

Rose Mary Allen



*Tur hende a papia un ko'*<sup>1</sup>  
African-Curaçaoan women

*conveying messages in traditional folksongs at the beginning of the XXth century.*

INTRODUCTION

**T**UR HENDE A PAPIA UN KO' (KOS) MEANING "EVERYONE HAS SAID SOMETHING", is the first line of a folksong in which an African-Curaçaoan woman demands to tell her own story. She uses a traditional vehicle, music, to articulate her message to others. African-Curaçaoan culture has been an oral one, depending on oral transmission for its survival. In oral cultures, the interaction process takes place in face-to-face situations. People give special importance to those communicating the information (Goody, 1992:16). In Curaçao,<sup>2</sup> like other Caribbean societies, oral traditions have been primary tools by which to pass on information from generation to generation. Oral tradition, in this paper, refers to this practice by working-class people of using songs, proverbs, stories, etc. to pass on information to their families and to other members of the community. This information is an important tool for teaching and consciousness-raising. The scenarios for oral tradition are based on events, problems, and successes experienced in the community. African-Curaçaoan women have been important transmitters of oral tradition. In oral tradition, women convey their messages, showing in that way that they were not merely observants, but participants in their society, yet whose voices were for long not heard in history.

In this paper, I will examine to what extent African-Curaçaoan women used songs to verbalize their experiences and concerns. I will apply the descriptive/exposition approach and will allow women to give their account of their lives through songs. The songs used as illustrations in this paper are not necessarily collected from female informants, but their texts center on women's lives. I will use both songs collected by Brenneker and Juliana in the sixties and seventies<sup>3</sup> and collected by myself from the eighties onwards. Furthermore they are also songs collected for the project "Hidden Voices" in 1992, with the objective of studying women oral culture.<sup>4</sup>

In order to structure the wide range of song genres, I have decided to analyze these songs, which are sung in the local Creole language, Papiamentu<sup>5</sup>, according to the following categories:

1. Male-female relationships
2. Relationships with other members of the family
3. Socialization
4. Rivalry between women

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WOMEN'S ROLE IN FOLKSONGS

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John Storm Roberts states in his book *Black Music of Two Worlds* that a main characteristic of traditional African music is that it is interconnected with daily living. Music serves a purpose and has a social use (Roberts, 1998: xxvi). Thus, traditional songs are rooted in the life of people. Their texts cover up "deeply situated human behavior" (Bauman, 1983: 362). The lyrics expose values not openly manifested on the surface of everyday life and often express deep feelings, that are not permitted to be verbalized in other context. Songs, thus, give us data on cultures, especially those without an extensive literary tradition<sup>6</sup> (Alan Lomax and J. Halifax, 1971). For women's studies, they are valuable research material to help demythologize certain ideas regarding women, as they restate how they voiced their lives. By systematically analyzing the texts of folksongs, this paper will expose communal values, norms, and perceptions of African-Curaçaoan women of themselves as well as their social reality.

Most of the traditional songs in this paper appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century and dealt with issues of everyday life. At that time, the life of these working-class women revolved around two different spheres. On one side, their life was centered on their homes and around their family obligations as daughters, wives, partners, mothers, aunts, godmothers, stepmothers, and grandmothers. On the other side, many of these women combined their domestic work with other types of activities. They made substantial contribution to the welfare of the home<sup>7</sup>, especially during times when men emigrated to work in countries in the region.<sup>8</sup> One of the principal economic activities of women was the making of straw hats. They also labored as washers, ironers of clothes<sup>9</sup>, and household maids. Some were involved in trade as owners of small shops, where they sold merchandise to people in the community. Others were herbalists, sometimes midwives, and had privileged positions among members of their community.

Similar to men, women sang during gatherings or while they worked at home. Songs functioned as an outlet for individual and communal tensions, or sometimes as a vehicle of protest. These songs were important channels for expressing feelings. For most women, life was not easy, and by singing about it they could transcend the difficulties. An informant underlined this statement by saying that when she sang, she would forget her problems and life would seem bearable again.

Women categorized their songs into the following genres: religious<sup>10</sup>, children's, love and work

songs, lullabies, and also satirical songs. Some of these songs were sung in the antiphonal structure of call and response and allowed for a close relationship between individual singer and community. This musical structure shows the strength of community. Levine sees this sense of community as an evidence of African culture, which enslavement had not destroyed. (Levine, 1983:343)

Women performed songs both in private and public spheres. These songs were named according to the activities performed. There were songs for grinding millet in the metate<sup>11</sup>, called *kantika di mula maishi* (songs for grinding millet)<sup>12</sup>. The *kantika di bati maishi* (songs for pounding millet), in contrast, were sung while rhythmically pounding millet in the tree-trunk mortar. There were also songs to accompany the pounding of cactus (kadushi)<sup>13</sup> with the mortar, *tati*. These songs were called "*kantika di tati*"<sup>14</sup> (songs to pound cactus). Through cradle songs, the *kantika pa pone mucha drumi*, mothers interacted with their babies and with others in the surroundings. Women sang while washing their clothes in a group or individually. Songs were also segments of storytelling and of ring-game activities.

Other songs were performed communally in public. The *kantikanan di Seú*, (harvest songs) for example, were sung during the celebrations of the harvest of millet in the month of March and April. The harvesting occurred in different phases. First, the millet was harvested. The men cut the millet, while the women picked and placed the millet in special baskets called *dakwe*. During this phase, songs were sung. People also sang when they marched to the rhythm of the drum, cow-horn, and the piece of plough, the *agan*, to store millet in the *magasina* (storage place). Most of the songs sung during the harvest-celebration were those called *kantika di piki*, and were sung during digging activities. During this *seú*-celebration these songs would be transformed by changing the rhythm and cadence to accommodate their use for the procession<sup>15</sup> (Rosalia, 1989). The existence of such a large number of digging-songs implies that African-Curaçaoans had their own ideas of what work was about. Analyzing these songs within their contexts would help to demystify the long-existing notion that African-Curaçaoans were lazy people.

Another category of these songs is the *kantika di tambú*.<sup>16</sup> Compared to the other genres of songs, which have disappeared, the *tambú* still exists. The *tambú* is an activity accompanied by music, drumming, and dancing, performed in the months around the end and the beginning of the year. The lyrics of the songs comment on events that happened during the year and which were disapproved of popularly. They also refer to individuals, either from one's in- or out-group, who misbehaved during the year. These songs create a kind of cohesion and solidarity among people, and furthermore reinforce societal values. In addition, sometimes these songs aim to solicit and arouse outside support and sympathy for someone or a situation.

Women often functioned as singers of these *tambú*-songs, *kantikadó di tambú*. This was contrary to the *seú*-celebration, where the lead-singer would always be a man. One example of these women is Petronilia Coco, who was popular for her songs, and who recently passed away at the age of 85.<sup>17</sup>

These women showed enormous verbal skills and devised words in their songs with which they whipped people. The *tambú*-songs characterize themselves by the use of cunning wordplay and double entendre. The composition of the texts received much attention and words had to be carefully thought out to trigger a response by the chorus-singers, dancers, drummers, and onlookers. The laughter and cheers of the crowd would stir up the singers. In these *tambú*-songs women often went beyond the boundaries set by society, and showed assertiveness and courage in the compositions and presentations of their songs.

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MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

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Many folksongs shed light on how women dealt with men, and female-male relationships were very often motifs in these folksongs. Situations in which women became pregnant and were left alone by fathers-to-be were sometimes themes of songs. I collected the following song from a male informant, who told me that it was sung by a woman in a *tambú*-celebration at the plantation where he lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. The woman-singer regrets that after she functioned as a helpmate for her man, he sent her back to her mother when she became pregnant. In these songs with sexual references, words are not said directly but metaphors are used. In this song, the relationship between women and men is referred to as a commercial transaction. The woman feels exploited by the man, and by singing this communally, she also warns other women against the selfish attitude of some men. However, the fact that a man retained this song also shows that it was not only aimed at women.

The text of the song is as follows:

Tur hende a papia un ko'  
Ta kon mi so n'papia nada?  
pasó m'a hasi un negoshi  
m'a e negoshi n'kumbinimi  
M'a hasi negoshi  
Ma negoshi a sali malu  
M'a kumpra un barí di suku pretu  
M'a bende, m'a pèrdè ariba  
Shonnan el a pidimi rosa mondi  
El a pidimi kima sushi  
Awo ku bòshi ta na ranka  
el a mandami pa mi mama.<sup>18</sup>

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Calabash

*translation:*

Everybody has said something  
Why did I not say anything?  
I did a business  
but the business turned out unsatisfactorily  
I did a business  
But the business turned out bad  
I bought a barrel of black sugar  
I sold it at a loss  
People, he asked me to clean the bush  
He asked me to burn the trash  
Now that there is a fruit on the vine  
He sent me to my mother.

The following variant of the same song collected by Brenneker and Juliana, also expresses anger and is a more direct accusation of the male.

Zimulai, Zimalai,  
Zimulai na de dondru  
Ku mi sanbarku di shete sribu  
m'a yudabo, tra kunuku  
Awo ku pampuna ta na ranka  
b'a mandami pa mi mama  
Zimulai, Zimulai,  
Zimulai na de dondru<sup>19</sup>

*translation:*

Forgiveness, forgiveness<sup>20</sup>  
Forgiveness to hell  
With my seven strapped sandals  
I helped you to farm  
Now that there is a pumpkin on the vine  
you have sent me to my mother  
Forgiveness, forgiveness  
Forgiveness to hell

The behavior of women was often judged in terms of morality. Reference to women's immoral behavior often led to quarrels, and women took people to court when insulted in that way.<sup>21</sup> Oral history shows that it was seen as a virtue for a women to preserve her virginity until marriage. Evidence shows that African-Curaçaoans in post-emancipation Curaçao had their own ideas of what

they considered formalized marital-type relationships.<sup>22</sup> The following *tambú*-song expresses the importance of women preserving their virginity. At the same time, it is also an attempt to control the gossip about oneself.<sup>23</sup>

Tur kos bo a konta mama  
Pakiko bo n'bisa mama  
Ku lampi a pèrdè su balon<sup>24</sup>

*translation:*

You have told mother everything  
Why didn't you tell mother  
That the lamp has lost its lampshade.

In some songs, women took control over their lives, as the next song, which most of us learned as a children's song will show. The song deals with the emigration of men. The informant related this song to the emigration of men to Cuba, but given the text it could have also dealt with any other past emigration to countries such as Panama, Venezuela, and Santo Domingo. Curacaoans, both men and women migrated to escape poverty in their country. However, mostly men emigrated, and women remained behind in extremely poor economic conditions, living from hand to mouth.<sup>25</sup> The following stanza expresses the significance of abandonment. The woman reflects on the departure of her lover, who had not even told her that he was leaving.

The following song gives an example of this:

Ai m'a subi un seru  
Ai m'a mira un barku  
Rosa a bin bisami  
ku mi dalia ta na bordo  
Hisa bela  
hisa bela  
hisa bela bo bai <sup>26</sup>

*translation:*

I climbed a hill  
I saw a boat  
Rosa came and told me  
that my lover is on board  
Set the sail  
set the sail  
set the sail and go

This song can be seen as a way of finding hope when left behind. The refrain also shows anger, nonetheless, it portrays a feeling that one does not care that the person has left. In that sense the song expresses the same philosophy as the verse of the following *banderita*.<sup>27</sup> In this song, the door symbolizes opportunity for a new life.

The *banderita* says:

Dalia bo ta bai  
Dalia bo a hasi bon di bai  
Karpinté a traha dos porta  
pa sali un malu dreña un bon <sup>28</sup>

*translation:*

Dalia (my love) you are going  
You did well to go  
The carpenter made two doors  
to leave through a bad one, and enter a good one.

Love themes, naturally, form one of the important categories of songs. In love-songs, women clearly express how they perceive the dependency of men on them. The following song shows what women thought about this dependency.

Fransinèt a laba lomba'i Dodoi  
Fransinèt a laba kama'i Dodoi  
pa chinchá n'kome lomba'i Dodoi  
Pa Dodoi hasi saltu mortal<sup>29</sup>

*translation:*

Fransinet has scrubbed Dodoi's back  
Fransinet has cleaned Dodoi's bed  
so ticks wouldn't eat his back  
and Dodoi would make a break-neck leap

Women's strength is also apparent in the following song in which the woman demands faithfulness from the man:

Tobo ku laba 'ki  
lo n'por laba 'ya.  
chorus: a keli manbea  
Washi ku washi 'ki,  
lo n'por washi 'ya  
chorus: a keli manbea<sup>30</sup>

*translation:*

The washtub in which you wash here  
you won't wash in over there  
chorus: a *keli manbea*  
The washing board you use here  
you can't use over there  
chorus: a *keli manbea*

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

Another popular theme in women's songs is the mother-child relation. Were their ties always as harmonious as we would like to believe? How did the mother relate to her son? Was it different from the way she related to her daughter?

The relationship between mother and child has been expressed not only in songs but also in children's games such as the one called *mama ku yu*, a game that corresponds with the one named "Father and Mother", or in a term such as *as kas di mi mama* to denote the house where one has grown up. People are advised to love their mother, because according to a saying, those who no longer have a mother will be nourishment for the *warawara*, which is a bird of prey [*Esnan ku n'tin mama, lo ta kuminda di warawara*]<sup>31</sup> or they will be worse off than a streetdog [*Kacho di kaya ta ma mibó ku nan*]. Children are warned that *yu ku no ta tende ku mama, ta kai den boka di kolebra*, meaning that children who don't listen to their mother will fall in the snake's mouth.

In songs, the mother appears very often. An example of a song in which the mother is present and which many of us who have grown up on the island have heard as a children's song is the next one. It also reveals that children are an investment for aid later on, when their parents become elderly.

Mama nami kuminda  
pa mi bai mi skol  
Mañan ku mi bira grandi  
ta bon pa mama mes<sup>32</sup>

*translation:*

Mother, give me some food  
For me to go to school  
Tomorrow, when I have grown up  
It is good for mother herself



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Calabash

Not always is the relationship between mother and child as harmonious as one would like to believe. Especially the relationship between the mother and daughter can be full of conflict, as the mother very often is too protective of her daughter. The saying is: a man will fall, but will still remain a man, but a woman, if she falls, will damage her whole future. [*Un mucha hòمبر ku kai den lodo ta keda hòمبر; pero un hende muhé no*]. This philosophy is also expressed in the following *banderita*:

Mi ta mama di yu muhé i di un yu baron  
Si yu muhé baha mi kara  
Mi baronsito lo lamantá<sup>33</sup>

*translation:*

I am the mother of a girl and a boy  
But if my daughter puts me down  
My son will lift me up.

The ambivalence in women's lives is clearly shown here. The same woman who is protective of her daughter at the same time allows her own son a lot more freedom. She expects marriage for her daughter but not for her son, who often is a material supporter and whom she will not easily want to give away. The next *tambú*-song, performed before an audience, and which I collected from a male informant, describes the ambivalent attitude of the mother towards her children of different sex.

Hendenan tur yega serka  
Mi ta bai kontabu mi pasashi  
ma kaweta ta na porta  
i ta bai bisa ku t'ami di  
Ai mama, mir'é ta yora  
ku e ta bai pèrdè su yu baron  
mama bo no yora  
t'ami ta e kakalaka  
ku ta dual galiña bula bai.<sup>34</sup>

*translation:*

People come and draw close  
I am going to tell you my story  
But gossip is at the door  
And will say that I have said

Oh mother, look at her crying  
Because she is going to lose her son  
Mama, don't you cry  
I am the cockroach  
which will fool the hens and fly away.

The different approaches to the two sexes is also manifested in the following song. Women exercised control on sexuality by protecting the virginity of their daughter before marriage. The protectiveness of the mother towards her daughter is reflected in the following song, while the latter rebels against this.

Mama n'ke pa mi bai aki  
Mi mama n'ke pa mi bai ayá  
Mama por serami den un kashi di glas  
mand'é den kombentu serka ser<sup>35</sup>

*translation:*

Mother don't want me to go here  
My mother don't want me to go there  
Mama can lock me up in a glass cabinet  
and send it to the sisters in the convent

The two following songs also show, that young women not only lamented their situation and questioned the protective attitude of their mother, but also rebelled against it and took the side of the one they loved. In these songs, young girls showed independent judgment of the situations, rather than complying with what their mothers expected of them.

Mi dushi a skirbi mi un karta  
kontentu mi ta lesele  
mi mama a pasa kitele  
mi mes a keda bashí  
E karta lo bo kit'é  
nos amor bo n'por kita mas  
e karta lo bo kit'é  
nos amor a kria rais.<sup>36</sup>

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Calabash

*translation:*

My lover wrote me a letter  
Happily I am reading it  
my mother passed by and took it away  
Now I don't have anything  
The letter, you can take away  
Our love, you can't take away anymore  
the letter, you can take away  
Our love has grown roots

Another variant says:

Mi dalia a skibi un karta skondí  
anto mi mama a pasa lesele  
mi mama dushi bo ta muchu bieu  
bai buska un soño pa bo sosegá  
Mara ku shelu por bira papel  
anto mi sanger por bira enk  
mi dede chikí di mas presioso  
por bira pèn  
Pa mi deklarele tur mi stimashon<sup>37</sup>

*translation:*

My lover secretly wrote me a letter  
and my mother came and read it  
my lovely mother, you are too old  
go and sleep so you can have a rest  
I wish that the sky could turn into paper  
and my blood into ink  
and my precious little finger  
could become a pen  
so I could declare all my love to him

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SOCIALIZATION

Songs for children functioned especially as a means of socialization. The appropriate values and norms were transmitted to the younger generation, who were also sanctioned in these songs when not living up to them. These songs are didactic, as they prescribed the appropriate behavior to children. "Doing the right thing" is rewarded, while disobedience is punished. There were many

songs like the following, which stress obedience to mothers.

“Pobersito Elias a haña daño na su pia  
Tur esaki den bahada di e kaminda di Westpunt  
Si bo a tende konseho ku bo mama a dunabo  
Awe lo bo n’ta yora rakatum rakatum<sup>38</sup>

*translation:*

Poor Elias injured his leg  
All this happened at the slope of the road to Westpunt (western part of the island)  
If you had followed your mother’s advice  
now, you would not have been crying rakatum, rakatum

Education was something done communally and was not limited to a certain age. Through songs, the community as the following stanza of the song shows, could reprimand even adults who did not keep to certain rules. Dèdè, the son of Chèchè, is questioned about his drunkenness and is warned that he will cause his mother’s death with his misbehavior.

Dèdè di Chèchè  
Kon bo por hasi un kos asina?  
Dèdè di Chèchè  
Kon bo por laga ròm gañabo?  
Dèdè di Chèchè  
Kon bo por lora den shinishi?

C H O R U S :

Si Chèchè tende  
Chèchè ta rabia mata kurpa  
Si Chèchè tende  
Chèchè ta rabia mata kurpa<sup>39</sup>

*translation:*

Dèdè, son of Chèchè  
How can you do something like that?  
Dèdè, son of Chèchè  
How can you allow rum to fool you?  
Dèdè, son of Chèchè  
How can you roll yourself in ashes like that?

CHORUS:

If Chèchè hear this  
Chèchè will get angry and kill herself  
If Chèchè hear this  
Chèchè will get angry and kill herself

The mother's mother (grandmother) is emphasized in some of the songs. The grandmother has for long been and still is a substitute child-carer. In the extended family-structure, grandmothers performed an important role socializing. This relationship with grandmothers is also present in songs such as the following:

Ami si n'tin rekompensa  
pa mi paga na n'un hende  
solamente wela grandi eh,  
k'a pari mama, k'a pari mi<sup>40</sup>

*translation:*

I don't have to thank anybody,  
except my grandmother, who  
gave birth to my mother, who gave  
birth to me

RIVALRY BETWEEN WOMEN

Most women, until now, have had to deal with partner-sharing, because most men do not engage in only one monogamous relationship. Formerly the wife called her rival *kombles*. Songs in which the *kombles* is mentioned as a rival are numerous and are indications of the impact of this phenomenon on the life of women.

Unlike the first two songs in this paper, in which the singers looked for support from other women, the following song shows rivalry and reflects the fragile position of the *kombles*. The lyrics of the song give a related allusion that she might have the love of the man, but still lacks a legal position. There is no law which protects her and to which she can turn to when problems within the relationship occur. Again, in these types of songs dealing with adult life, the meaning is not given explicitly, but metaphors are used.

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Calabash

Ayera m'a mira mi kombles  
E ta bin ta tira puña pa mi  
e ta bini lagami sabi  
ta kon mi ta sintimi awor,  
dalia a bai lagami  
ningun kontesta mi no dun'é  
mi kacho ke respond'é  
mi di kuné larga e so ladra kaya  
pasobra e ku kaya ta igual  
Mi kacho ta mihó kuné  
pasombra e tin derechi, e tin banchi<sup>41</sup>

*translation:*

Yesterday, I saw my kombles (rival)  
She came and threw words at me  
She came and told me  
How do I feel now that  
my man has left me  
I did not give her any answer  
I let my dog answer her  
I told her to go and bark in the street alone  
because she and the street are the same  
My dog is better off than her  
because it has rights, it has a penny

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Songs portray experiences people have encountered in their life and therefore furnish us with valuable information. Women communicate through songs their own concerns, such as their partnership with males, their feelings of happiness and disappointment with their children, their feelings towards their parents, and the nature of their relationship with other women. Furthermore traditional songs can give us insight into how women saw their own position in society and how they dealt with it. The study of these traditional songs and stories can thus help to direct academic discussions on gender roles as they identify otherwise hidden areas of concern to women themselves.



ORAL SOURCES

Zikinzá-collection of Pader Brenneker en Elis Juliana, stored at the Central Historical Archives of the Netherlands Antilles (soon to be named the National Archives)

AAINA-collection with interviews by Rose Mary Allen stored at the Central Historical Archives of the Netherlands Antilles.  
Oral history Project "Bosnan skondi" [hidden voices] by Jeanne Henriquez and Rose Mary Allen stored at the Central Historical Archives of the Netherlands Antilles.

Garmes-collection stored at the Central Historical Archives

NOTES

1. Tur hende a papia un ko'(kos) is translated as : everyone has said something. For the complete text of the song, see song number 1.
2. The Netherlands Antilles consists of five islands, Bonaire, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, and Saba. Until 1986, Aruba also belonged to the Netherlands Antilles. After 1986 it went and formed a direct status with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao Papiamentu is spoken, while in the rest, English is the mother language.
3. The systematic collection of oral tradition of Curacao started around the sixties by the priest Brenneker together with Elis Juliana. They literally searched the whole island for existing songs, personal reminiscences, short stories, and other expressions. These data belong to the Zikinzá-collection of the Zikinzá-Foundation founded in 1973 and are stored at the Central Historical Archives. It contains a corpus of about 1410 traditional songs recorded from 266 persons.
4. Oral history Project in preparation for the documentary *Bosnan skondi* [Hidden Voices] by Jeanne Henriquez and Rose Mary Allen. July 1992, Institute of Archeology and Anthropology of the Netherlands Antilles and Centrum for the development of Women, (SEDA). *Bosnan skondi* was done by order of and presented at the Third Caribbean Women Writer's Conference, held in 1992 in Curaçao.
5. For information on Papiamentu, see the book by Efraim Frank Martinus, *The Kiss of a Slave: Papiamentu's West-African Connections*, 1997.
6. Recently Olive Lewin from Jamaica published her new book on folksongs of Jamaica, *Rock it come over*, in which she documented and analyzed a rich collection of songs, gathered through intensive research in Jamaica.
7. A woman from the western part of the island, who was 103 in 1983 when the interview was taken, relates how she took care of her children after her husband died in 1926 and her mother some months later. She said: "I struggled and struggled with my children. I had three children, two girls and one boy. In the morning I would stand up, say my prayers and then go to work. We didn't have anything. I had to work with my arms. The government could not help anybody. I would go into the wood and collect berries, the fruits of cactus, and fill up my basket with them. In the rainy season I would work the garden, and afterwards carry the products to town to sell. I would carry my basket on my head. Sometimes rain would meet me on the road and I would get wet. I would just take off my dress, wring it out and put it on again. "AAINA, Project Curacao 21A". Interview by R.M.Allen in 1983 with Ma Tuda, 103 years old. The tapes are stored in the Central Historical Archives.
8. Allen, R.M., Curaçaoan women's role in the migration to Cuba. In: *Mundo yama sinta mira*. Fundashon Publikashon, 1992, 59-79. In this article the author addresses Curaçaoan women's role as migrants and also looks at those who remained at home during the labour migration to Cuba at the beginning of twentieth century.
9. An interview with a woman who was 83 at the time (1983) and who used to iron clothes for a living, gives us an idea of what this type of work meant for some women. She said: "I started to iron clothes to make a living at a very young age. Before I would start to iron, I had to go into the wood and chop some trees, to get wood. Then I would put the wood on my head and walk back home. When I came home, I would make my oven and burn my charcoal. I needed those coals to put my irons on. Radio interview by Sonia Garmes in 1983 with lady who used to iron for money. The Garmes 'collection is stored at the Central Historical Archives.

10. An example of these religious songs were those for San Antonio (Saint Anthony), called *kantika di San Antoni*. Until now, these songs are performed on 13 June during gatherings in which particularly women show their devotion to the saint. Women petition the saint for certain favours, such as good health for their families and for themselves.
11. A grinder made of coral stone.
12. Millet [*sorghum vulgare*] was long the most important food for the black working class.
13. Kadushi is a cactus [*Cereus rebandus*].
14. *Tati* is a mortar, small in size, in which the cactus (*Cereus rebandus*) is stamped into a slimy substance and cooked with dry salted fish etc., in a kind of sauce. It is eaten with cornmeal called *funchi*.
15. At the moment the *Seú*-celebration functions as a tourist attraction, where the focus is on the procession, which contrary to the past also takes place in the town-area. In order to participate in this procession, young people are taught some of the traditional songs during workshops. This has prevented many of the traditional songs from becoming extinct.
16. The event in which these songs were sung and the drum accompanying these songs were named *tambú* as well. Of all folk customs, it has been the most persecuted. During slavery it was feared by slave-owners, as it offered opportunities to the enslaved to gather and express their disgust about their situation by means of their songs. It was also condemned by the Catholic clergy, because the songs and dance, were seen as lascivious and sexually immoral. After emancipation, it continued to be heavily condemned by the government and the Catholic clergy. Members of the older generation relate the severe forms of punishments exercised by the clergy for those found participating in a *tambú*. This punishment included confiscation of the drums, whipping and even expulsion of the participants from the Catholic Church.
17. In: Rosalia, R. *Stupi baltu rospod'i oro*. Curacao, 1989, page 8. See also an article on another popular *tambú*-singer by Joceline Clemencia, *The semiotic of dark clouds in songs and poems of Elia Isenia: Art of female therapy*. In: *Mundo yama sinta mira*. Fundashon Publikashon, 1992, 207-233. See for women's role in the tambu, the article by Iteke Witteveen, *El tambú la mujer en Curaçao: Imágenes en la encrucijada de culturas*. In: *Mundo yama sinta mira*. Fundashon Publikashon, 1992, 107-117.
18. AAINA, Project Cubagangers, no. 6. Interview with Didi Sluis (1901) by R.M.Allen. March 1984.
19. Zikinzá T1066
20. Zimulai is a guene word and is translated by Frank Martinus in his study on Guene, *The Kiss of a Slave*, as "forgiveness". (Martinus, 1997:199) Guene-language was developed as a medium of communication among the enslaved and lasted until the twentieth century. Afterwards, people continued to use some words, as far as they could recollect them.
21. *Rol van strafzaken over de jaren 1900-1920* (List of criminal cases 1900-1920)
22. For a historical overview of the family system in Curaçao, see E.E.Abraham- van der Mark, *Yu i mama. Enkele facetten van gezinsstructuur op Curaçao. Van Gorcum & Comp, B.V., Assen, 1973*.
23. See for information on gossip and its function in oral society, the publication by M. Tebbutt, *Women's Talk?: a Social History of "gossip" in working class neighbourhoods, 1880-1980*, Scolar Press, 1995.
24. Brenneker, P., *Sambumbu* No.7, page 1823.
25. See note 8.
26. See note 4. Female informant was born in 1906. See also Zikinzá, T231.
27. *Banderita* is a short verse in which one person criticizes another in a hidden and camouflaged way. At the end of the year, one could buy a *banderita* with the text that most applied to his/her feelings. The *banderita* was popular around the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century and was often used as a text for the *tambú* and then sung communally. See Lucille Berry-Haseth, *Banderita*. In: *Kristòf*, 1994, jrg 1X-2.
28. See note 4.
29. See note 4.
30. Newspaper, *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 1940.
31. See also Zikinzá T1188.
32. See Zikinzá T904.
33. See note 4. Female informant was born in 1911. See also Brenneker, *Sambumbu*, page 1829.



34. Allen, R.M., Oal Tradition project, 1990. Male informant was born in 1898.
35. See Zikinzá T247.
36. See Zikinzá T774.
37. See note 4. Female informant was born in 1906.
38. Zikinzá T821.
39. Interview Allen taken in 1984. Female informant, born in 1906 in the western part of the island, Bandabou.
40. See Zikinzá T635.
41. See Sambumbu page 1786/87.