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# NIEUWE WEST-INDISCHE GIDS

onder redactie van

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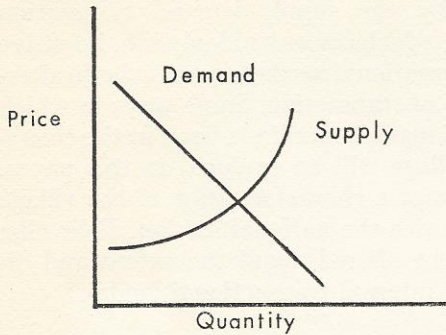
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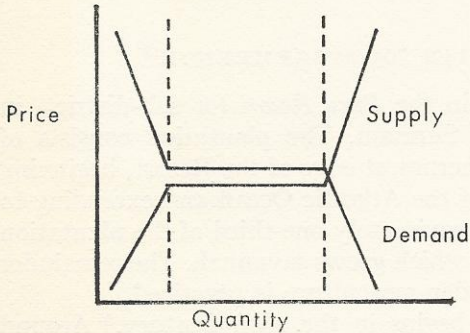
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Anthropologists have long noted the special problems which arise from the attempt to apply 'Western' economic theory to technologically simple economies. Though part of the confusion in this matter has arisen from the fact that Western economic theory has itself been changing – LECLAIR's revisions make obsolete the major thrust of POLANYI's critiques<sup>1</sup> – a certain middle ground has been reached on which interpretations can be built. According to this synthesis as offered in the writings of FIRTH, SALISBURY, and NASH among others,<sup>2</sup> the law of supply and demand can be applied to many transaction patterns in small, partially isolated, and inward-oriented village economies. Other sets of transactions, on the other hand, do not seem interpretable by this ordinary device, though we may perhaps assume that at some theoretical extremes of production there would be either a cut-off of supply to even the nearest kinsman or bond friend, or so much of the good in question that no transaction would be required. Within these extremes, however, there appears to be a flat spot on the supply and demand curves. The economist might graph such a phenomenon as follows:



Supply-demand schedule under market conditions.



Supply-demand schedule often attributed to primitive or peasant economies.

As can be readily seen, the area within the dotted lines calls for special analysis. Such analysis has nearly always been forthcoming from anthropologists. FIRTH in his *Primitive Polynesian Economy* argues that the "basic aspects of Tikopia economy do correspond to the data of ordinary economic analysis."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, "There are to some extent closed circuits of exchange by a traditionally dictated scheme of values in which certain types of commodity are regarded as appropriate to specific social situations."<sup>4</sup> Reciprocal labor exchanges,<sup>5</sup> obligations to fellow clansmen,<sup>6</sup> and expenditures of 'capital' for ceremonial goods<sup>7</sup> are examples of transactions which occur along this apparently flat segment of the economist's supply and demand schedule. Such examples imply that 'circuits' of goods and services can be discovered in a primitive or peasant economy (perhaps in our own as well), and that a 'mode of transaction' can be derived for each.

Such an interpretation may be adequate if the situation is static. But since national markets of modern economies are almost

exclusively characterized by the supply-demand transaction pattern, the village economy which comes suddenly into intensive contact with national or international markets may undergo alterations of its internal modes of transaction. Some ways in which the influence of the external market manifests itself in the economy of a Surinam Creole village will be explored in this paper. First it is necessary to attempt a characterization of the village circuits and their interplay with the national market. Following this some speculations will be offered about the extent and direction of recent changes in internal transactional modes.

#### I. THE BERLIJN 'DORPSGEMEENTE'<sup>8</sup>

Berlijn village is located in the *Para Resort* (or sub-district) in the East-West center of Surinam. The plantation consists of 8400 hectares on the southernmost edge of the Resort, beginning at the line 52 km south of the Atlantic Ocean and extending to the 63 km line south. Approximately one-third of the plantation land is fine white sand on which grows savannah. The remainder is hilly jungle where swidden agriculture is practiced.

The history of Berlijn begins in the 18th Century.<sup>9</sup> Around 1760 a number of lots along the upper Para River were ceded with the intention of fostering lumber exploitation. On February 25, 1763 1,000 acres were ceded to JOHAN GODLIEB VAN BORRIUS, captain-lieutenant serving the Directors of the Surinam Society. At about this time Bush Negroes were bringing many of the plantations closest to the jungle under almost continual attack in their war against the colonial government.<sup>10</sup> Owing to its position on the edge of the jungle Berlijn became a military post. (The cannon barrels still lie to the side of the road at the eastern end of the village.)

In 1821 Berlijn was bought by Mr. JAMES BALFOUR, owner of the sugar plantation Waterloo in the district of Nickerie, with the intention of moving the slaves from Berlijn to Waterloo. When the slaves, who had already been transported to Paramaribo, learned that they were bound to be shipped to Nickerie, they revolted and fled back to Berlijn. Owing to a certain grudge by the government officials in Paramaribo against the English colonists in Nickerie, the slaves were allowed to stay at Berlijn.

With the establishment of the peace with the last of the warring Bush Negro tribes in 1825, the safety of the outlying plantations was guaranteed. There followed a period of expansion on the lumber plantations. Such

1830	3500 acres	288 slaves
1840	6800 acres	315 slaves
1847	6800 acres	370 slaves
1861	21421 acres	382 slaves

expansion required the continual acquisition of new land so that in various almanacs the following changes in the size of Berlijn can be traced:

In 1863 the slaves of Surinam were emancipated. According to the emancipation plan former slaves were allowed to own plantation land following a ten-year apprenticeship period. For some reason the families at Berlijn did not accept the option of buying the plantation and continued to live at Berlijn without ever making the land their own property. Because the lumber plantation had been set up so that it demanded that the slaves provide their own food through farming, fishing, and hunting, the families which stayed after emancipation were at no great loss to support themselves.<sup>11</sup>

During the next 70 years first Hindustani and then Javanese contract laborers were brought to Surinam. These wet rice cultivators preferred to settle along the alluvial plains of the coast where they could construct irrigation ditches for rice paddies and market their products more easily than could the farmers of the more isolated Para area. For this reason the Para today remains an exclusively Creole area.<sup>12</sup>

In 1937 Berlijn was declared a 'dorpsgemeente' or village commune.<sup>13</sup> This declaration meant the establishment of a token government within the former plantation and the defining of tax requirements and authority relations between the national government and the Berlijn 'bestuur'. According to the final agreement Berlijners signed a 75-year lease on an area of 8400 hectares for which they are required to pay a total of Sf. 52 per year (\$ 30). Land for farming is free to Berlijners without further payment though there is an additional bestuur tax on lumber sales.

During the Second World War American troops were landed just 8 km from Berlijn at *Zanderij* to construct and defend an airstrip which has since become Surinam's international airport. Three men from Berlijn worked in this project for two years; otherwise there has been evidently little contact by Berlijners with markets outside the village. This was in large measure owing to their great distance from Paramaribo: a week-long journey down the river by canoe, or a full day's journey by train. The railroad tracks are an hour's walk over rugged hilly jungle, however, and the train has never run more often than twice a week.

In 1957 a dirt road was constructed between Berlijn and the airport at *Zanderij*. From *Zanderij* there is a paved road to Paramaribo. There is now a daily bus service linking the village with the city; the trip to town is about 1½ hours one way.

## II. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

A characterization of the Berlijn economy requires some basic information on the kinds of goods which are produced and services which are rendered by the participants. The major modes of production involve local exploitation of *dorpsgemeente* land and the offering of labor for wages outside the village.

A major source of income and subsistence is derived from agriculture. All 46 permanent households in the village cultivate by 'slash-and-burn' methods. Land is to be had in abundance, possibly only one-third of the total area of the *dorpsgemeente* ever being cleared for planting. Farming capital is minimal, consisting mainly of an axe, a hoe, and a digging stick. The returns from farming are utilized in two ways. Some crops are primarily for local consumption, others for sale at the marketplace in Paramaribo. Table I indicates which crops move into the external market and which do not.

TABLE I - USES OF CROPS

<i>Subsistence</i>	<i>Cash</i>	<i>Occasional</i>
taro	taro	okra
sweet kassava	ginger	poka (type of yam)
bitter kassava	pineapple	pineapple
plantain	napi (type of yam)	sugar cane
banana	banana	potato
string beans		sweet potato
rice		corn
		yam
		abongra (sesame)

'Occasional' crops are those which are produced in small quantities and which do not seem to be exchanged in regular patterns. Infrequently they will be sold at the market, but usually they are consumed as trimmings on a daily meal. It will be noted that some crops fall into both the subsistence and cash categories. This reflects partly their different uses at different times of year and partly that they may be consumed or sold or both at certain times of year. Taro for example is basically a subsistence crop except during the heavy harvesting months of September and October when large quantities are taken to market as well. Bananas are often sold in January and February to help meet

an annual rice and taro shortage. It should be kept in mind, however, that some crops are almost exclusively subsistence (e.g. rice, plantain, kassava), whereas others are grown primarily for sale at the market (e.g. ginger, pineapple, napi). Kassava presents a special problem to the Berlijn farmer. There is an attractive market price for bread from this root, yet the planting risks are great owing to the ever-present danger of pre-harvest annihilation of the crop by parasol or leaf-chopping ants. A few of the wealthier households at Berlijn have attempted to control this pest by the use of a rather expensive powder poison, but even so, kassava crops are frequently destroyed. Villagers believe that the only effective way to control the ants is to plant on higher ground a few hundred meters from the creek bed and to limit the kassava crop to a few plants so as not to attract the ants from their jungle nests. The result of course is that kassava remains a subsistence crop except for a very occasional shipment of a few loaves of bread to the city.

In addition to agriculture, some Berlijners fish in the Para Creek. During the rainy season, when the river is high, only seven households have persons maintaining traps. Fish from these traps are never sold outside the village. For a few days in the middle of the dry season, however, fishing becomes a major subsistence activity for everyone. As the river dries up, shallow pools are left in the sandy bed. Fish are drawn from these pools in large baskets called *kurukuru*. People follow the river bed for great distances, removing fish from the pools. Fish from these pools circulate only in the village.

When the dry season is in full swing, a few able men take up hunting seriously. Hunting at Berlijn seems to be almost a leisurely pastime except during the months at the height of the dry season when many men hunt almost nightly. Game from Berlijn is never sold at the marketplace in Paramaribo.

In addition to the above activities, three or four men at Berlijn manufacture charcoal. The oven, or *krofaya*, is allowed to smolder for about a week after which it is dismantled and the charred logs removed and stuffed into gunny sacks. Charcoal is sold in town and within the village.

A further source of income is local labor. Wage labor inside Berlijn accounts for part of the income of only one person besides the school teacher who comes from the city and is paid by the national government. In addition to the teacher only one real specialist is present in the village. This is the woodworker, who



makes occasional dish cabinets, wooden tombstones, and axe handles. His total income for these pursuits during my 11-week stay at the village was enough to purchase two chickens. Casual wage employment inside the village is obtained during August and September when six families from the city come to live in vacation homes which they have constructed at Berlijn, and for which they pay an annual rent to the village bestuur.

The major source of income from labour, however, and by far the major source of income from the external market, is regular work for the national government. Sixteen of the 46 households at Berlijn have at least one person employed outside the village. One household has two. (The highest paid government worker, not included in the count, is the school teacher.) One man works as a supply hand at a nearby Dutch army training camp, another is a railroad repairman. Three types of work occupy the remaining fourteen laborers: road repair (8), park attending (4), and foreman of repair gang (2).

Road repair work may take a man as many as 50 km from home during the day, but road workers always leave Berlijn at 6:30 a.m. and return at 4:00 p.m. or slightly earlier. Two of the workers are permanently assigned to the two-kilometer segment of road connecting Berlijn with the road to Zanderij. Their daily labor contribution amounts to walking along this road and filling in holes and buttressing low areas with log retainers during the rainy season. This work takes no more than about three to four hours per day, and no supervision is required. Usually the men walk along the road making the necessary repairs and continue to their swiddens which are just beyond the connection with the Zanderij road.

Park attendants work at one of Surinam's amusement parks, Kola Creek (so named because the water resembles Coca Cola in appearance). Their main job is to rake leaves in the morning before the crowds begin to arrive, and to pick up carelessly discarded papers and other trash left around by the first swimmers and picnickers. The work crews leave Kola Creek at 2:00 p.m. and arrive back at Zanderij at 2:30. There they must wait for an hour until the Volkswagen bus comes with the road workers. The hour stopover is passed drinking beer and soft drinks at a Chinese store a few hundred feet from the cross-roads. It appears that a fairly large share of each week's wages is deposited in this store. Road gang foremen go with the road workers to other parts of the Para Resort, but return with the Berlijn road workers in the 4:00 bus.

Everyone works six days each week. Park and road workers are paid f 4,20 per day (\$ 2.35). Foremen make f 4,50 or f 4,80 depending on seniority (all wages are for 1965). A typical household spends most of its wage money for food. Rice and meat are purchased during the dry season, meat during the rainy season. Wages are also used to buy household items such as baskets utensils, and furniture. Sometimes food is traded with Carib Indians for pottery or baskets, but usually cash is required for such purchases.

A final source of wealth for the entire village, though primarily for the three or four wealthiest households, is the *eskursie*, or subscription dance. *Eskursies* are set up by entrepreneurs in Paramaribo, usually Hindustani bus drivers. Arrangements are made with one of the Berlijn households which has cash to invest in the enterprise. Tickets are printed and advertising time is purchased on the radio stations. A band is hired; beer, soft drinks, *nasi-goreng* (Javanese fried rice), and other special foods are prepared in large quantities and brought from the city just before the arrival of the busloads of people who have purchased tickets. The *eskursie* begins at about 11:00 a.m. immediately after church on Sunday, and lasts until dusk at 6:00 pm. or so. As many as 200 people may attend, but their presence alone does not insure a profit for the sponsoring household. Substantial amounts of food and drink must also be purchased by the city people. Some city families bring their own food, in anticipation of the high prices of the *eskursie* concessions. Many families seem to come only to get away from the city and to buy agricultural products at below-market prices, not indulging themselves at the *eskursie* proper.

Other than the economic benefits or losses to the sponsoring household, the *eskursie* seems to have a beneficial effect on the Berlijn economy. City families frequently buy large amounts of ginger, napi, and taro when in season. An *eskursie* Sunday can be detected by the near lack of attendance at church, for everyone is busy setting up stands in front of his house with products to sell to the excursioning city-folk.

In addition to all previously noted undertakings, one man runs a small general store at Berlijn from which he derives a relatively large income through the sale of food and soft drinks.

## III. ECONOMIC CIRCUITS AT BERLIJN

The brief survey presented above gives an immediate view of the discontinuities between intra-village and inter-village economic circuits. Rice, fish, and game do not circulate outside the community (except when rice must be purchased from the market); certain crops, charcoal, eskursie tickets, and labor services do. Yet there is not a simple 'break' between the two circuits, for *within* the village at least three circuits are operating.

The smallest of these circuits is the household. A Berlijn household is not definable in terms of kinship or location alone. It may consist of a strict nuclear family, all members of which occupy an identical house structure. It may, however, include aged parents of husband or wife or both, children by previous cohabitation of either party, brothers and sisters of husband and wife, children of deceased brothers and sisters, grandchildren of brothers and sisters of husband and wife, etc. perhaps *ad infinitum*. It does not always have a husband and wife. The household may also be extended over an apparently unlimited number of house structures some at opposite ends of the village, others just next door to each other. The household was conveniently defined in the field by noting which persons took the evening meal together. These same persons work a swidden in common. Later reference to field notes indicates that this same group of people circulate all or nearly all goods and services among one another without operation of a price mechanism (though, as mentioned above, there may be theoretical supply limits at which this mode would break down). Intra-household transactions may be said to take place along lines of social obligation which function as a substitute for the market.

Larger than the single household is an economic circuit comprising clusters or 'sets' of households. The presence of these sets was not fully appreciated until after leaving the field, and it is difficult to ascertain how member households are recruited. There are currently three of these sets functioning at Berlijn. Each has one member of the village bestuur, a position which leads to some influence over government welfare, and may help to account for them. (There are five positions on the bestuur; two are currently vacant.) All members are near kinsmen of these notables, though no single principle of consanguinity or affinity seems to determine membership as the list below indicates.

TABLE II - COMPOSITION OF 'SETS'

## A.

- 1) 50-year-old man plus his 78-year-old mother (man is bestuur member)
- 2) His daughter and her husband
- 3) Second daughter and her husband
- 4) Third daughter and her husband
- 5) Eight children of his father's brother's sister, living as one household under headship of oldest child, a girl of 18.

## B.

- 1) 66-year-old man, his wife, and three grandchildren whose parents recently died (man is bestuur member)
- 2) A wife's father's brother who lives alone
- 3) A wife's father's brother and his 33-year-old daughter with her eight children
- 4) A wife's sister and her husband
- 5) A 'cousin' (neef) whose exact relationship I did not learn.

## C.

- 1) 53-year-old man, his wife, and five children (man is bestuur member)
- 2) A son of a deceased sister plus children
- 3) Another son of same deceased sister plus wife and children
- 4) Another son of same deceased sister plus wife and children
- 5) Another son of same deceased sister plus wife and children
- 6) 78-year-old mother of man in household 1) plus her sister and sister's son
- 7) A man of undetermined relationship plus his wife
- 8) Mother of the man in household 7) who lives with and cooks for his three children by a woman previous to his present wife
- 9) A sister's son who lives alone and is mentally feeble.

No generic term for these sets appears to exist, but a number of transactional data confirm their presence. Specifically, subsistence and occasional crops, fish during the rainy season when they are a scarce commodity, game, charcoal from the *krofaya*, and sometimes cash crops pass among these households along lines similar to those within households. Subsistence goods are freely given, without specification of return, and redistribution occurs with the greater portion of goods passing from wealthier (especially bestuur) households to poorer (especially aged) households. Goods purchased at the city with cash, or at the general store, such as soft drinks, beer, kitchen utensils, or more expensive goods such as radios, clothing, or furniture, do not circulate in the sets, though they could be theoretically purchased for cash.

Strikingly, however, reciprocal labor arrangements do not obtain within the sets. Only harvesting time brings together different households in a set, but such labor cooperation lasts for just a few days each year. Other kinds of labor within the village such as house construction, swidden tending, even clearing of the jungle for planting, require indemnification through payment in cash or subsistence goods, or both, apparently at the discretion of the debtor.

There is yet another economic circuit at Berlijn. This is the circuit which includes all members of the dorpsgemeente – exclusive of the government schoolteacher, vacationers, and visiting anthropologists that is. Modes of transaction in this widest intravillage circuit are much more blurred than in either of the other two. With respect to goods, both supply-demand and channels of social obligation are in effect. Fish in the dry season are for the taking; no one makes the ‘rational’ decision to carry them off to market for his own gain. Eskursie tickets are free to all members of the dorpsgemeente. Iguana eggs, a delicacy in August when the savannahs are filled with a ‘never-ending’ supply, are distributed to everyone by their gatherers. A *ferjari-hoso*, or birthday party, is open to all residents of the dorpsgemeente, and even the school teacher and vacationers might be invited. But here the channels of social obligation dry up. Cash and subsistence crops, and charcoal from the *krofaya* are sold for immediate or promised indemnification to all dorpsgemeente members outside one’s own household or set.

Labor, if it occurs, requires pay at a scale roughly comparable to that of the government road jobs. Communal labor obligations, however, are written into the dorpsgemeente charter, or *Erfpacht*. Theoretically one member of the bestuur, the *Commissaris Onderhoud*, organizes semi-annual work parties to dig the drainage ditches around the village; and various persons are appointed more or less at random to keep the medical clinic building in repair (for the monthly visits of a government doctor). These obligations are rarely fulfilled today.

#### IV. MONETIZATION

An important corollary of the distinction between supply-demand and social obligational modes of transaction is that monetization tends to be found with the former. The Berlijn data bear this

corollary out. External market transactions are all accomplished with cash, those all-village transactions which follow supply-demand modes, and the all-village labor circuit – excepting communal labor – are almost monetized. Subsistence crops might be acceptable as payment in the all-village labor circuit, but were not observed in such a capacity during eleven weeks of field work. Casual labor within the sets may be remunerated with cash, but observations indicate that food is the preferred form of payment in this circuit.

TABLE III – BERLIJN VILLAGE ECONOMY

<i>Circuit</i>	<i>Goods</i>	<i>Transaction Mode</i>		<i>Services</i>
National Market	cash crops charcoal eskursies	SD*	SD*	wage labor
All-village	cash crops subsistence crops charcoal	SD*	SD*	wage labor
	eskursie tickets <i>ferjari-hoso</i> iguana eggs fish (dry season)	CSO	(CSO	communal labor)
Sets	subsistence and occasional crops charcoal fish (rainy season) game	CSO	SD**	casual labor payment may be in kind
Household	all or nearly all	CSO	CSO	all or nearly all

- SD denotes 'supply and demand'
- CSO denotes 'channels of social obligation'
- \* denotes 'monetized'
- \*\* denotes 'partially monetized'
- () denotes 'services not currently rendered'
- divides the two transactional modes

A simplified diagram of the Berlijn village economy is given in Table III. A convenient way to check this diagram is to take

any good and use the classifications to predict its economic circuit behavior. Rice, for example, does not move out of the village (though it is purchased during a few lean months). In the whole village circuit it is bought and sold; but in the set circuit it passes without a price, and within the household it also circulates along the flat portion of the supply-demand schedule. Charcoal is exchanged on a supply-demand basis in the external market and within the whole village circuit; it is freely given within one's set, and of course, within one's household.

Labor obligations present a more difficult problem and indicate a need for some additional speculations. As has been noted, labor is sold outside the village for wages. Within the household there are no formal prices for labor. But both the all-village circuit and the set circuit resemble the outside market in their transactional modes for labor. Furthermore there are unmet communal labor obligations and only partial monetization of the labor sector of the set circuit. What might these blemishes on our model indicate?

#### V. ECONOMIC CHANGE

The construction of a road to Berlijn in 1957 greatly intensified the villagers' contact with outside, supply-demand oriented markets. Furthermore, it has increased the demand schedules within the village enormously. Many persons attested to their recent ability, through wage labor primarily, to purchase radios, furniture, bicycles, plastic toys for their children, etc. A likely interpretation of the half-monetization of the set labor circuit, then, would be to view it as a recent development. But what about the mode of transaction in this circuit? An example may provide the answer.

A man building a house could not get help from his set-mates to saw two large beams. He finally persuaded a man not in his set to help him for about one hour. Later in the same day an argument ensued over whether the helper should receive cash payment. No payment was given and the helper refused to return. When asked, the contractor replied that people in the village never used to ask one another for payment for help in the fields or with house building. Apparently reciprocal labor arrangements have broken down during approximately the same period in which the communal labor obligations of the *Erfpacht* also began to falter. Yet the set circuit for goods has remained intact, and a large portion of all-village goods transactions are still within the flat segment of the supply-demand curve.

Further evidence of the recent arrival of present transactional modes for labor is reflected in the ambivalent attitudes of Berlijners towards Bush Negroes.<sup>14</sup> According to Berlijners Bush Negroes are 'true Africans'; they share with one another freely, unlike town Creoles or white men. When distributing buffalo meat to his set-mates, one man proudly offered the unsolicited remark: "This is how Bush Negroes live. This is how Africans live. They share everything. You white people don't do that." Two nights later, however, the same man was making fun of Bush Negroes because they don't understand how to work and save. "When they were working at *Ajobaka* (site of a hydroelectric project of the Suralco branch of Alcoa Aluminium), they would come for a few days until they got paid, then they would stock up on food and trinkets and go home to their villages. That is why they remain so poor." Another man remarked on a different occasion: "Bush Negroes are stupid. They don't know how to hold a job with an American company. They come to work late and they spend too much of their money on drinking and on other people." The same man said on another occasion: "Bush Negroes really have the life. All they do is plant crops and fish and hunt. They don't have to leave their homes all the time to work for other people. They don't have to work hard."

Such contradictory remarks most likely reflect a partial awareness on the part of many of the villagers of the changes which have come with the road. Both the new schedules of wants and the regret at the loss of old values about the way services should be rendered are implicit in them.

Changes may also have come to the sector for goods, but it is perhaps significant that market mechanisms have reached farther down into the village economy for transactions involving labor. The difference cannot be attributed to differing respective starting points. The conflict over intra-set labor reciprocity and the neglect of communal obligations indicate that it is this sector that has undergone the greatest changes in recent years. And in any case an explanation is at hand. It is labor outside the village which has most drastically altered the demand schedules of Berlijners; agricultural produce is small by comparison. And it is labor within the village which has been most thoroughly revaluated, whose mode of transaction has become like that of the outside market where its power to bring new goods has been so dramatically demonstrated in so short a time.



## NOTES

The author (Peabody Museum, Harvard University) wishes to thank Professors M. NASH and D. OLIVER for their helpful criticisms of an earlier draft.

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- 11 Field work was carried out in Surinam from June to September, 1965 on a grant from the National Science Foundation.
- 12 I am most grateful to Mr. H. C. VAN RENSELAAR of the Royal Institute of the Tropics, Amsterdam, for kindly making available archive materials regarding the history of Berlijn.
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- 14 R. A. J. VAN LIER, *Samenleving in een Grensgebied*, The Hague, 1949, p. 167-168, 228.
- 15 *ibid.*, Chapter IX.
- 16 *Gouvernements-Blad* No. 110, 1937; cf. VAN LIER, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
- 17 The general attitude of Surinam Creoles towards Bush Negroes is summarized in A. J. F. Köbben, "Continuity in Change," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 124, 1968, p. 87. For Bush Negro attitude towards other Surinamers, see *ibid.*, p. 63.