

Policing in times of change: The rise of a police force in Suriname, 1863-1900.

Ellen Klinkers

2012

(L'émergence d'une force de police au Suriname: les mutations policières dans une société en mouvement, 1863-1900. In Vincent Denys et Catherine Denis (eds.), *Polices d'Empire, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 47-62.)

The Marechaussee in Suriname became operative on the first of July 1863, the same day that 33.000 slaves became free citizens in Suriname. This newly established police force symbolized the historical transformation of colonial society. The developments in the police force of Suriname in the late 19th century were closely intertwined with the changes in a society adapting to the abolition of slavery. Society was on the move. Social boundaries were no longer determined by slavery and freedom, disciplining and law enforcement had to be reshaped, while at the same time new ways of resistance appeared. In addition, society became more complex because of the arrival of indentured laborers from Asia and the West-Indies. Chinese, more than 34,000 British Indian laborers and almost 33,000 Javanese immigrants from the Dutch East-Indies moved to Suriname to work the plantations, while increasingly ex-slaves found a living outside the plantation economy.¹

Surinam is bordered on the West by Guyana, on the East by French Guyana and on the South by Brazil. The country was populated with 51.436 people in 1863, in majority living in the capital of Paramaribo and in the plantation areas in the northern coastal area. Over three-fourths of Suriname was and still is covered by tropical rainforest, inhabited by small groups of Amerindians and Maroons, runaway slaves and their descendents.

Administrative reform gave Suriname limited room for home rule in 1865. A Colonial Council was established, mainly representing the elite of white planters.² The power of the colonial authorities was limited because of the colony's incapacity to be financially independent, and because the Crown had the right to reverse decrees. Nevertheless, the Colonial authorities had a larger influence on the direction and development of the police after the administrative reform of 1865 than before.

¹ Rosemarijn Hoefte, «slaan of treuzelen? Verschillen in verzet tussen Hindostaanse en Javaanse contractarbeiders» Meel P. en Ramsoedh H. *Ik ben een haan met een kroon op mijn hoofd. Pacificatie en verzet in Koloniaal en postkoloniaal Suriname*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker 2007, p. 152, 153; Ellen Klinkers, «De strijd gaat door. Creools verzet na de afschaffing van de slavernij» Meel P. en Ramsoedh H. *Ik ben een haan met een kroon op mijn hoofd. Pacificatie en verzet in Koloniaal en postkoloniaal Suriname*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker 2007, p. 133-151.

² Hans Buddingh', *Geschiedenis van Suriname*, Utrecht, het Spectrum, 1995, p. 184, 212, 213; Rudolf van Lier, *Samenleving in een grensgebied. Een sociaal-historische studie van de maatschappij in Suriname*, 's Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1949, p. 194-195; F.E.M. Mitrasing, «Constitutionele regelingen van Suriname. Verzameling van rechtsregelingen betreffende de Surinaamse staat», 's-Gravenhage, Staatsdrukkerij, 1966, p.67-74. C.D. Ooft, *Ontwikkeling van het constitutionele recht van Suriname*, Assen, Van Gorcum & Comp., 1972, p. 51-62.

Maintaining colonial power was a major concern for the planters and local authorities in this turbulent period. Danns, writing about British Guyana, states that «the experience of the colonial Caribbean societies reveals that the police was set up with the expressed intent of subjugating the colonized and repressing any actions they took to reduce the conditions of their suffering and exploitation».³ This is true, but the developments in the Surinamese police do not just show us how colonial supremacy was maintained, but also reveal the frictions within the colonial elite about the direction and pace of the inevitable social transformation. Both the incentives from the mother country and the daily practices of policemen on the job affected this debate.

Conflicting views on how colonial power should be maintained dovetailed with the rise of the Surinamese police in Suriname in the aftermath of slavery. As Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have stated in their work on colonial control: «rulers of the empire reexamined their own hegemony in the face of the divisions within their own camp and the challenges from the people they were trying to rule». And, as they continue, «Against the power which they projected across the globe and against their claim to racial, cultural, or technological dominance, closer investigation reveals competing agendas for using power, competing strategies for maintaining control, and doubts about the legitimacy of the venture.»⁴

This paper elaborates the interaction between local dynamics, regional developments, and the colonial relations. I will demonstrate the struggle among and between colonial authorities of policing Surinamese society through the institutional changes of the police from 1863 to 1895. The police system consisted in this period of two interrelated police forces, the Marechaussee and the Inland Police Force. Both forces merged in 1895 into one Armed Police Force. In addition, semi-private, special constables were introduced (see figure 1). These changes raise the question in what way the institutional transformations reflected new ideas about law enforcement and maintaining order.

The Marechaussee

The police was already active in the colony during the times of slavery, but was not incorporated in a strong, well organized force. Only some thirty policemen worked mainly in or around Paramaribo in 1862.⁵ The police was fairly absent in the plantation areas. The planter owned, though not unlimited, the right to discipline and punish his slaves at the plantations. He was assisted by administrators and *basyas*, slaves appointed as overseer, in maintaining order on his estate. The army and vigilant patrols took up arms in case of insurrections or for tracking and hounding runaway slaves in the interior of Suriname.⁶

After the example of the British, the abolition of slavery was followed by a period of apprenticeship. Emancipated slaves were obliged to work on the plantations for another ten years,

³ George K. Danns, *Domination and Power in Guyana; A Study of the Police in a Third World Context*, New Brunswick and London, Transaction books 1982, p. 3.

⁴ Frederick Cooper et Ann L. Stoler. 1989 «Tensions of Empire. Colonial Control and visions of Rule» *American Ethnologist* 16 (4), p. 609, 610.

⁵ Koloniaal Verslag (KV) 1862.

⁶ Ellen Klinkers, *Op Hoop van vrijheid. Van slavensamenleving naar Creoolse gemeenschap in Suriname 1830-1880*, Utrecht, Bronnen voor de studie van Afro-Suriname, deel 18, p. 42-47; Gert Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou; Twee Surinaamse plantages, 1720-1870*, Dordrecht, Foris publications, 1989, p. 176-188; Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750-1863*. Leiden, KITLV Uitgeverij, 1993, p. 369-402.

although they received pay for their work and were free to choose their employer.⁷ The planter lost his right to discipline and punish his work force, but the district commissioner received instead the right to pass sentences on laborers during apprenticeship. He was held responsible for maintaining law and order in his district. The apprenticeship was supposed to prevent social and economic upheaval in Suriname. Nevertheless, society was about to change, and the colonial authorities felt the need for a new way of maintaining order.

In November 1862, more than six months before the abolition of slavery, the minister of Colonial Affairs gave permission to the Governor of Surinam to introduce a new colonial police force, the Marechaussee.⁸ The Royal Marechaussee, a mounted police force with a military structure, had been founded in the Netherlands in 1814. On the Dutch island of Curaçao, a brigade of Marechaussee had been operating since 1838. This brigade was not an institutional part of the ministry of War like the Marechaussee in the Netherlands, but stood under the command of the attorney-general. The approach from Curaçao was a source of inspiration for the Governor of Suriname, Van Lansberge, who had previously been posted on the island. As a result, the colonial authorities in Suriname chose unanimously for the installation of a civilian police force with a strong military character.⁹ The government in The Hague welcomed this arrangement to organize and equip the police forces in Suriname and Curaçao in the same way so as to maintain similar police systems in the colonies of the Dutch West Indies.¹⁰ Military of European descent and encamped in Suriname, were recruited to join the Marechaussee. The policemen were supposed to live in barracks to keep a safe distance from the local community.

The Marechaussee started with 122 men in 1863, hardly sufficient to cover the vast working area in the rural plantation districts. The difficult means of transportation by horse over land and by rowing boat across the rivers and canals made it difficult to act efficiently. The tasks were many. The Colonial Council requested frequently for reinforcements of the Marechaussee. The demand for more police intensified when indentured workers came to Suriname. Besides, the opening of new and promising gold mines, which attracted many ex-slaves, expanded the working area of the police again and deeper into the interior. Marechaussees were plagued in these areas by tropical diseases and harsh living conditions, whereas it seemed almost impossible to prevent smuggling in these border regions.

The attorney-general had a difficult time to maintain the Marechaussee up strength. Frequently, Marechaussees were sent back to the barracks, because they turned out to be unfit for police service. Attempts to expand this police force confronted even more difficulties. First of all, the minister of Colonial Affairs was reluctant to approve the reinforcement of the police, because of the colony's deplorable economic situation. Suriname was in debt constantly, and the decline of the plantation economy made the situation even worse. Moreover, the supply of new personnel stymied due to the reluctance and sometimes even outright refusal of the army commander to provide men for the Marechaussee. The army was also dealing with a shortage of personnel, and could therefore

⁷ Gouvernementsblad der Kolonie Suriname (GB) 1962, no. 6.

⁸ GB 1863, no. 7.

⁹ Nationaal Archief (NA): Koloniale Raad, 1.05.11.02 (no. 6), June 30, Augustus 1, August 15 and October 31.

¹⁰ NA: Ministerie van Koloniën (MvK), 2.10.02 (no. 1264), letters from Governor Van Lansberge to the minister of Colonial affairs, Paramaribo August 2 and 20, 1862. Letter from the minister of colonial affairs to the Governor of Suriname, the Hague November 17, 1862; (no. 1270), Letter from the minister of Colonial Affairs to the Governor of Suriname, The Hague, November 28, 1872.

not afford to lose more men.¹¹ However, recruitment of soldiers for the police did not end, as redeployment from the army and cooperation between the two forces would in fact be common until way into the twentieth century. At the same time, the attorney-general was well aware that it would be impossible to man the police exclusively with soldiers of European descent. The solution for this shortage of personnel was sought in the foundation in 1868 of a second police force, the Inland Police Force. The Inland Police Force would be manned with creoles, that is to say, descendents of former slaves in Suriname.

The Inland Police Force

The colonial authorities discussed in their first meetings about the future of the police in 1862 the question whether the Creole population should participate in policing the country. The possibility was debated to appoint former slaves who had worked as overseers on the plantations as assistant policemen. Proponents argued that these men were already involved in policing tasks. The attorney-general doubted if these overseers would meet expectations, but he wanted to put them to the test.¹² The minister of Colonial Affairs rejected the proposal to appoint the most loyal workmen from the plantations as policemen at that time. These policemen, so argued the minister, would continue to be ruled by the planters and would therefore act more as overseers than as policemen.¹³

The formation of the Inland Police Force in 1868 did not have the intention of creating a plantation police based on the experience of black overseers. The Inland Police was the result of the inability to form a police force with military of exclusive European descent. The entrance of Creoles into the police force seemed inevitable, but their incorporation into the Marechaussee was considered problematic. Racial prejudices certainly abounded. Thus, the attorney-general stated that he had given thought of incorporating Creoles, but the colonial council convinced him that such a plan would be unfeasible. The Marechaussees would object, and clashes between them and the black policemen were predicted. Furthermore, as the attorney-general wrote in his letter to the Governor, black policemen would resign when they would be forced into the military discipline. Finally, the authorities expected that the reputation of the police force would decline among the local population. A standing, he affirmed, that was already falling because of the reprehensible behavior of some Marechaussees.¹⁴

The obsession with the separation local and European policemen in different police forces was remarkable, since Suriname had a long history of cooperation between black and white men in maintaining law and order. Black overseers, as had been mentioned before, were considered as mediators between slaves and whites at the plantations. Besides, patrols of black (both enslaved and free) and white men pursued runaway slaves in the interior of Suriname in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.¹⁵ The racial separation in the post-abolition police force can be understood as a redefinition of social boundaries in the aftermath of slavery as, to quote Cooper and Stoler, 'the otherness of the colonized person was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be

¹¹ NA: MvK, 2.10.02 (no.4052), Letter from lieutenant- colonel Van Dijck to the attorney-general, December 6, 1886.

¹² NA: Koloniale Raad, 1.05.11.02(no. 6); MvK, 2.20.02 (no. 1264), Letter from Governor Van Lansberge to the Minister of Colonial affairs, Paramaribo, Augustus 20, 1862.

¹³ Nationaal Archief Suriname (NAS), gouvernementssecretaris, 1.01.01 (no. 945).

¹⁴ NA: MvK 2.10.02, no. 1728. Letter from attorney-general Gefken to the Governor of Suriname, August 12, 1865.

¹⁵ Wim Hoogbergen, *'De bosnegers zijn gekomen!' Slavernij en rebellie in Suriname*, Amsterdam, Prometheus 1992, 29.

defined and maintained; social boundaries that were at one point clear would not necessarily remain so'.¹⁶ The desired distinction between white and black in the police forces was therefore not so much a result of doubts about the loyalty of black policemen, but the Marechaussee was supposed to represent the colonial state and symbolized the unbroken supremacy of the white colonial population after emancipation.

The difference between the Inland Police Force and the Marechaussee was expressed in clothing and weaponry. Besides, policemen were separated by locating the Marechaussees in the rural districts and the Creole policemen in Paramaribo and surroundings. As the attorney-general stated, 'it would be difficult to find separate housing for black and white policemen in the districts.'

The first policemen of the Inland Police came from the Creole community in Paramaribo. This free Creole community had already emerged during slavery. After the end of the apprenticeship former slaves became policemen too. This is a major difference with the British West Indies where black and colored policemen were non-locals, coming from the other parts of the British West Indies to be replaced by local black policemen later.¹⁷ British Indian immigrants were hardly represented in the police forces, both in nineteenth century British-Guyana and Suriname. Steve Garner states that the numerical dominance of Africans in the modern Guyanese police dates to the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸ As Joan Mars writes, a complex of factors resulted in a preference for blacks rather than East Indians for police service, like occupational specialization, expectations of loyalty and reliability and the level of assimilation to the colonizers culture.¹⁹ The number of British-Indian and Javanese policemen increased in Suriname in the first decades of the twentieth century, because the colonial authorities realized that knowledge of society and its people was essential for effective policing.

The end of apprenticeship: negotiating law and order

A plantation police, which had been rejected by the minister of Colonial Affairs in 1862, was realized eventually in 1872 shortly before the abolition of the apprenticeship.²⁰ These special constables, often former slaves were in service of private companies, but under the command of the police, district commissioners and the Attorney General. They were organized after the example of the «onbezoldigde veldwachters» in the Netherlands, where landowners could appoint staff members as special constables.²¹ The approach in the neighboring country British-Guyana, where rural or parish constables guarded the plantations, had also been a source of inspiration for Suriname. Last, but not least, the system of special constables harked back to times of slavery, when slaves were appointed as black overseers. The government in the Hague feared the re-establishment of this old system from times of slavery, just like in 1862 when the colonial authorities wanted to appoint the black overseers as assistant policemen. The Colonial authorities faced again a minister of Colonial Affairs who warned

¹⁶ Frederick Cooper & Ann L. Stoler «Tensions of Empire; Colonial Control and visions of Rule» *American Ethnologist* 16 (4), 1989, 610.

¹⁷ Howard Johnson, «Pattens of Policing in the post-emancipation British Caribbean, 1835-1895» David M. Anderson and David Killingray, *Policing the Empire, Government, authority and Control, 1830-1940*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1991, p. 7, 71-87; Joan R. Mars, «Rough Justice. Political Policing in Guyana», *Caribbean Journal of Criminology and Social Psychology*, 2001, 6/1&2, p. 9-12.

¹⁸ Steve Garner, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender. Guyana 1838-1985*, Kingston/Miami, Ian Randle Publishers, 2008, p. 59.

¹⁹ Joan Mars, «Rough Justice. Political Policing in Guyana», *Caribbean Journal of Criminology and Social Psychology*, 2001, 6/1&2, p. 10-12.

²⁰ GB 1873, no. 10 and 44; GB 1878, no. 26.

²¹ Jos Smeets, *De Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Politie. Verdeeldheid en eenheid in het rijkspolitieapparaat*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2007, p.55.

against the revival of the system of black overseers. He emphasized that these constables should safeguard the property and people at the plantations only, and should not be burdened with the supervision of the plantation labor or whether the laborers complied with their contracts. The minister approved eventually the formation of special constables, but insisted on a clearly defined job description, which left no room for conflicting interpretations.²²

However, police practice headed in another direction. The regulations eased up on in the first decades of the twentieth century when special constables outnumbered policemen of the Armed Police Force, and the division between (semi-)private and public police became more diffuse. A change in law in 1907 made possible that the police and civil servants could hire special constables too. For example, 256 policemen and 338 special constables guarded law and order in Suriname in 1920.²³ The financial problems of the colony, the power of private and state owned companies, and the dispersal of economic activity deeper in the interior were the main reasons for the spectacular growth of special constables in the early twentieth century.

The administration of justice also shows the struggle by the authorities with incorporating new ways of maintaining law and order in Suriname and the difficulties of leaving the past behind. A reform in 1869 resulted in a civil code, largely in accordance with the Dutch system. However, convict labor, abolished in the Netherlands in 1813, was maintained in Suriname and put into practice until far into the twentieth century. The same goes for the death penalty, which was abolished in the Netherlands in 1870, but upheld and practiced in the colonies.²⁴ Public corporal punishments ended with the abolition of slavery. Convicts were sentenced to forced labor on roads and public works instead. Policemen and soldiers were charged with the surveillance of forced laborers. Members of the colonial council complained about the efficiency of these punishments because of the poor quality of the work done by the condemned. But also the effectiveness of the death penalty was doubted – among planters the idea arose that in particular Asian workers did not fear death. Death penalty was meted out for the last time in the nineteenth century in 1875.²⁵ The planters pleaded in vain for a return to public corporal punishment.

The promulgation of the ordinance that ended the judicial power of the district commissioners in Suriname in 1873 resulted in a heated discussion among the colonial authorities.²⁶ The abolition of slavery had already ended the disciplinary power of the planter and with this

²² NA: MvK, 2.10.02 (no. 2624), Letter from Governor Van Idsinga to the minister of colonial affairs, July 29, 1873. Letter from attorney-general Twiss to the Governor, July 22, 1873. Letter from the minister of Colonial Affairs to the Governor of Suriname, September 26, 1873, (No. 2584) Letter from the minister of Colonial Affairs to the Governor of Suriname, May 10, 1873, (No. 2587), Letter from the Minister of colonial affairs to the Governor of Suriname, May 24, 1873; GB 1873, no. 10 and 44.

²³ KV 1920.

²⁴ GB 1868, no.14; A.J.A. Quintus Bosz, *Grepen uit de Surinaamse rechtshistorie*, Paramaribo, Vaco 1993, p. 74-84; M.R. Wijnholt, *Strafrecht in Suriname*, Deventer, Kluwer, 1965, p. 40-42, 99-101; P.J.C. Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, *Ontzag voor het hoogste gezag. Een onderzoek naar de vraag waarom de doodstraf in de kolonie Suriname werd gehandhaafd nadat zij in het moederland was afgeschaft*. [doctoraalscriptie Algemene Letteren Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht 1997].

²⁵ William L. Man A Hing, *De affaire Lijkwan. Een opzienbarende terechtstelling*, Amstelveen, Orchid Press, 1983; William L. Man A Hing, *Jeugdigen en doodstraf in Suriname. Twee arresten van het Gerechtshof in Suriname die in 1864 en 1975 ten uitvoer zijn gelegd*, Amstelveen, Orchid Press, 1999. P.J.C. Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, *Ontzag voor het hoogste gezag, Een onderzoek naar de vraag waarom de doodstraf in de kolonie Suriname werd gehandhaafd nadat zij in het moederland was afgeschaft*. [doctoraalscriptie Algemene Letteren Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht 1997].

²⁶ GB 1873, no. 13.

ordinance of 1873, which coincided with the end of the apprenticeship, the maintenance of public order moved again further away from the planters. Offences had to be prosecuted at the district court from now on. The newly installed Governor Sypesteyn and the districts commissioners protested against these proceedings, because more time elapsed between violation and verdict as a result of the new proceedings, while convictions were less certain. The district commissioners felt that the prolonged judicial procedure had caused more disorder. «Only short proceedings will maintain order and discipline in the districts», stated district commissioner Ballin. His colleagues complained also about the time-consuming procedures and the many formalities unnecessarily prolonging the small criminal cases. Indictments had to be made, witnesses be heard and the use of translators was obligatory. The district commissioner complained of loss of labor, rising costs and an accumulation of criminal cases. Moreover, the commissioners and the Governor attributed the uprisings at several plantations that year to the new judicial proceedings. More laborers were accused of neglect of work, desertion and laziness. Almost 600 cases were reported from July till September, but only ninety cases were processed.²⁷

Attorney-general Twiss struggled on his own for the maintenance of the new legal order and warned the Governor about the colony's conservative forces. Governor Van Sypesteyn was furious and argued there was no reason to fear a conservative force under his rule, but he warned the attorney-general for another movement: «the one to organize everything in the Dutch way, to adopt Dutch institutions without observing the peculiarities of the colonial society. Your views on the legal order based on the Dutch instead of the Surinamese system, belongs to that movement and therefore I cannot agree with it.» The breach of loyalty between the Governor and the attorney-general was beyond repair. The attorney-general asked the King for dismissal from service the next month and left Suriname soon after. The Governor made an appeal to the minister of Colonial Affairs to postpone the ordinance until a new settlement was made.²⁸ The adjustment came six months later. Judges were supposed to rule immediately on civil cases and verdicts could not be postponed for more than fourteen days.²⁹ A compromise between local and European ideas of maintaining order and law had been accomplished.

Merging the Inland Police and the Marechaussee

How were these arrangements put into practice? The ministers of Colonial Affairs insisted on ending forms of maintaining public order that harked back to times of slavery. Still, the notion of law enforcement did not change significantly. The struggle to maintain production and labor was still urgent in the plantation areas after the abolition. The few police reports that have survived in the archives, show requests for tracing mostly Javanese and Indian indentured laborers who left the plantation without permission.³⁰ Vagrancy laws controlled work outside the plantation as well. Small farmers, gold miners, small shopkeepers in the towns or in the rural districts were registered and – as far as possible – supervised. Violent unrest was suppressed forcefully by joint operations of police and army.³¹ The colonial civilization mission criminalized everyday practices, such as expressions of the African-Surinamese religion. A policy of penal sanction was part of the contract labor system,

²⁷ NAS, gouvernementssecretaris, 1.01.01, (no. 1332 and no. 1539).

²⁸ NAS: gouvernementssecretaris, 1.01.01, (no. 39). NA, MvK, 2.10.02 (no. 6892),

²⁹ GB 1874, no. 15, 7, 11, 18-21.

³⁰ NAS: Districtscommissariaat Saramacca, 1897-1955, 1.24.01 (no. 183).

³¹ Rosemarijn Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery. A Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1998, p. 189-194; Sandrew Hira, *Van Priairy tot en met De Kom. The history of resistance in Suriname, 1630-1940*, Rotterdam, Futile, 1983, p. 205-206.

which made it possible to punish misdemeanors as absence, laziness, and drunkenness with fines and detention. Moreover, a breach of contract, formally a civil offence, could be penalized as a criminal offence.³² As a consequence the power of planters and district commissioners on law enforcement remained strong.³³ Besides, even though the ministers of Colonial Affairs interfered with institutional arrangements in the colony, they hardly supervised police practices in the colony.

The army was still occupied with maintaining order within the colony. The fading boundary between army and police – policemen often had a military background, while both forces cooperated frequently – involved the risk of harsher and more violent action because soldiers were trained to use armed force against an enemy, and were less trained to act in service of the civilian public.³⁴ Complaints from inhabitants of Paramaribo about the callous behavior of policemen resulted in a new instruction in 1890, in which was mentioned that the police should be polite and humble towards the population, without the use of senseless force. An act which had to give the colonial state a more civilized appearance, even though it did not end violent behavior by the police.

Not only colonial perceptions and ideals shaped the police force in Suriname, but also daily routines and social interaction among policemen and with civil society. Local policemen were not just instruments of colonial governance and colonial ideals, but they were also part of the community. Marechaussees of European descent became increasingly members of the local community. Many raised a family with a local, usually Afro-Surinamese partner, and the practice of living secluded in barracks came to an end. The linkages between policemen and society were many and encouraged them to make individual decisions.

A dispute about the conduct of a police constable in 1893 illustrates the effect of daily police practices on colonial discourse. Hiemcke was a clerk at the police office in Paramaribo. His job was to make contracts for the gold and rubber industry. One day, Hiemcke warned the laborers that the contract they were about to enter into with the employer Mr. Barnett, would be disadvantageous for them. Hiemcke knew employees of Barnett who had lived in poverty. He considered it as his duty to warn the laborers about the possible risks involved with this contract. The attorney-general, head of the police in Suriname, did not share Hiemcke's view. He was angry with the clerk for accusing Barnett of making his laborers suffer from hunger. The attorney-general discharged Hiemcke from service, and held the head commissioner of Police responsible for what he considered an unlawful act by his clerk. The Governor of Suriname intervened. He decided that Hiemcke, and certainly the head commissioner of Police, were not to blame. Hiemcke worked independently and had not received direct orders from his superior about this case. Moreover, the attorney-general had no right, so stated the Governor, to impose his opinion on the clerk and oblige him to act according to those views. The clerk was entitled to his own judgement. Hiemcke was reinstated to his post. Several years later he became inspector of police and was in 1901 promoted to head inspector of police.³⁵

³² Ellen Klinkers, «Moravian Missions in Times of Emancipation» Michelle Gillespie and Robert Beachy, *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. Gert Oostindie, *Het paradijs overzee. De 'Nederlandse' Caraïben en Nederland*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 1997, p. 50-53.

³³ Rosemarijn Hoefte, «slaan of treuzelen? Verschillen in verzet tussen Hindostaanse en Javaanse contractarbeiders'» Peter Meel et Hans Ramsoedh, *Ik ben een haan met een kroon op mijn hoofd. Pacificatie en verzet in Koloniaal en postkoloniaal Suriname*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 2007, p.153, 154.

³⁴ Paul Chevigny, *Edge of the Knife. Police Violence in the Americas*, New York, The New York Press 1995, 255.

³⁵ NA,MvK, 2.10.01 (no.7023), gouvernementsjournaal March 1894; NAS, gouvernementssecretaris, 1.01.01 (no. 88). Surinaamsche Almanak

The effect of daily routines brings us to the next issue: how did the strict division of Inland Police and Marechaussee take shape? As mentioned before, the initial idea was to station the Marechaussee in the rural districts and the Inland Police in Paramaribo. However, in practice Marechaussees and Inland policemen worked throughout Suriname. This implies that there was no fundamental difference in the police practices of both forces.

Nevertheless, two paradoxical stories exist about of the cooperation between the two police forces. On the one hand cooperation was common practice, while at the same time the distinction in color was confirmed over and over again. May 26 1891, the policeman Lodewijk Redan wrote a letter to the Governor. He was looking for a new job because he wanted to leave the police. 'We natives are maltreated' wrote Redan. The policeman illustrated his accusation with the implementation of disciplinary measures. The punishment of policemen was not exceptional but turned out differently for Surinamese and European policemen, as Redan noted:

A drunken, inland policeman was confined with the regular detainees on the 14th of this month and for another one the order was given to 'shut him in with the other negroes, which was put into practice. Two European Marechaussee were put under surveillance for being drunk. Later they were transported to the detention centre for policemen.³⁶

The removal of the institutional distinction between Inland Police and Marechaussee took decades. Governor Idsinga pleaded for merging the forces already in 1870, only two years after the founding of the Inland Police. The Governor argued that the Marechaussees could be enlarged with inland policemen without problems. The colonial council resisted with success the proposed merge.³⁷ Also attorney-general Twiss praised the mutual understanding and collaboration between Europeans and Surinamese policemen at performing their duty, «something what was doubted before», said Twiss in 1871.³⁸ In the years to come, the members of the colonial council would argue in favor of a merger, obstructed by the successors of Governor Idsinga and attorney-general Twiss.

A reorganization in 1878, mainly aimed at raising the salary of the policemen, united the Inland Police and the Marechaussees administratively in one police force, the Armed Police. The Colonial Council suggested to undo the division entirely, but Governor Van Sypesteyn refused to submit this proposal to the minister of Colonial Affairs because it would only delay the salary hike. Besides, he didn't see any advantage in merging the Inland Police and Marechaussee.³⁹

His successor Governor Schmidt wrote to the minister of Colonial Affairs that colored people had too many connections with the population to be trusted. He considered it as a major drawback that these policemen couldn't operate separately from their «colored colleagues». Schmidt regurgitate the old ideal of a European police force, as little as possible in touch with «Creoles and negros», and managed by an European officer.⁴⁰

³⁶ NAS, Gouvernementssecretaris, 1.01.01, (no. 88).

³⁷ Handelingen Koloniale Staten, 1870-1871, bijlage, *Nota, behoorende bij de missive van den Gouverneur dd. 2 juli 1870*; 1870-1871, zitting 30 augustus en 2 september 1870.

³⁸ KV 1871.

³⁹ Handelingen Koloniale Staten, jAAR, bijlagen [no. 45 en 46], *Verordening waarbij wordt geregeld de organisatie der gewapende politie in de kolonie Suriname, Memorie van Toelichting; Voorlopig verslag der commissie van rapporteurs; Memorie van beantwoording*; GB 1879, no. 1.

⁴⁰ NA: MvK, 2.10.02 (no.4052), Letter from Governor Schmidt to the minister of Colonial Affairs, 21 December 1886.

A final attempt to maintain the Marechaussee as an all-white force and resolve the shortage of personnel at the same time, was made by recruitment from the Dutch police force. These attempts to attract men directly from Holland to man the rank and file of the Surinamese police failed completely. Some were dismissed for bad behavior, alcohol abuse, or callous behavior towards the population. Others left the police on their own accord soon after their arrival.⁴¹ Those who returned to Holland complained about their experiences in Suriname at the ministry of Colonial Affairs. Work had been hard and grueling while the costs for living were high and the salaries low.⁴²

The colonial council insisted on merging the Inland Police Force and the Marechaussee again in 1891, saying that: «Those who traveled in the West-Indies even to some extent, could see only one police force, manned by natives only».⁴³ Eventually Governor Asch van Wijck decided to turn daily practice into policy and merged the two systems into one Armed Police Force. The Governor neglected the complaints of the attorney-general and claimed that the division existed on paper and in clothing only.⁴⁴ The merger had also the intention to strengthen the staff of the police force with Dutch specialist policemen to educate and control the rank and file. With the appointment of a police commissioner from Holland a beginning had been made with the professionalization of the staff two years earlier in 1893.⁴⁵ However, the institutional changes did not fundamentally change the system's character. What remained was one police force with a military character, with a growing shift from European to local personnel through time.

The police was manned by just 175 policemen in 1895, but had accompanied the population growth: between 1863 and 1899 the population had increased with 36,6% from 51.436 to 70.248 people, while the police increased with 43.4% from 122 to 175 policemen. Remarkably, in the same period the military reduced more than half in size with 52,5% from 848 to 403 soldiers in 1899.⁴⁶ In fact, the soldiers operated more as a military police force, like the former Marechaussee, than as an army.

Conclusion

The unfolding developments of the Surinamese police force, consisting of Marechaussee and Inland Police, show the struggle of the colonial authorities to accept, mold and structure the socio-economic changes in colonial society in the aftermath of slavery.

The effect of this struggle on the police became more visible after the administrative reform of 1865 which gave Suriname some room for home rule. The search for a suitable Colonial police force resulted in a series of reorganizations. The initial idea to organize the police systems in the colonies of the Dutch West Indies in the same way faded to the background. Instead, the police in neighboring British Guyana became a source of inspiration for the Surinamese colonial authorities. The mother country was involved in institutional arrangements but seemed less interested in the

⁴¹ NA: MvK, 2.10.02 (no. 4731). Letter from the Governor to the minister of Colonial Affairs, 24 juni 1893; *gouvernementsjournaal*, 2.10.02 (no. 7017).

⁴² NA: MvK, 2.10.02, inv. No. 4731. Letter from the Governor to the minister of Colonial Affairs, 24 juni 1893. Letter from the minister of Colonial Affairs to the Governor of Suriname, August 16, 1893. (no. 7017), *gouvernementsjournaal* September 1893.

⁴³ *Handelingen Koloniale Staten 1890-1891, bijlage, Verordening van den houdende wijziging van den 27 juni 1878 (GB no. 14), waarbij wordt geregeld de organisatie der gewapende politie in de kolonie Suriname, memorie van toelichting en voorloopig verslag der commissie van rapporteurs.*

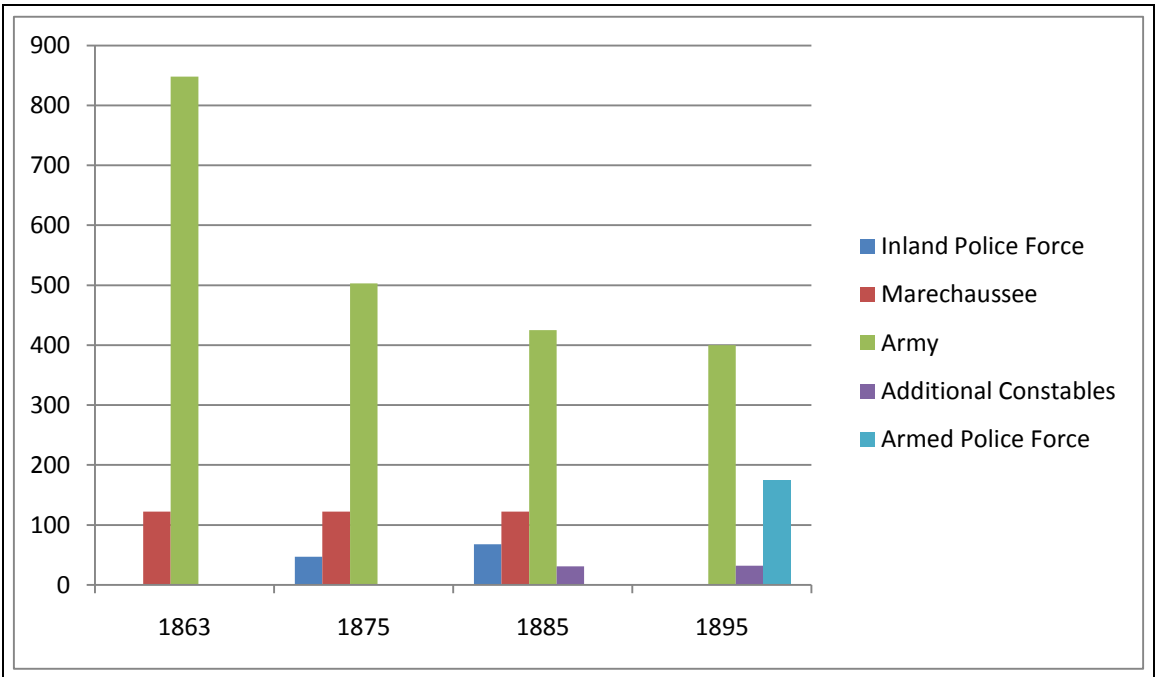
⁴⁴ *Koloniale Staten, 1894-1895, bijlage, Verordening waarbij wordt geregeld de organisatie van de gewapende politie in de kolonie Suriname, memorie van toelichting, 8 mei 1894.*

⁴⁵ NA: MvK, 2.10.02 (no.7011), 18 maart 1893.

⁴⁶ KV: 1863-1900.

practice of policing in the colony. The most striking feature of the developments was the urge to separate black and white policemen in different forces, which can be understood as an attempt to affirm white superiority of a colonial state in uncertain times.

Daily practices paved the way for the merging of the Marechaussee and Inland Police Force into the Armed Police Force. The developments of the Surinamese police force can therefore be considered as an outcome of local and trans-local power dynamics, and as a concession between maintenance and change. In this process, policemen were no not so much agents of change, but actors in a changing society.



Source: Koloniaal Verslag