertheless, in the early 1890s six so called "coolie schools" were opened for British Indian children, where they were taught in their own language.<sup>40</sup> However, after the turn of the century this policy was changed as it became clear that these immigrants were indispensable for Suriname's economy and efforts had to be made to integrate them into this colony. In 1907 the last coolie school was closed. Instead the Hindostani and Javanese children were now to receive education in Dutch in combination with education in their own language, to facilitate the eventual transition to Dutch. This new policy resulted in heated discussions, and sometimes unexpected opinions.<sup>41</sup>

For example, in 1919 the opening session of the Second Conference on Colonial Education (1919) in The Hague was dedicated to the question *"How does education in Suriname have to be equipped with regard to Dutch-Indian, British-Indian and Chinese children, particularly with respect to language? Is it necessary to erect separate schools for them?"* All four prae-advisors (three Dutch, one Surinamese, *i.e.* Dr. Benjamins) had long educational experience in Suriname. Most were in favour of some education in one's own language to facilitate the transition to Dutch, and all four were against separate schools for British Indian children. Their

<sup>38</sup> In the early 1880s Creoles outnumbered Asians in the rural districts by more than four to one; half a century later Asians outnumbered Creoles in those districts by three to one (kv, 1882 and 1930).

<sup>39</sup> G.B. 28-03-1878.

<sup>40</sup> *Rapport*, 1920, 11-12. The first immigrants from Java only arrived after 1892. Being Dutch subjects, no need was felt to educate them in their own language.

<sup>41</sup> These discussions resemble very much the discussion of the 1980s and 90s in the Netherlands about education for immigrant children in their own language and culture, so called OETC.

motivation, however, differed markedly. One was convinced that it would make the other ethnic groups jealous.<sup>42</sup> Another stated that as long as education in the rural districts did not improve it was better to teach in Javanese and Hindostani so that at least they could be thoroughly christianized.<sup>43</sup> And a third was of the opinion that "Negro-English has to disappear completely, civilized Dutch should become the language spoken, with no distinction, by everyone in Suriname."<sup>44</sup> Obviously, this was exactly what former Inspector Dr. Benjamins, had always been fighting for: Dutch, and Dutch only. However, as the fourth adviser to the conference, Benjamins himself turned out to have changed his mind in the course of time. In his view Asian children should have the opportunity to learn how to write in their own language at the "normal", Dutch educated schools, *i.e.* if the parents wished so. However, proficiency in their mother tongue they were supposed to learn at home. Benjamins loss of orthodoxy was a result of his (new) conviction that within one generation the need for education in the immigrants own language would die out.

One year after this conference a report on the question of non-Dutch education to children of Asian immigrants was published by the Suriname Teachers Association.<sup>45</sup> The research committee, consisting of only Surinamese (*i.e.* Creole) teachers, concluded that the — by this time widespread — practice of bi-lingual education should not be continued. Not without some truth they pointed at neighbouring Guyana, also populated by a great number of Hindostani immigrants, where all education was in English, and seemingly without much trouble.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the results were presented of an enquiry among fifteen head masters of schools with a large Asian population, and where one or more Asian co-teachers were employed to give lessons in their own languages. Thirteen of the head masters thought such co-teachers completely redundant. According to some they were even counter-productive, because often the co-teachers were uneducated themselves, and/or had no didactical skills. Remarkably, almost all respondents observed that their

<sup>42</sup> Tweede Koloniaal Onderwijs-Congres (1919): Prae-adviezen, 13-14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> *Rapport*, 1920.

<sup>46</sup> However, Marriott and Mayhew, who investigated the educational circumstances in the British Caribbean stated in their report (1933) that they were "shocked by the spoken English of both teachers and pupils" (cited in Gordon, 1968, 24).

Asian pupils learned Dutch via Sranan, which they had learned in their pre-school years from Creole children. Only when children had grown up in a purely Asian neighbourhood a well trained Asian co-teacher was considered useful to make the transition to Dutch easier, and also to facilitate communication with the parents (*Rapport*, 1920, 17-19). A director of a Moravian district boardingschool for Javanese children went even as far as to state that he did not think it wise — or even possible — to strip the Javanese immigrants of their own language and culture. According to him they should learn the “common language”, probably meaning Sranan, without neglecting their mother tongue (*Rapport*, 1920, 29). So, no Dutch education at all.

In their conclusions the committee did not follow this advise. However, they stated that teachers at district schools had to learn a working knowledge of “Eastern languages”, and only a graded co-teacher could assist in non-Dutch education. The biggest problem, according to this committee, however, was the high rate of absenteeism from school by Asian children. And finally they added: “If the Government realises, that Asians [...] should be moulded into good colonists, they should be educated for that purpose, and gradually learn western habits”. However, up until that moment “it is not quite clear which direction the Government of our colony wants to follow” (*Rapport*, 1920, 38). Such an explicit critique against the government, was very unusual in a colonial society like Suriname.

The outcome of all these reports and discussions was that almost everyone seemed to be against separate schools for Asians — which had been abandoned since 1907 anyway — and that the most fervent advocates for, as well as against (some) education in Asian languages embedded in a Dutch based educational system could be found among Surinamese and Dutch educationists alike. Consequently, the colonial government did not change its policy, and the number of district schools where part of the education was in an Asian language by an Asian co-teacher expanded rapidly. Between 1915 and 1927 their number increased from *circa* seven to thirty-seven.<sup>47</sup> Most of these were newly founded schools, which tried to attract as many pupils as possible. Public schools did so, because the government had to provide for ample education opportunities as a consequence of compulsory education for all

<sup>47</sup> Not including 24 so called Bushland schools for Maroons in the interior, where Maroon languages kept on being used (kv, 1928).

children. Denominational schools tried the same, because they had a mission to fulfill. And exactly there lay — at least part — of the problem which caused the end of education for Asian immigrants in their own language in 1930.<sup>48</sup>

Moravians and Roman Catholics strongly competed in the same “market”. In the city of Paramaribo this meant that whenever one of these denominations opened a new school the other soon followed. In the rural districts and the interior this competition was sometimes also felt, but generally both denominations had divided territories and “conquered” their “own” villages and areas.<sup>49</sup> However, every time a denominational school was opened, and tried to attract pupils with education in their own language, it was the government’s duty to provide for neutral education too. And this became an extra burden since, in 1921, the colony followed the mothercountry by financially equalizing public and denominational education.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, when it eventually became a matter of costs, the expansion of schools was ended, and non-Dutch education was abolished. Moreover, stimulated by the wish to keep the agricultural population in the districts, the colonial government was of the opinion that these children should not be bothered with too much education (Themen, 1935, 74). Therefore, in 1928 and 1929 most district schools were turned into so called schools for Limited Elementary Education (BLO). Of 86 districtschoools in 1940 74 were BLO, whereas in town no such schools were founded at all.<sup>51</sup> The deliberate division between Paramaribo and the rural districts, which by then was also a rather obvious ethnic division,<sup>52</sup> could not be illustrated better. Of course, the costs of these BLO schools were less than those of normal elementary schools. Or, as a later Dutch Director of education in Suriname put it in

<sup>48</sup> Koloniaal Verslag, 1930.

<sup>49</sup> Ramsodh (1995, 125) rightly states in this respect that Moravian and Roman Catholic mission developed a “categorical cure of souls based on language and population group. They thereby strengthened the structure of diversity which colonialism had introduced in Suriname”.

<sup>50</sup> Governments Besluit 16-02-1921. Particularly the Hindostani Suriname Immigrant Association *Bharat Oeday* sent in requests for neutral schools, accompanied by lists of potential pupils (Koloniaal Verslag, 1928). The same phenomenon was observed at the Colonial Conference on Education by friar Van Eerd (Tweede Koloniaal Onderwijs Congres (1919), Stenografisch Verslag, 11).

<sup>51</sup> Surinaams Verslag, 1940.

<sup>52</sup> Around that time at least three quarters of the district population was Asian (in the most populated districts even more than four-fifths), whereas four-fifths of the population of Paramaribo was black, or light-skinned Creole (Koloniaal Verslag, 1930).

the early fifties: "The BLO was an economy product, actually until well into World War II all state interference suffered from the heavy burden of always having to economize." And "I have seldom come across a name which was more accurate; this education was limited in every possible way: in its curriculum, in the quality of its teachers, in its salaries" (Boheemen, 1951, 69).

TABLE 5. *Education's Share in Colonial Budget Suriname 1849-1940*

| <i>Year costs of education<br/>(× Fl 100.000)</i> | <i>Governmental colonial<br/>budget (%)</i> | <i>Share in</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1849                                              | 0.4                                         | 3               |
| 1861                                              | 0.5                                         | 4               |
| 1872                                              | 0.6                                         | 6               |
| 1882                                              | 1.1                                         | 8               |
| 1890                                              | 1.2                                         | 8               |
| 1900                                              | 1.8                                         | 8               |
| 1910                                              | 5.4                                         | 7               |
| 1920                                              | 6.1                                         | 6               |
| 1930                                              | 12.4                                        | 16              |
| 1940                                              | 11.1                                        | 14              |

Koloniaal/Surinaams Verslag, 1849-1940; Lier, 1977, 212.

TABLE 6. *Paying and non-paying pupils Suriname 1872-1940*

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Paying pupils<br/>at private school/ for<br/>own expense*</i> | <i>Non-paying pupils</i>                            |                                             | <i>Total<br/>pupils</i> |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|             |                                                                  | <i>at public<br/>school for state<br/>expense**</i> | <i>at school<br/>sponsored<br/>by state</i> |                         |
| 1872        | 30                                                               | 28                                                  | 42 %                                        | 5 380                   |
| 1890        | 16                                                               | 32                                                  | 52                                          | 5 684                   |
| 1910        | 13                                                               | 27                                                  | 60                                          | 8 524                   |
| 1930        | 16                                                               | 34                                                  | 50                                          | 17 415                  |
| 1940        | 2                                                                | 32                                                  | 66                                          | 21 278                  |

SOURCE: Koloniaal/Surinaams Verslag, 1872-1940.

\* Paying pupils at public schools.

\*\* Non-paying pupils at private schools.

Obviously, rising costs of education put an end to the discussion on bi-lingual education. However, not for long, because during the second half of the 1930s a new governor started discussions anew — and more heated than ever before, for that matter — by introducing so called “*deffa*-schools” where no Dutch was spoken at all, and which were meant for Asians only. This governor Kielstra (1933-1944) wanted to give Suriname a sound economic basis, and put all his cards on (small scale) agriculture. Furthermore, he found colonial bureaucracy much too centralized, much too expensive and redundant (Ramsoedh, 1990, 52, 112). To Kielstra the Dutch East Indies, where he had started his colonial administrative career, were the living example of how things should be done. Central to his ideas was the introduction of a decentralized administration and relatively autonomous village-communities, like the Javanese *deffas*. Not only would this result in diminishing costs of colonial bureaucracy, but, more importantly, it would strengthen social cohesion among (not between!) ethnic groups in the rural districts, and it would put an end to the labour drain to Paramaribo. In his view, only the creation of village-communities on an ethno-religious basis would result in socio-cultural institutions, which would be a stimulus for permanent settlement.

Kielstra’s project also included an educational reorganization. In his view educational policy did not meet societal needs, because it was not adapted to the existing cultural differences, nor to the differing cultural levels of the ethnic groups. Such adaptation was not only needed, it was also much cheaper. He thought it an illusion to try to do something about school absenteeism in the districts, and he also wanted to prevent district schools from becoming a means to start an existence outside of agriculture. Therefore, the curriculum of these so called *deffa* schools had to be much more limited than the already existing BLO schools — *i.e.* basic reading, writing and arithmetic — and education had to be given in their own language, *i.e.* Javanese. All district schools with a ninety per cent majority of Asian children would be turned into *deffa* schools, which had to be considered as the end station in their educational careers. In 1937 a commission was installed to report on the feasibility of such a reorganization. Meanwhile, on an experimental basis, seven *deffa* schools were opened (Ramsoedh, 1990, 118; *Rapport d’Haens*, 1946, 21).

Of course, Kielstra was well aware that this approach meant a decisive break with the assimilation policy that at least formally had been the rule since the end of slavery. Instead of homogenization and Dutchification, he wanted to strengthen the separate cultural and religious basis of every

different (Asian) group. He did not think this would restrain the process of dutchification, because he saw hardly such a process at work anyway (Ramsoedh, 1990, 112). What is more, inspired by their experience with the East Indies, Kielstra, as well as his superiors in Holland, were convinced that Dutch oriented education would be a source of nationalist resistance (Buddingh, 1995, 251).

Kielstra's policy, combined with his stubborn character and the way he tried to enforce his ideas upon the States brought him a heavy of opposition by the (Dutchified) Creole elite who accused him of the "Indification" of Suriname, and who did everything they could to stop him. However, the support of his superiors, and the extra-ordinary circumstances created by the war gave Kielstra enough legal room to continue his policy (and administration) for some time. On the other hand, the same wartime circumstances severely hindered the execution of his ruralization policy, among which the large scale immigration of Javanese. Furthermore, the 1937 commission which had to look into the possibilities of turning all Asian populated schools into — lesser than BLO — *desa*-schools, finally reported negatively in 1940. According to them, assimilation policy had to be continued, and Dutch was considered the indispensable medium, even at these schools, although they did find it desirable to appoint teachers who were acquainted with the language and customs of the district population (Ramsoedh, 1990, 118). This was against everything Kielstra stood for, but in the light of the growing opposition against his person, he could not ignore this report. As a consequence, no more *desa* schools were founded, and actually nothing was done anymore at all in the field of education.

When finally, the war was ended and, with much pressure by the local elite, Kielstra was removed from his post, a way out of the impasse in Surinamese education was needed. Another commission was appointed, which was headed by W.H.M. d'Haens, General Inspector of Western Education in the Netherlands-Indies.<sup>53</sup> He was instructed to advise on measures that had to result in a complete reorganisation of education in Suriname. He probably was the right man at the right time, as his report, presented in 1947, was "widely distributed in Suriname and hardly met any opposition" (Boheemen, 1951, 78). The colonial administration accepted the report as the basis for reorganisation. Ironically, one year

<sup>53</sup> Missive van den Minister van Overzeesche Gebiedsdeelen van 24 Juni 1946, 7e Afdeling No. 23.

before Suriname's actual autonomy in internal affairs, including education, the d'Haens report prepared the basis for the virtual Dutchification of Surinamese education. Dutch now really became the sole language in education;<sup>54</sup> to every elementary school a kindergarten was added in which children were prepared for education in Dutch; the BLO schools for limited elementary education in the districts were abolished; secondary education was expanded by an upgrading of ULO and MULO schools, as well as by the founding of a general secondary school (AMS), all of which corresponded with educational levels in the Netherlands; and finally a law school was opened — Suriname now needed to train its own officials and lawyers — in which curriculum and staff were mainly Dutch. Finally, it was decided that secondary education should be open to anyone who was sufficiently talented (*Rapport d'Haens*, 1947, 37-39). One of the consequences of these changes was that since that time the number of Surinamese going to the Netherlands for further studies has increased considerably, thereby adding another touch of Dutchification to Suriname's education.<sup>55</sup> However, the latter had a contrary effect too, which will be illustrated hereafter.

#### EDUCATION AND EMANCIPATION

Education has always functioned as a switchboard between (colonial) state and society alike. Of course, the top down approach of the state, in order to keep control on society via education was the most obvious, but that does not mean bottom up movement, or influences did not exist. Since the eighteenth century education has been a means for personal as well as group emancipation. Education opened opportunities for careers which had been unthinkable before, or education became a career in itself. Eventually it even became an important part in the transition of the colonial state.

At the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century educated, free mulattos, or light skinned Creoles as they were later called — particularly those who had received their professional training in Holland — began to rise in the colonial hierarchy. At the beginning of the

<sup>54</sup> Education of children in their own languages was left to private enterprise.

<sup>55</sup> In 1947 a few dozen Surinamese students were studying at Dutch universities; in 1952 their number had increased to just above 100, and in the mid-1950s they already counted some 430 (Oostindie, 1990, 236).

twentieth century the emancipation of the Jews in Europe and diminishing economic opportunities in Suriname made many Surinamese-jewish families decide to try their luck at the other side of the ocean. The positions they left behind in the administration and business life of the colony were soon occupied by mulatto socio-economic climbers. For example, after 1910, the majority in the Colonial States belonged to this group (Ramsoedh, 1990, 120-121).

The darker coloured descendants of the slaves were the next group who used education as a means, and a goal, for emancipation. Actually, the state offered them this opportunity with the introduction of compulsory education and the policy of assimilation. However, it was not possible for them to make a career in bureaucracy or business, as long as, in this colour-sensitive society, the light skinned Creoles were still making their way up in these fields. The only way out, therefore, for this group to make a career, was as a (trained) craftsman, or in education.<sup>56</sup>

A striking example of the latter was the career of J.H.N. Polanen (1882-1939). His father, who was six years old when slavery was abolished, was a tailor. His two elder brothers became a boat builder and a carpenter. Only he was singled out by his father to continue his studies after elementary school, so he went to the rather expensive Hendrikschool (MULO). Thereafter, Polanen successfully passed through public normal school, which trained for teachers of the fourth and third grade. The second and first grade were reserved for the highest educational functions in Paramaribo and could only be obtained by means of private lessons with the best teachers in town, mainly those at the Hendrik school. Around the turn of the century most of the second grade teachers who were born in Suriname were light skinned Creoles,<sup>57</sup> only a few Moravian schools were headed by second grade black Creole teachers.<sup>58</sup> Polanen also succeeded in passing for his second grade and even tried to obtain his first grade by means of a written course from the Netherlands and private lessons with first grade Dutch teachers in Suriname. Until that time only two people had ever obtained a first grade in Suriname, and both had not been black (Polanen, 1982, 31-37).

<sup>56</sup> Between 1900 and 1950 the number of qualified teachers more than quintupled (see table 4), and their complexion gradually became more colourful.

<sup>57</sup> For example J.R. Thomson, headmaster of the public Willemschool, member of the Colonial States, and the author of a history of education in Suriname.

<sup>58</sup> For example two brothers Themen, one of whom was the author of a history of Moravian education.

After having been rejected twice times on disputable grounds, Polanen appeared before the commission of examination for a third time in 1912. After hours of deliberations the commission still could not make up its mind whether Polanen should fail or pass. Then, so it is said, a Dutch member, Van 't Hogerhuis, took the word. He stated that everyone knew the candidate was excellent, but the simple fact that he was a Negro made them raise all kinds of arguments against him. Van 't Hogerhuis made it perfectly clear that he was going to vote in favour of Polanen, and eventually the majority in the commission followed him. An enormous crowd of black people then took Polanen on their shoulders to the street where he lived, and that night the — mainly black Creole — military band played in front of his house, and the crowd had a party (Polanen, 1982, 37-38).

Simultaneous with their increasing participation in education, feelings of dissatisfaction among this group of dark skinned Creoles came about with the colonial policy of cultural assimilation. Particularly Creoles had been subject of this policy, but since the (late) 1930s signs could be observed of developing cultural, and even political emancipation. However, it was still limited to the Creole population only. The most typical example of this development was J.G.A. ("Papa") Koenders (1886-1957), who became one of the most outspoken adversaries of Dutch education in Suriname.

Ironically, but maybe exemplary, Koenders had been a member of the commission in 1920 who advised against education in Asian languages. That commission had even come to the conclusion that if the Asian population were to be transformed in descent citizens, they had to be educated that way and "gradually have to learn western customs" (*Rapport*, 1920, 35). During that time Koenders was headmaster of the elementary school at Alkmaar in the district of Commewijne, which had a large Asian population. It was there that he gradually realised that he was

a mentally half mutilated, who had to give mental guidance; a teacher who had been trained in subjects which were from a to z strange to him, administered [...] in a strange language, called to give others mental maltreatment, which had [also] been his own.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Doelwijt, 1977, 86 [my translation]. Speaking of his own youth in the 1890s, Koenders even stated that "*biegieskoro* [elementary school] has been for me, the Negro, the beginning of mental murder" (in Doelwijt, 1977, 83).

After his retirement in 1936 he started to promote Sranan Tongo, which, until then, had been largely a spoken language only.

Koenders published a spelling guide for Sranan Tongo (*"Fo memre wie afo"*, 1943), he edited a publication of sixty popular songs in Sranan, and in 1946 he started a cultural monthly magazine (*"Foetoeboi"*), also in Sranan, which lasted for ten years. Koenders has had an enormous impact on a growing number of young, black intellectuals who eventually founded an association for cultural awakening called *"Wi Egi Sani"* (Our Own Thing/s). Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, members of this association became influential politicians in Suriname.<sup>60</sup> But then Suriname's relation with the Netherlands had changed.

Koenders may have been the best known example of emancipation via colonial education, he was definitely not the only one. During the early 1930s the colonial state was confronted with a — still embryonic — labour movement which became a serious threat to colonial law and order. This movement was led by (light skinned and black!) Creoles only, and they had all been educated at one of the (M)ULO schools in Paramaribo.<sup>61</sup> It would be exaggerated to describe these schools as revolutionary training grounds, but it is likely that there the foundation was laid for their cultural and political awakening, be it only in a negative way, as in Koenders' case. Illustrative of the atmosphere was a gathering of the Suriname Popular Alliance (Surinaamsche Volksbond, svb) in 1931 where one of the leaders, Marinus Lepelblad proposed to speak in Sranan Tongo instead of Dutch. This was welcomed enthusiastically by the approximately one thousand people attending the meeting. Clear proof that this movement was more than only a cultural threat to the colonial

<sup>60</sup> Ironically this Creole-nationalist association was founded by Surinamese students in Amsterdam (1950), not in Paramaribo. This, of course, has happened with many Third World nationalist movements, whose intellectual leadership was obliged to go to the colonial "mother country" for their academic training. There they often quickly "radicalised". Among the black, nationalist students in the Netherlands were famous cultural activists and later members of the Surinamese government like Eddy Bruma, Jules Sedney, Hein Eersel and Eugène Gessel. The latter two had been teachers at elementary schools in Suriname before taking up an academic study in the Netherlands (See Oostindie en Maduro, 1986, 80-84).

<sup>61</sup> For example, the famous Anton de Kom (1898-1945), author of *"We slaves from Suriname"* who was expelled to the Netherlands and died in a German concentration camp, had been to the Roman Catholic Paulus school; Otto Huiswoud (1893- ?), later a member of the Russian Comintern, also had attended a Roman Catholic ULO school, as did Louis Doedel (1905-1980); J.J. Esajas (1909-1972) probably went to a Moravian ULO school, and Marinus Lepelblad (1903- ?) did not finish his MULO education, because eventually he could not afford it.

*status quo* were the words of another labour leader, Heinrich Liesdek, when he stated that whites were always favoured in the colony, whereas "Suriname is for the Surinamese" (Scholtens, 1986, 62-63).

The latter statement was later used by a group of Surinamese teachers and government officials who were bitterly opposed against Governor Kielstra. In 1943 they founded the "Union Suriname", which demanded more autonomy for Suriname's own affairs, under the explosive political slogan "Boss in our own home". This movement was led for some years by J(ohan) H.E. Ferrier, a former Creole teacher, who in 1950 defended his PhD-thesis in Amsterdam, titled "Suriname society as a social-pedagogical task". In 1975 he became the first president of the independent Republic of Suriname. In the 1940s, however, when Roman Catholics and Moravians — among whom also an extra ordinary proportion of Creole teachers — both founded political parties<sup>62</sup> most members of Union Suriname went over to one these two Creole dominated parties.

When in 1949 the first general elections were held for the States of Suriname the Asian population had only recently started their process of emancipation.<sup>63</sup> This was clearly illustrated by the poll differences between the Asian dominated district of Commewijne (35%) and the almost completely Creole town of Paramaribo (66%).<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, long before that moment, Asians too had used public education as a means to make clear that they could not be ignored anymore. The most outstanding example of this development was the first Hindostani who took the first-grade teachers exam (1922), C.R. Biswamitre (1897-?). He was probably also the first of his group who went to the Netherlands for further education, and after that he became the first Hindostani member of the Colonial States.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, he was the co-founder and chairman

<sup>62</sup> Roman Catholic was the Progressive Surinamese Popular Party (psv), Moravian was the National Party of Suriname (nps).

<sup>63</sup> Although the first political party ever founded in Suriname was the Muslim Party (mp) in 1946 (a few months before psv and nps). This party advocated general suffrage and particularly represented the interests of Hindostani and Javanese muslims. In 1949 they merged with the Hindostani-Javanese Political Party and the Hindu Party Suriname into the United Hindostani Party (*Verenigde Hindoestaanse Partij*, vhp).

<sup>64</sup> At the first general elections in 1949 the registered electorate counted 96 466 persons; at the last elections based on census suffrage in 1948 a mere 3 261 persons were entitled to vote (Source: Surinaams Verslag, 1950).

<sup>65</sup> In 1929 Biswamitre went to the Netherlands to do teachers course on political history. When he returned the next year he was elected for the States for the first time. He stayed a member of that political body off and on between 1930 and 1969 for eighteen years in total (Oostindie en Maduro, 1986, 36-37). Biswamitre's career was not exemplary for the

in 1924 of a Hindostani association called "*Nawa Yuga Oeday*" (Beginning of a New Era), which promoted the social interests of the Hindostani population (Oostindie en Maduro, 1986, 36; Lier, 1977, 164). In 1946 he even became the founder of the Asian pendant of the Union Suriname, the Hindostani-Javanese Central Council, which later joined the vhp.

The oldest, and most important association of Asians however, was the Suriname Immigrants Association (Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging, siv), which was founded on the initiative of the colonial official who was responsible for the immigration and well being of the British Indians in Suriname. Although it was meant to serve both Javanese and Hindostani immigrants, the siv was soon turned into an exclusively Hindostani association.

Its goal was to promote the moral, intellectual and material interests of the British Indian population in Suriname [...] In 1922, the name of the siv was changed in "*Bharat Uday*" (Rising Hindustan) to express the growing ethnic consciousness of the Indians. The term "immigrants" with its connotation of "outsider", was rejected [Hoefte, 1987, 386].

It was this same association that had sent petition after petition to the colonial authorities and the Inspector of Education, asking for public (*i.e.* non denominational) district schools, which were accompanied by lists of names of potential pupils. And because of this "serious and in different ways very clearly uttered wish of large groups of British Indians for neutral education" the authorities gave in, and opened one district school after the other.<sup>66</sup> This recognition of their refusal to undergo any christian influence — let alone christianization — actually meant a severe undermining of the state's assimilation policy. Actually, every important Asian organization in Suriname during that time had — almost by definition — this non assimilating, not to say separatist effect. Around 1930 four important religious organizations were founded by Hindostani, two Hindu, Sanatan Dharm (orthodox) and Arya Dewaker (liberal), and two muslim, the Suriname Islamic Association (liberal) and Suri-

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Asian population, at least not in that period. Actually it resembled more the careers of Creole teachers, not in the least because he was a christianized Hindostani, which was very exceptional.

<sup>66</sup> Koloniaal Verslag, 1928.

name Muslim Association/Sunnat-ul-Jama'at (orthodox).<sup>67</sup> All of these religious associations eventually laid an organizational basis for the political parties which emerged at the end of the 1940s, when finally general suffrage was introduced.

All in all, education has played a prominent part in the cultural, economic and eventually political emancipation of different groups in Surinamese society. It was a means as well as a goal for upward mobility, and unintentionally, it created anti-colonial, or at least anti-assimilationist leadership.

### CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century bureaucrats in Suriname gradually were substituted for plantocrats as a consequence of the increasing grip the Dutch state tried to obtain on its West Indian colonies. This resulted in the emergence of an eventually full fledged colonial state, which, however, by definition, could never become more than a tropical extension of the Dutch state. Since that time the colonial state expanded quantitatively as well as qualitatively, and the endemic use of violence as the only means of control was gradually replaced by other, more sophisticated instruments. For example, the (slow) disappearance of brute and legalized violence was accompanied by an increase of state officials — including a police force — and, more importantly, by the large-scale introduction of education (and mission) for the black population. Particularly the start of a massive missionary campaign since the end of the 1840s among the slaves, and the introduction of general compulsory education at the end of the 1870s were the most obvious measures to control and discipline the (ex-) slaves.

Education as a means of control was used in several ways. Actually, it turned out to be the ultimate instrument for a colonial divide-and-rule policy: sponsored mobility for some, and, consequently, sponsored immobility for the majority. Education divided Surinamese society in several ways. It was used to keep the different ethnic groups apart from each

<sup>67</sup> Bruyning & Voorhoeve, 1977, 37, 408, 542. Lier (1977, 164) mentions the founding of a *Khalifat Anjuman* in 1931, and in 1933 the Indonesian Islam Organization (*Perkumpulan Islam Indonesia*, PII) was founded, which was religious as well as nationalistic, *i.e.* aimed at Indonesia (Hoeft, 1987, 392).

other. Different school languages were used in that respect, as well as a distinction in educational levels between Creole dominated schools in town, Asian dominated district schools, and lowest level schools for the bush population in the interior parts of the country. Moreover, a distinction was maintained between schools for paying pupils, mainly attended by whites and light skinned Creoles, and schools for non-paying pupils for the darker colour gradations. Furthermore, most education for the common people was left, by the colonial state, to denominational schools. However, keeping every group apart from each other was not enough guarantee to maintain the colonial *status quo*. There had to be a safety valve to keep ethnic and social tensions under control. And particularly so, as the economy was gradually transforming from a one-sided plantation economy into a much more complex economy where small-scale agriculture and mining industry became more successful economic sectors.

Sponsored mobility proved to be the answer. The economy needed more talent, and more Surinamese role models "at the top" could be the right instrument to temper socio-economic frustrations. Since the end of the eighteenth century mulatto's or light skinned creoles had been the first to grab the educational opportunities offered to them in this respect. As a result the formerly white elite gradually became more 'colourful'. After the introduction of compulsory primary education, and particularly when more opportunities for secondary education were created at the beginning of the twentieth century some talented pupils, even those without money and/or with the "wrong" skin colour, were — often reluctantly — sponsored by the colonial state (or the church) to make an educational career. This was not an easy road to go, as some individual examples like headmaster Polanen illustrated. Nevertheless, people like Polanen turned out to be the pioneers of a beginning emancipation of dark skinned creoles via education. This implies that, in the long run, sponsored mobility for some individuals could result in upward mobility for larger groups.

Sponsored mobility via education in a colonial context opened up new opportunities for talented people who had been prospectless before, and it even broke through the most rigid colour lines in society. Nevertheless, a lot of talent was probably still wasted. Despite the transformation of this plantation economy, and the resulting expansion in education, educational specialization, particularly in agriculture and in technology, hardly developed at all. Sponsored mobility was never directed at *all*

talented people. Despite the ideals of civilizing people and bringing colonies to maturity which were so characteristic of late-colonialism, colonies still were, and were meant to stay tropical extensions of the European mother countries, never intended to become *really* mature and independent. Moreover, in the case of Suriname, the Dutch government was hardly interested in its colony (anymore). The Dutch East Indies were incomparably more profitable, whereas the colonial budget of Suriname was eternally out of balance. As a result, colonial policy with regard to Suriname never contained any long term dimensions, and was never consistent. Actually, spending restraints were the only constant element.

One of the most obvious aspects of this lack of consistency was the so called general assimilation policy, which turned out to be directed at the creole population only, and within this group only at those who made use of, or were subject to colonial sponsored mobility. No sponsored mobility without Dutchification, that was the price that had to be paid if one had the ambition to make a career in colonial society. The overall majority of the population, however, could hardly be called "assimilated", which was for the first time openly admitted by Governor Kielstra. They spoke (some) Dutch, next to at least one other language, they had learned (some) historical and geographical data about "our country" (*i.e.* Holland) and hardly anything about Suriname, and a large number had become christians, however, without dropping their former (*winti*-) religion.

The Hindostani and Javanese on the other hand, had been hardly subject to this assimilation via education at all. Until the mid twentieth century part of their education had not even been in Dutch and this education was of a very limited extent, meant to keep them in the rural, agricultural areas and away from (Creole) town. And if Kielstra had had his way, particularly the Javanese would have been set apart even more. Therefore, until the mid-twentieth century, education, which could have been the most important integrating factor in this pluriform society, was only used by the colonial state to stay in control by keeping the different ethnic groups apart. The few instances education was "colour blind", it was aimed at assimilation, meaning Dutchification, which hardly contributed to the emergence of some sense of nationhood either.

However, the colonial policy of sponsored mobility turned out to have another side too. Obviously, it was meant to provide upward mobility via education for a few ambitious, but socially non-privileged people, in

order to maintain the colonial *status quo*. Meanwhile, however, it also stimulated unintentionally anti-colonial sentiments and activities. As a consequence of sponsoring some, other non-privileged were frustrated in their ambitions. Moreover, education offered tools to analyze and criticize the colonial situation, and not everybody was willing (anymore) to pay the price of Dutchification. Therefore, education has also played a part in the emergence of cultural and political nationalistic sentiments, labour leadership, and eventually the formation of political parties. This implies that education not only was a state supervised instrument to keep colonial society in control, but it also functioned as an instrument of opposition groups in society which tried to obtain control over the (colonial) state, and to change the colonial *status quo*. Other studies are required to measure the success of this opposition, but obviously it is not hard to tell that it did not overcome one fundamental aspect of colonial sponsored mobility: ethnic division. However, it triggered at least feelings of nation within the most important ethnic groups.

Therefore, in terms of mediation, education proved to be the ultimate mediating institution. In this situation of, at the same time state — as well as society formation, education translated — even literally the interests of the colonial state, and it also gave words and career opportunities to the oppositional leaders it “produced”. In this process society and the state came closer to- and transformed each other. The state eventually became more autonomous from the colonizing power and undoubtedly more ‘colourful’. At the same time the state increasingly became the ultimate goal as well as the driving force of socio-ethnic competition, where it had always been a white monopoly which kept the socio-ethnic segments divided from each other. Anti-colonial sentiments, unintendedly stimulated by colonial education, may have shaped some contours of a Suriname nation. However, in 1950, supra-ethnic nationhood still seemed to be far away.

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