

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4233



The Creole Music Of Surinam

(Dutch Guiana)

RECORDED AND ANNOTATED BY CLIFFORD ENTES, CORONIE, SURINAM, 1971-1972



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- 3 - Njan-Njan-Je -
Welcome Song to the Spirit 4:20
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Introduction

Suriname is a newly independent nation (1975), formerly known as Dutch Guiana, a colony of the Netherlands for the previous three hundred years. Before that it was a British colony (it was given to the Dutch in exchange for Dutch New Amsterdam) and prior to that it was a Portuguese colony. Suriname is one of the three Guianas (Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana) and is situated along the northeastern coast of South America, between Guyana and French Guiana, and north of Brazil. Suriname is primarily an agricultural nation which produces its own sugar, rice, coconuts and bananas. Just recently, it has begun to explore its rich resource of bauxite ore located in the Guiana highlands.

The people and cultures of Suriname are many and diverse. There are the Dutch; the Creoles, descendants of the emancipated Black slaves (emancipation took place in 1863); the Bushnegroes, descendants of Black slaves who escaped Dutch settlements in the 1700's; Hindustanis, descendants of contract laborers brought to Suriname from 1873 through 1917, to cut cane; Javanese, descendants of contract laborers brought to Suriname in the 1890's, to cut cane; Chinese, many of them dry goods merchants; Jews, descendants of Jewish Dutch colonists; And Amerindians, the descendants of native Americans who lived in Suriname before all the other groups. The Creole people and the Hindustani people comprise the major portion of the Suriname population, with the Javanese placing a more distant third.

The music on this album was recorded in Coronie, the major coconut-producing region in Suriname. Coronie is a beautiful and breezy low-lying coastal region located about halfway between Paramaribo, the capital, and Nickerie, Suriname's westernmost town. Coronie is inhabited primarily by Creoles, who own small farms on which they harvest their coconuts and grow their own rice and vegetables. These small farms were previously part of larger estates and plantations owned by British colonists. Coronie also has a substantial Javanese community situated in Somberedjo, a separate community within Coronie.

This album is a collection of the music of the Creole people of Suriname. It was recorded with the permission of the local artists. Much of the music was recorded at parties and celebrations but other pieces were recorded informally at people's homes or at jam sessions. While all this music was recorded solely in the rural region of Coronie, it would be a fair statement to say that this music is representative of the various kinds of musical expression of the Creole people throughout Suriname.

I am indebted to the people of Coronie and Suriname for their great hospitality, interest and help during my year stay (1971-1972) there. I would specifically like to thank Fritz Limon—for his help in teaching me the language; Abona Holweijn, Moewa Boenwari, Dofy Sylvester and the Sinester brothers—for their great stories; the Lodi Nicolson Band of Coronie, the Dollgatie band of Nickerie, Copto and friends—all for their musical contributions; Ursula Jong, and family—for their friendship; Om Moore—for teaching me how to braid a fish-net (asawa) and Popo—for her great dishes of fish and plantains; Mrs. Colli of New York—for assisting me in translations of stories and songs; and to all the other great people of Suriname who made my stay in their country such an invaluable experience.

Language

The official language of Suriname is Dutch, which is taught in the school system and spoken primarily in academic, government and business circles. However, the lingua franca of Suriname is the Creole tongue of "Taki-Taki" or Nengre-Engels (Negro English) as it is called in Dutch. "Taki-Taki" is spoken by all Surinamese (Creoles, Bushnegroes, Hindustani, Chinese, Javanese and Amerindians) as a means of bridging the multi-lingual gap which exists amongst the diverse ethnic groups. "Taki-Taki" is spoken in the marketplace, on the street, in the working place, wherever Surinamers of different backgrounds meet.

"Taki-Taki" is also the expressive language of the Creole people, the language used in all the songs on this album. It is a living history of the people of Suriname, being a combination of the many tongues of the people who have lived there. It is based in English but contains many words and phrases in Portuguese, Dutch and African.

The Music Itself

Creole music breaks down into essentially two types—that of *Kawina-winti* music and that of *Kaseko-Opo Poku*. *Kawina-winti* is generally music of a more serious and spiritual nature while *Kaseko-Opo Poku* is played at lighter occasions where people are more interested in just having a good time.

Kawina music can be identified by its specific rhythmic quality. It is considered by most Creoles to have its rhythmic and linguistic roots based in African music. A *kawina* band is generally composed of at least two drummers, a lead singer (who is usually the lead drummer) and several rhythm accom-

panists. The lead drummer plays the "kawina" or "agida" drum, a long, two-sided drum which is set on the lap and hit on one side with a stick while it is slapped by hand on the other side in response to the stick's beat. The other drummer plays the "apinti" or bass drum which is held between the legs and beat with both hands. The rhythmic accompanists play the following instruments: a "sek-seki," usually a small bouillon cube can filled with bird shot or beads, which is "sek"ed or shaken to the beat; the cowbell; and the maracas. At times, a kawina band will also have saxophone, trumpet and cuatro (a four-stringed guitar).

The *kawina-winti* dance is specifically arranged for spiritual purposes and has been attributed by many Creoles to be the closest living link to the older, respected traditions of Africa. A "winti-play" (which is another name for a kawina winti dance) can be initiated because a person has been sick or extremely despondent. It also might be arranged if a person had a special birthday (21, 25, 50), a special wedding anniversary or if that person were leaving for the Netherlands for an indefinite period of time. In all these cases, the dance is arranged to permit the honored person's soul or personal spirit (their "kra" or "winti") to celebrate, dance and enjoy itself. When the spirit celebrates as such, Coronie people say that the person has caught winti, "kis' winti," or has become possessed by his or her spirit. Friends of that person might also "kis' winti." For this to happen, it is essential that the quality of the kawina music be very tight. The kawina drummer, especially, is the key. It is his drum which calls to the spirit, and when it does come, it dances to the drummer's beat. The success of a kawina band depends on its lead drummer. The band will sink or swim depending on that drummer.

At a kawina-winti dance, the participants dance single file in a circle to the kawina beat. When a person "catchs his spirit," he/she will break off from the circle and dance in the center. Often, other dancers will steady this person while he/she dances so as to prevent the dancer from bounding off into a wall, a pole, a body of water or another person. The person who "kis' winti" has incredible strength and needs to be looked out for while the spirit dances. There are many different spirits and some of their names are: Ingi (Indian spirit), Watra Ingi (Water Indian); Vodou (Snake); Kromanti (African spirit named after the Coromantyne warriors from Western Africa); Tigri (Jaguar spirit); Aisa (groundmother). The topic of winti is an especially complex one of which whole books have been written. I hope this short discussion will give the reader-listener some idea of the general background of the Kawina-Winti Dance.

Kaseko or *Opo Poku* (open beat) is the kind of music played in lighter, more joyous situations—birthdays, anniversaries, weddings. This music, like kawina music, is played to be danced to. Kaseko is both a musical and dance form. It is a partner dance, done with a two-step to a lilting beat. Partners are often given to breaks where they separate and express themselves with their own personal steps and moves, where they roll their hips and belly ("lolo berri" in taki-taki) and then return to one another to the swaying, infectious beat. A Kaseko band is generally composed of Saxophone, Trumpet, Bass Guitar (electric with small amplifier), Rhythm Guitar (electric also), Bass Drum and Maracas. The music is strikingly similar to Calypso music of Trinidad and Guyana. Indeed, many of the Suriname Kaseko bands tour the Caribbean islands and vice-versa, Calypso artists such as King Sparrow, Calypso Rose and Lord Kitchener have performed in Suriname. Although Suriname is part of mainland South America, it is very much a part of the Caribbean when it comes to popular music.

SELECTIONS

Side 1

- 1—W'odo! —Welcome Song Time: 2:00
The Dollgatie Band of Nickerie

W'odo, wie sa bari-e (2x)
Ala mala na wakamang
Ala mala sa miet' na wang
W'odo wie sa bari-e.

Welcome, we are calling out! (2x)
(Though) Everybody is a stranger
Everybody shall come together
Welcome, we are calling out!

This is the traditional "Welcome" Song played at the beginning of any Kawina Dance. Usually, the host of honor will lead a procession of family and close friends in single file to dance in a circle to this opening song.

The vocals are somewhat muted in this recording due to the fact I was limited to one microphone at this kawina celebration. The dance took place in the westernmost Coronie township of Burnside on a windy Friday night. All kawina dances are held outdoors in the yard or "prasi" of the host of honor's home. Makeshift outdoor dance halls in the yard are constructed out of wooden poles and sheets of corrugated iron for dancers to dance under in case of a late midnight drizzle. The dance must always go on!

- 2—Two Step Dance — Opu Poku Time: 1:40
The Dollgatie Band of Nickerie

It is not unusual for a Kawina Band with horns to play an Opo-Poku two-step at a Kawina dance. This piece is slower and more laid-back than the more exciting kaseko. It is a partner dance and is often done with the grace and elegance Europeans are accustomed to seeing in a waltz.

- 3—Njan-Njan-Jé — Welcome Song to the Spirit Time: 4:20
(pronunciation note:

j in taki-taki is pronounced as a "y" in English)
The Dollgatie Band of Nickerie

This song serves as a welcome to all "spirits" or "jéjé" to enter the yard and eat (njan). Often, a bowl of rice is left in the backyard for the spirits to eat.

Note the excellent "sek-seki" and bass drum beats. These beats are essential to a successful kawina rhythm.

- 4—Kaseko Poku (untitled) Time: 5:00
The Lodi Nicolson Band of Coronie

Instruments:

Sax (Mr. Ludwig "Lodi" Nicolson); Trumpet (August the tailor); Bass Guitar, Rhythm Guitar; Bass Drum; Maracas.

This lively piece was played at a Birthday Party (Vrijjaar Hosu) in Coronie. The musicians are all local working people who play as a band for special occasions and practice in their spare time. Mr. Nicolson, a man in his sixties, still "blows" like a young man, and August, his buddy, can wail too.

This piece is a basic Kaseko, a swaying lilting two-step partner dance.

- 5—Liba-Sei — Kaseko Poku Time: 8:15
The Lodi Nicolson Band of Coronie
(Recorded live at a Birthday Party)

Vocal: Mi mama de na Para'
Mi de na Liba-Sei

Chorus: Ay, Ay, Mi de na Liba-Sei

Vocal: My lady's in Paramaribo
I'm waiting down by the riverside

Chorus: Ay, ay, I'm down by the riverside!

A very popular Kaseko tune throughout Suriname. The song is about a young lover calling to his lady to join him. Note the tight Maraca beat. Good dance piece.

Side 2

- 1—Na So Mi Jere — And So I've Heard Time: 6:30
The Lodi Nicolson Band of Coronie
(Recorded live at a Birthday Party)

Na so mi jere (3x)
Taki: Oema lobi Man
And so I've heard (3x)
Saying: Woman Loves Man!

Note the creative, syncopated solo by Lodi on sax, about half-way through, in this popular Kaseko piece.

- 2—Ke, Ke, Kele — Dear, Dear Kele Time: 2:40
The Lodi Nicolson Band of Coronie
(Recorded live at a Birthday Party)

Ke, Ke, Kele (2x)
Mama no de, Papa no de,
Ke, Ke, Kele
Dear, Dear Kele (2x)
Mother is not there, Papa is not there
Dear, Dear Kele.

Popular Kaseko piece.

- 3—Winti Medley Time: 2:20
Ursula Jong—vocals; Renaldo Jong—rhythm

Ursula Jong, a young lady in her twenties, a good friend of mine, sings three short Kawina-Winti songs with her younger 11-year old brother Renaldo backing her up.

a) Sengeré—

Ayé, Ayé, Ayé, Sengeré
Mi go begi Gron-mama, Sengere
Mi go begi Goron-papa, (2x)
Mi go begi Goron-mama
Ayé, Ayé, Ayé, Sengeré
I am going to pray to the Ground-Mother, Sengeré
I am going to pray to the Ground-Father,
I am going to pray to the Ground-Mother.

Song to the Ground spirits for their blessings, specifically to Aisa, the ground-mother. At the beginning of all winti-plays, liquor or "sopie" will be poured on the ground of the yard to honor Aisa.

b) Lelu Lelu Vodú Lelu—

Lelu Lelu Vodú Lelu (2x)
Langa tan na wie dja
Langa tan na busi-o
Lelu Lelu Vodú Lelu
Lelu Lelu Vodú Lelu (2x)
Sometimes you stay with us
Other times you're in the bush
Lelu Lelu Vodú Lelu

Song to the Vodú (snake) spirit. The Vodú spirit is generally conceived to be the spirit of the Boa Constrictor. When possessed by its spirit, persons are known to crawl along the ground like a snake.

c) Vodú Dede— Vodú is Dead

Den nok' mie nanga tikki
Den soet' mie nanga gon
Vodú Dede, Vodú de no'mo' (repeat)

They knock me with a stick
They shoot me with a gun
Vodú is dead, Vodú is no more.

A kawina song to the Vodú (snake) spirit. Note Renaldo's excellent kawina beat. He has the makings of a real kawina drummer.

- 4—Kot'Singi— Songs That Cut Stories Time: 2:20
Abona Holweijn—the kot'singi man, the man who cuts the stories.

Moewa Boenwari—Famous 80 year old storyteller from Friendship, Coronie.

Chocotte—Host, and Abona's singing partner. Note his great, contagious laugh.

"Kot' Singi" are short songs which are used to break up a story and so allow the storyteller a short interlude in which to "blo" or take a breather. Cutting a story is an art because one can only cut stories at special times. One must listen for a special word or phrase in the story and then interrupt with a song which uses that word or phrase. To be a good "kot' singi" man, like Abona, requires a quick sharp ear and a vast knowledge of songs. These men are all in their seventies and older and still rate as the best storytellers and "kot' singi" men in the community. The storytellers are the elder statesmen of the community, the men with "koni" or knowledge.

This excerpt is from the story of the Dag van Philia Linga (The Magic Ring) by Moewa Boenwari. It was recorded at an informal gathering one Monday morning at the home of Chocotte.

Moewa: . . . The old man said: "Listen, if you want to give me the money, then fling it to me on the ground while I lay down on my back. You see, I can't take money, by hand, or my magic won't work!"

Abone: Hold yourself;

Moewa: What was said?

Abone: When I heard "diggi-diggi-diggi"] Refrain (2x)
The Hercules (a ship) was passing by]

Kot' Singi:

—Marienburg first, a boat hauling stone,
The Hercules knocked it down

(Refrain)

—All that noise was the Boni (magician) who lay on his back and itched and scratched

(Refrain)

Chocotte: Pull, Moewa, let's go (on with the story). (The phrase in the story "ground while I lay down on my back" relates directly to the phrase "lay on his back" in the song. The "kot' singi" man must link significant phrases in the story to a similar phrase in a short song.)

Moewa: . . . Yes, my friend, the father, with pleasure, threw the money to the man and told him to be well. Yes, the father felt that his heart was now satisfied. He then returned to his ship with his sailors. They traveled until they finally reached their homeland. Well, then, because of this momentous occasion, *cannons were shot* all day long. So much so, that almost everyone *thought there was a fire!* Just like when those *Zeelanders* came to Paramaribo, they went around . . .

Abona: Ohh? You are talking now?

Kot' Singi:

Zeelander shoots his cannon
The streetwalkers *thought it was a fire*] (2x)

Some pulled off their blouses
Some pulled off their skirts] (2x)

Let's go!

(The Zeelander was the first iron steamship to come to Suriname. Before that there were only mast ships. The cannons were a salute, but to those who didn't know this, they thought it to be a fire, a ran to hide.)

Moewa: . . . Well, my friend, when the sons ran out, their father embraced them and then he embraced his wife. Do you know what that means? Experience, my friend! That means that the children are his blood, the wife is not, therefore the children come first . . .

(End of excerpt)

Excellent example of taki-taki storytelling with good kot'-singi. Note very fine harmonizing between Abona and Chocotte.

5—Wang Boto e kong — One Boat is coming Time: 3:55
nanga Wang Fraga with one Flag

Copto and Friends, Totness, Coronie

Lead: Wang Boto e kong nanga wang fraga

Chorus: Wang Fraga no'mo' hanga de?

Lead: One boat is coming with one flat! (statement)

Chorus: Only one flag is flying? (question)

Instruments: Kawina Drum, Apinti or Bass, Sek-Seki.

This song is characterized by its kawina beat, excellent singing and two excellent drum solos. This recording took place at a jam session with some young Totness men one warm evening.

6—Mooi-Mooi-A-Wei-Sei Time: 1:10
Copto and Friends

Mooi-mooi-a-wei-sei

mooi-mooi-a-wei-sei pé mi mama de

mooi-mooi-a-wei-sei-e

The lyrics of this song are in the dialect of Bushnegro. This is a *Seketi*, a song and dance stemming from African sources.

The Seketi dance is characterized by two persons dancing opposite one another. It has been likened to a game where each partner tries to step on the other partner's feet. It is a fast and intricate dance, with feet going back and forth while arms swing around the body to balance the quick feet movements.

7—Njoema Njoema — Loboto Singi

Time: 10 sec.

Abona Holweijn

Njoema, Njoema

Mi go a Bronspein

Njoema, Njoema,

Mi go a Bronspein

Njoema, Njoema,

I'm going to Bronspein

Njoema, Njoema,

I'm going to Bronspein

This is a "loboto singi" or rowing song and is used in this instance as a "kot' singi" by Abona. Before the times of motorized boats in Suriname, fishermen and workmen would sing as they rowed their boats. This song was sung by rowers on boats which hauled sand and shells from the Paramaribo side of the Suriname River to Bronspein.

8—Mi nan go — I won't go — Kawina Time: 5:25
The Dollgatie Band of Nickerie

Ay, Ay, Mi nan go (2x)

Papa no de, mama no de

Ay, Ay, Mi nan go

Ay, Ay, I won't go (2x)

Papa is not here, Mama is not here

Ay, Ay, I won't go.

Regular kawina song. Good cowbell and sek-seki beat.

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