Peter Kloos

The Akuriyo of Surinam: A Case of Emergence from Isolation
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A CASE OF EMERGENCE FROM ISOLATION

Copenhagen 1977

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The dotted line indicates the boundaries of the Akuriyo territory in South-East Suriname.
1. INTRODUCTION

The Akuriyo of Surinam are a Carib speaking population which numbers at the moment about 60. Until 1970 they knew a completely nomadic way of life, hunting and gathering in the forests of Southeast Surinam, on the Oelemari, Litani and Loë rivers, or rather on the smaller tributary creeks. Occasionally some of them drifted into Brazil (Paru river area).

In 1968 they were (re)discovered, first by a party of Wayana Indians, later by members of the West Indies Mission, who worked among the Wayana and Trio Indians in South Surinam. The latter had searched for the Akuriyo from 1965 onwards. After 1968 they established contact with all but one of the Akuriyo bands and in 1970 and 1971 brought the majority to Trio villages. At this moment there are 40 Akuriyo living in Përëru Tëpu on the Upper Tapanahony and 1 Akuriyo living in Alalaparu on the koeroeni. Both villages are Trio villages with a resident missionary and a resident nurse. There is a group of about 10-12 individuals still roaming about.

In this case study I shall describe how the Akuriyo fared between 1968 and 1973. In 1973 I did fieldwork among the Akuriyo living in Përëru Tëpu. Akuriyo emergence from isolation has not been a happy event in all respects and there might be some profit in a critical evaluation of mission and government policies. Although the chapter on Man the Hunter and Gatherer in the record of human history has almost come to an end, there are still several groups that might come to a similar fate as the Akuriyo. One might learn
from the Akuriyo case. As for the human record: it may be interesting to learn what was done to Stone Age Amerindians in the years that Industrial Age Americans walked on the surface of the moon.

There are four parts, apart from this introduction: (2) a description of the parties involved, (3) the history of contact, (4) adjustment to village life, (5) an evaluation.

A first version of this paper was presented at the symposium An Evaluation of Amerindian Policy in South America since 1968, at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Amsterdam March 19-22, 1975.

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2. THE PARTIES INVOLVED

2.1. The Akuriyo

The Akuriyo live in the forests of the headwaters of the Litani, the Loë, the Oelemari (tributaries of the Marowijne or Maroni) and the Pimba and the Walimeroe (tributaries of the Tapanahony). Some years ago at least one band crossed the watershed near the sources of the Litani and wandered into Brazil, and lived for some time in the forests of the Matawale river (Paru basin).

It is a rugged habitat where they live, the Oranje Mountains in particular. Steep and heavily forested hills, sometimes with rocky outcrops on top, are interspersed with small marshes and creeks. Although the Akuriyo come in the dry season to the big rivers, the Oelemari in particular, in search of iguana eggs, they tend to hide themselves in
the depth of the forests. They avoid the big rivers, they do not make boats and cannot swim. Rivers and creeks that cannot be forded are crossed by using fallen logs as bridges.

Since the Akuriyo do not have gardens there is no necessity for them to stay in one place for any length of time. Furthermore, the distribution of food and other resources is such that a full nomadic way of life is probably the best adaptation conceivable. Hunting, fishing and gathering they stay only a couple of days, occasionally a couple of weeks, in one place before moving on.

Akuriyo hunters use only bow and arrow. For hunting three types of arrows are used. A type with a long, lanceolate point of bamboo is used for big game, such as the tapir, deer, peccary, etc. A second type is provided with a sharp bone shiver. Having a barb it is used for small game, such as the agouti, and big birds. The third hunting arrow has a detachable point of palmwood and is used for monkey: the point is painted with arrow poison (urasi, curare). A fourth arrow is used for fishing only. It has a detachable, barbed arrowhead which is connected to the archer by means of a long line. Big fish are lured to a palmleaf screen, behind which the archer is hidden, by throwing the entrails of game into the water. Small fish are caught only by using fish poison (ineku, Lonchocarpus sp.).

Hunting and fishing provide the Akuriyo with protein and fats, which dominate in their diet. Additional food are honey, palmfruit and palmnuts, and various tubers. The Akuriyo distinguish some 35 kinds of honey and they are constantly in search of nests. The majority of the bees have their nests high in trees. The men climb the trees (often 20–25 metres), hang onto the tree with one hand, breaking open the nests with a stone axe. It is their fondness of honey that is fatal to many men (see Kloos 1977a).

Vegetable food consists of a variety of fruits and several (small) tubers. Fruits do not play a preponderant role in the diet. Some of them are eaten raw, like the fruit
of the Itu palm. Others are processed into a drink. But more important than the fruits are the palm nuts: the kernels of several thorn palm fruits. The nuts are cracked with a stone or a stone axe and usually eaten raw. Palmfruits are plentiful in the wet seasons (May and June) and in this season moving around may slow down, people staying in one place for several weeks.

The Akuriyo distinguish six edible tubers. All grow near the granite outcrops. The tubers are dug out with the aid of a digging stick. Most of them are small (many of them not exceeding the size of a finger) and often a day of hard work is rewarded by not more than a pound of tiny tubers.

The relative contribution of the various foodstuffs to the total diet is not precisely known. Tubers and fruits probably form a minor part of the diet that consists possibly for 60-80% of meat, fish, palmnuts and honey. It is certain that the Akuriyo have a very specific diet; fat and protein rich, but poor in carbohydrates. About the reliability of resources no quantitative data are available. The Akuriyo certainly know days of hunger and shortage of food, but in general there is no shortage. The nomadic Akuriyo are well fed, both in a quantitative and in a qualitative sense. Getting enough food, however, requires all their energy for most of their time. The majority of the adults of a group goes in search of food most of the days. Only two or three women may stay behind at the temporary shelters to take care of small children. The days following an exceedingly rich catch too show the Akuriyo staying home. Any amount of meat that they cannot cook in their earthenware pots is barbecued. Sometimes this is transported to the next camp. Otherwise it is consumed on the spot. Times of consistent surplus are rare. The forests and rivers of the habitat contain many edible things, but never in great quantities, the only exception being palmnuts in the wet season. For the rest the direct vicinity of a temporary Akuriyo camp is exhausted after a couple of days, thus
forcing the group to move.

The pattern of daily life adapted to these conditions is as follows. A band — anything between one nuclear family and a group of 20-30 individuals — departs early in the morning. The women carry most of the possessions in their pack frames, such as hammocks, pots, stones for grating and for cracking nuts, stone axes and spare axe heads, a few small utensils, a digging stick, barbecued meat, a fire fan, etc. (see Kloos n.d.). Some carry a baby on top of it. All women carry fire. The Akuriyo are unable to make fire and have to carry it from camp to camp, never allowing it to die out. The women always bring some dry wood with them and occasionally have to rekindle their fire on their way to the next camp. If the fire of a band goes out there are only two possibilities: to get fire from another band quickly, or to die. "His fire has gone out" is a euphemism for: "He is dead". The men usually carry only bow and arrows, a stone axe and a small quiver with poisoned arrow heads. They are not only on their way to the next camp, they are hunting as well. This division of labour is no iron rule, however.

Early in the afternoon, after a journey of usually not more than 10-12 kilometres, people decide where to camp. Both men and women busy themselves with the construction of simple shelters for the night: a couple of thin poles, lashed together with vines, and palmleaves on top of this. The fire is built up, hammocks are tied in the houses and the camping place is somewhat cleaned.

Next day the men leave and go hunting, looking for honey and fruits at the same time. The women go in search for tubers and also fruits. Getting food is quite an individual affair: men often go all alone or accompanied only by a child. Women too often go out alone, sometimes returning to the campsite long after dusk. Men sometimes spend the night away from the camps. They make a small shelter and an improvised hammock from bark when it rains, or seek cover between the roots of a big tree when it is dry. Hunting and gathering alone is probably the explanation
for the relatively high incidence of killings by jaguars. Among the Trio and Wayana such killings are extremely rare, but there are at least two circumstances that may explain the difference: the Trio and Wayana go hunting with dogs (which the Akuriyo do not possess) and they go hunting in small groups.

Preparation of food is women's work. The bulk of the food is collected by men: meat, honey and part of the palmfruits.

A second and perhaps a third day is spent in the same manner and then the band departs again, moving to a new camp.

The pattern of moving is not only determined by food resources that become exhausted after a few days. In the movements of the Akuriyo two levels can be distinguished. The first one is the level of day to day movement, from camp to camp, usually not exceeding 12 kilometres. The drive behind these movements is almost certainly the exhaustion of food in a restricted area. After a few days it is more efficient to change the campsite than to lengthen the food trips. The second level is characterized by long distance goals and purposes. The day to day movements of an Akuriyo band are not at all arbitrary or without plan. They are, in fact, part of the way to specific sites that will be reached only after travelling for weeks or months or even more time. Some of these sites are visited because there is much game. The drive behind long-term movements however has not to do with food but with non-edible, but nonetheless vital materials. These are: fibre for hammocks, fibre for string (used to make a variety of artefacts, such as arrows, axe, bowstring, loincloth, necklace, hammock lines), arrow cane, and stone for stone axes. All Akuriyo bands have their favorite site palm fibre patches (in swamps), their wild pineapple fibre patches (on rocky outcrops). There are in their habitat only three of four sites where arrowcane can be found. And there are only a few sites (in certain rapids) where stone suitable for an
axe head can be found. These various sites are widely
distributed over their habitat and are not found in each
other's vicinity. Sizeable Ite palm patches occur only in
marshy places. Wild pineapple grows on granite outcrops.
Arrow cane, growing perhaps at ancient village sites, can
be found only on the Upper Oelemari, the Litani and in one
or two small creeks. These circumstances force the Akuriyo,
who are completely dependent upon their habitat and know
no trade, to make their long voyages. In the absence of
agriculture they are able to do so.

The journeys follow quite definite trails, used already
for many years, even though a band may not use a trail for
a year or more. The trails — chains of broken, bent or
twisted saplings, an occasional axe cut in the bark of a
tree, an emptied bee nest, and old camp sites — can easily
be recognized by a qualified eye.

More or less fixed trails themselves are probably an
adaption to a nomadic way of life in the forest. Although
Akuriyo artefacts are ingenious enough, it is knowledge of
the habitat more than artefacts that makes survival possible.
In this case an advanced technology probably would not pay.

The Akuriyo bands do not have territories in the sense
of bounded areas. Rather they have more or less fixed
trails. These trails and a strip of forest along the trails
they know incredibly well. The areas between trails is
relatively or even completely unknown.

The use of the term "band" in the previous lines is
slightly misleading. It should be stated that, as far as
is known, the Akuriyo never formed one band. They have
always trekked in smaller groups. These groups vary in
size and in composition. There is no strict rule at all to
account for actual composition. In some societies the
shifting composition of bands has been explained in terms
of adjustment to available resources and their seasonal or
regional variation. This does not apply to the Akuriyo
bands. One of the few rules about group membership is that
a man often seeks a wife in another group (especially a
first wife). But the marital relationship is weak and the frequency of divorce is extraordinary high. The actual composition - apart from the relationship mother-young child - seems to be explainable only in terms of personal likes and dislikes and highly individual attachments. It should be added that the attachment between individuals is not strong either: there is almost no emotional involvement in each other. Sick or old people who cannot move with the group are left behind (my data indicate that 25% of the women, for instance, died in the solitude of a deserted camp, left behind by their children and other relatives, see Kloos 1977a).

There are, of course, relationships between bands. In the first place because most adults have close relatives in other bands. In the second place because a few individuals or nuclear families move from band to band, being part-time members of both. The total population is divided in two sub-groups, the Tura and the Akuri proper (possibly these subdivisions go back to two villages in the past - there are indications that the ancestors of the Akuriyo were until about 1880 shifting cultivators, similar to the Trio). The relationships are not always friendly but members of both subgroups intermarry and do meet each other, and these meetings are planned. There are, however, no pantribal meetings and I doubt whether any Akuriyo has ever seen more than 30 people at the same time - until 1970, at least.

Leadership is weakly developed. Shamans do exist - male and female - and they are feared, in particular by other groups, because they are supposed to have the power to cause death by inducing the attack of jaguars (wirìkaimo - jaguar killing).

In general the Akuriyo isolate themselves - from other Akuriyo bands and also from the outside world.

2.2. The Mission.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In this simple sentence lies
the simplest explanation of the presence of missionaries among the Amerindians.¹ The West Indies Mission, and its Surinam branch, the Surinam Interior Fellowship, is a non-denominational protestant faith mission, working in Surinam since 1954. In the late sixties the missionaries began to be interested in the Amerindians of the interior (the Amerindians of the coastal belt are almost exclusively Roman Catholics) and contact with the Trio was made in 1960. The village Paloemeu was chosen as base. Another missionary settled near the Alalaparu creek in S.W. Surinam. Apart from teaching the Gospel the missionaries explicitly aimed at creating Trio and Wayana churches, capable of taking care for themselves and solving their own problems. Their work includes translation of parts of the bible, the training of Amerindians to become church leaders, but also medical care and schooling (this was later taken over by the Medical Mission of Surinam). They succeeded in winning the principal men for their point of view and especially among the Trio most of the Amerindians became Christians. Several of the Trio became teachers and missionaries themselves, working among Trio in Brazil but also among Coastal Caribs.

¹ I am aware of the fact that the motives and background of the Christian missions in the Third World are more problematic than a quotation from Mark indicates. But this problem goes far beyond the scope of this paper. Let me add one thing. It is often said in South America that Christian missionaries are the vanguard of western economic interests, paving the way for the exploitation of local resources, whether they are aware of their role or not. As far as I can see this does not apply to the missionaries in S.E. Surinam, neither in the sixties, nor now. The area is forbiddingly difficult to exploit, and the economic development of Surinam is in the Northwest, rather than in the East. The Northwest (Kabalebo region) is in the process of being opened up, and here several Amerindian groups (Arowaks on the Corantyn River, in the villages Washabo and Apoera) are the victims. No such plans exist for the Southeast. Although several minerals are found in small quantities there is no bauxite.
Of course the work of the missionaries has been disruptive in certain areas of society and culture. The Trio, for instance, were concentrated in two villages (see Riviere 1969), a change which had and has many social and economic consequences. Shamanism, traditional singing and dancing disappeared. There is however not only loss of culture but also gain. In the first place the missionaries gave a dwindling population new goals and stopped the population decline. In the second place they replaced shamanism and its corrolaries by a church organization, and traditional songs by church songs. Many of the former shamans are now composers of Christian songs. Many men find new ways of expression in ecclesiastical activities, as elders in the local church. A ban on extramarital sexual relationships (and the possibility of flogging by the church elders in case of transgression) has made life in big villages possible for the Trio.

The missionaries have created small shops in the villages (goods are flown in by the Missionary Aviation Fellowship - every Amerindian village has an airstrip). The shop in Têpu on the Tapanahony (see map) is now run by a Trio. The missionaries were the ones who taught the Amerindians to read and write in their own language.

Here I shall not go into the consequences of these changes. The Trio perceive most of them as gain, even though they also secretly regret some of the losses, such as the singing of ancient songs (I once seduced a Trio into the singing of a number of these songs for the purpose of recording them. The man prayed to God that he knew that these songs were of heathen nature and he told God that I wanted to record them. Then he sang a full score of them and he visibly enjoyed himself). Growing dependence on industrial products, and the necessity of money income as a concomitant are not felt as a drawback by the Trio themselves, although it is fairly difficult to earn money locally. But the needs of the Amerindians in this respect
predate the arrival of the missionaries. In fact, the missionaries liberated the Trio and Wayana from Djuka (Bush-negro) exploitation: in the past the Djuka acted as middle-men, and they demanded high prices (usually paid in trained hunting dogs, and bows and arrows). One should never forget that the missionaries brought selfrespect and hope for the future to a dwindling, retreating population!

2.3 The Government.

I can be very short about the role of the Surinam Government with regard to the Amerindians of the interior. The Government never had an explicit policy towards these small village societies. Since the coming of the missionaries the government has virtually followed their advice, realizing that no official would ever do for the Amerindians what the missionaries were prepared to do.

In most of the expeditions to the Akuriyo the Government participated, however. In 1972 the Government ruled that the area should be closed to anyone without official permission. This rule was formulated to protect the Amerindians against contagious diseases. In 1973 the Amerindians were registrated (which implied, among other things, that old people could get an old people's allowance).

The Amerindians are integrated in the political system of Surinam, through the formal appointment and recognition of their Chiefs.

Health centres are run by a special foundation, the Stichting Medische Zending Suriname, which is subsidized by the Government and by other agencies.

The interest shown in the past by the Surinam Administration (Government expeditions in 1938 and in 1956, in search of the Wama, as the Akuriyo were named then) seems to have been a purely scientific curiosity. The participation of a Government official in the recent expeditions of the Mission can be explained, at least partly, by the fact that the missionaries have been the target of severe
criticism coming from Surinam citizens. The role of the Government official is to keep a proper control on what is going on so far into the interior.

2.4. The Anthropologist.

Before my research among the Akuriyo in 1973 I carried out fieldwork among the coastal Caribs of Galibi on the Maroni, in 1966-68 (see Kloos 1971). My report on the Caribs included a development scheme. This scheme, originally not envisaged in the research project, grew out of my research experiences. In it, I used the results of my research on Carib village society and culture as part of Surinam national society, to answer the question how actual developments could best be influenced for the benefit of the Caribs in the near future. The Government, to whom I presented the development scheme in 1970, did not take up the plan (at the moment the Caribs themselves are working out basic principles of the plan! See Kloos 1977b).

The goals of my research among the Akuriyo explicitly included the answer to the question how I as an anthropologist could help them to survive the inevitable process of encapsulation in Surinam society (although by 1971 I knew that I would be too late, because the majority of the Akuriyo had been brought to the Trio villages). I was not the only one to ask the question what I could do for them. During a short visit to Tépu in 1972 the village chief Tamenta, who had given me permission to come to his village for the intended research in 1973, asked me what I was going to do for the Akuriyo (he asked what I was going to teach them - he used the verb enpa, to teach). Knowing by then already the eagerness of the Akuriyo to learn to read and write their own language or the Trio language (both languages are closely related) I felt this to be at least one of the possibilities - for the rest I could not yet foresee what other possibilities there were.

During my short stay in 1972 one of the Akuriyo,
Towatowapo, received a letter, written in Alalaparu, by his kinsman Kananaman. Kananaman had learned to read and write in Trio and used his knowledge to send around messages, like the Trio do. But Towatowapo could not read. To his delight I could read to him the letter, written in a language I could hardly understand.

3. THE HISTORY OF CONTACT: 1968-1971

If my hypothesis about Akuriyo history is correct, then the Akuriyo were until about 1880 shifting cultivators who took to the forest trails probably as a result of tension and conflict between them and other Amerindians. They retreated into the forest, fearing every outsider. Occasionally they shot arrows at Bush Negroes, but usually they tried to avoid contact.

In their contacts with the missionaries and their Trio and Wayana helpers, the Akuriyo found that at least with regard to these people their distrust and fear were groundless. Almost overnight the attitude of the majority of the Akuriyo changed into the opposite.

Already during the second contact between the Akuriyo and the missionaries a number of Trio Indians were left among the former, in order to gain information on territory, language and habits. This information was deemed necessary for future plans and for a longer stay of the missionaries themselves.

In 1969 a garden was cleared on the Oelemari, near its headwaters, for the purpose of creating an Akuriyo village there. A few Akuriyo did stay there for some time, but returned to the forest, fearing the big river and the opportunity it offered for people to visit them.

The move to Trio villages began with a few individuals, a young boy who had been rejected by his mother, and a father and his small son, who later returned for some time to his own people. Meanwhile the Akuriyo were prepared for the change by Trio families who, provided by the Mission with
food and also a wireless radio, stayed for months among them. In 1970 a large group of Akuriyo left for Alalaparu.

Since May 1971 two Trio families still stayed with the Akuriyo in the forest and in the course of the year the majority of the remaining Akuriyo were flown over to Përëru Tëpu. All of them really wanted to go, no one was forced to go. Free choice is not an absolute concept. There is no sharp boundary between a voluntary move and a forced transport. The Akuriyo had been told by the Trio about life in a village. Village life as pictured did appeal to them (especially the amount of food to be expected) and therefore they decided to leave the forest trail and its hazards. It is not entirely clear why the Akuriyo families which are still in the forest did not want to leave. They have not been contacted since 1971. An expedition in 1973 failed to find them. They probably were in Brazil at that moment.

4. ADJUSTMENT TO VILLAGE LIFE

The Akuriyo had already in the forest suffered from diseases possibly contracted from visitors (both in Surinam and in Brazil, from jaguar hunters). But probably only a few died as a result from these diseases. The effect of village life however proved to be disastrous for many. This effect had been foreseen. Nowhere the impending drama was better put to words than in one of the missionary Ivan Schoen's reports: "if they (the Akuriyo) are brought out, sad to say, we can almost predict those who will perish because of age or weakness" (Schoen 1971:9). But it were not only the aged. Table 1 shows what happened: within less than two years the entire Akuriyo population had lost 25% of its members!

Apart from the case of chickenpox - an epidemic struck the whole Amerindian population of Southern Surinam - there appear to be at least two reasons for this high incidence of mortality.
Table 1. Death in the village (males in capitals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>time</th>
<th>place</th>
<th>main cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>koti</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Febr.1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>anaemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPERIHTÉ</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Febr.1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kurimaye</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Febr.1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAIPUKU</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>March.1971</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanahpê</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>May 1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSUWARA</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>July 1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAKIRA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>July 1971</td>
<td>Alalaparu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kowara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>July 1971</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOWASI</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dec. 1971</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KANAIHPE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dec. 1971</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simokowara</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Apr. 1972</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imauruman</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Aug. 1972</td>
<td>Tēpu</td>
<td>chickenpox</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 estimated

In the first place there was a drastic change in diet. As I pointed out in part 2.1, Akuriyo diet in the forest was quite specific: it was rich in fat and proteins, but poor in carbohydrates. The Akuriyo already in the forest became acquainted with manioc but not in great quantities. In the Trio villages, however, manioc became a prevalent item in their diet, a belly-filler. In Alalaparu even more than in Tēpu meat is a rather scarce item, at least compared with the quantity the Akuriyo were used to eat. All Akuriyo suffered heavily. In the second place, and although they made the change to village life apparently easy if one restricts this to the move itself, the psychological impact was great. A few just refused to live any longer. Others demonstrated behaviour resembling a psychological shock. The majority of the women did not menstruate for more than a year. I believe that in most individuals who died both factors coincided.
Most of the Akuriyo who eventually survived were critically ill for weeks or even months. Only in the course of 1973 the majority began to recover a little. But even in that year influenza brought the majority of the Akuriyo down in their hammocks for more than two weeks. Without excellent medical care and constant attention on the part of the resident nurses and the missionaries and their wives the number of casualties would have been much higher.

Partly as a result of the number of deaths the network of social relations between the Akuriyo was thoroughly shattered. 11 of the 22 dependent children lost one or both parents. Of the 8 married couples that moved to the Trio villages only 3 still existed in 1973: of 5 unions one or both partners had died. Four new unions were formed afterwards, partly from the remnants. But here there is a new problem that partly arises from new norms. Among the Akuriyo there are more young men and boys than young women and girls: a proportion of 15 to 7 (I do not know whether this is due to selective infanticide as in so many Amerindian societies in South America). In the forest the Akuriyo solved this problem by tacitly accepting polyandrous unions. In the Christian Trio village this solution is out of question. This means that at least half of the boys cannot have an Akuriyo wife - and probably no Trio wife either, because a similar disparity exists among the Trio. Two Akuriyo men married a Trio and a Wayana women respectively; both were elderly ladies.

Taken together this means that of the 35 Akuriyo in 1973 living in Têpu only 15 (both adults and children) knew a more or less normal family life (as far as one can speak of "normal" in this situation). The remaining 20 were either part of a Trio nuclear family (most of the Akuriyo children without parents were placed in Trio families - 11 cases) or were hanging around an Akuriyo couple.

Although one should bear in mind that Akuriyo relationships in the forest were anything but stable, the first
years in the Trio villages almost made an end to whatever there was. This made it very difficult for the Akuriyo to keep an identity of their own.

There is a second factor why it was extremely difficult for the Akuriyo to keep an identity of their own. In 1973 eleven Akuriyo lived in one part of Tëpu in four small houses, constructed by the Trio, and more or less separated from the rest of the village. The other Akuriyo were scattered all over the village. The houses were of a Trio type. In other respects as well the Akuriyo were dependent upon the Trio. Even after they had recovered from the physical weakness of the first year they were unable to provide completely for their own food. They lived upon manioc and meat, largely provided by the Trio. The Akuriyo women under the guidance of Trio women were soon experts in the procession of bitter manioc even though they had no gardens of their own (in 1973 the Akuriyo men took part in the communal clearing of new gardens for 1974). But the Akuriyo men - the providers of the past - could not provide their families with enough meat. The Trio already for several years hunt with a shotgun. Hunting with bow and arrow in the vicinity of the villages is seldom successful. When the Trio had meat, the Akuriyo got their share, and besides this they always participated in the large communal meals of the Trio, but this again made them dependent upon the Trio. This too ran against the keeping of an identity of their own.

A third factor had to do with the development of Trio culture. Christianity had given the Trio a new form of self-esteem. "In the past we were ignorant" they said. And they added that the Akuriyo were now what they were in the past: ignorant children, and they said so in presence of the Akuriyo. Likewise, the Akuriyo were given the front benches in the church, "because they have still to learn so much".

Given these factors - demographic chaos, social dis-
integration, difficulties of food supply, and psychological pressure — there was, in short, only one way for the Akuriyo to survive: to become Trio. In certain respects they were and are trying to do this as rapidly as they can.

Still there is a countercurrent. For instance, when the Akuriyo did have a lot of meat themselves, they tended to close their ranks. They stayed home, ate among themselves and did not invite the Trio to come and eat with them. In these circumstances they reverted to their own language and there always was a striking difference in behaviour. Akuriyo participating in Trio meals were usually silent. An all-Akuriyo meal, however, was a gay event of chatting and laughing people, who, sitting close to each other, without male-female division, ate and ate and ate. And occasionally the Akuriyo, often in small groups, disappeared into the forest for one or two days or more.

This countercurrent notwithstanding no Akuriyo really wants to return to the Oranje Mountains or to the trails in the forest. The following event is a very significant one. In the 1973 expedition, in search of So'wiwi and his people, one of the Tëpu Akuriyo men went along. He acted as a guide whenever necessary. He was one of the oldest Akuriyo men in Tëpu and he was certainly the least adjusted one: his hair style, the fact that he, unlike the Trio and the other Akuriyo, still had his eyelashes and his eyebrows intact, and many other things betrayed the way he saw himself: he was an Akuriyo. On the morning of the last expedition day, when we were waiting on Oelemari airstrip to be flown back to Tëpu, he asked one of the Trio to clip his hair Trio fashion, to shave off his eyebrows and to remove his eyelashes and whiskers. He had seen his home territory and visited ancient camping sites and did not like it. He had decided to become a Trio.

I do not believe that the few older people — of 30 years and more — ever will or can become Trio. I am afraid that they will remain between two worlds — living a daily
life as sedentary shifting cultivators as long as the Trio are able to do so, but for the rest of their life having a vivid picture of a nomadic way of life and its consequences for social relations, culture and personality. The children will turn into Trio, losing virtually everything what is Akuriyo. The young adults will simply adjust.

3. An Evaluation.

To evaluate is, *stricto sensu*, to inquire to what degree set goals have been attained. Since the mission is in the case of the Akuriyo emergence from isolation the main agency with an explicit policy one should evaluate in the light of their goals. The goals of the Government are much less clear. They amount to vague statements about surviving, thriving populations, and developing communities. To evaluate the policy of the mission one should know in how far the Akuriyo have become Christians. To answer this question one should have an intimate knowledge of each individual Akuriyo. This knowledge I do not possess - no one does. Furthermore, although it is clear enough that the Akuriyo are changing fastly, it is my conviction that it is too early to say anything about this question at all. Certainly the number of baptisms, or church attendance, is a poor answer. In a statement about the status of the Akuriyo, dated August 1972, Ivan Schoen said that the "Total of Akurio who have died being Christians" was seven. I cannot say anything about their being Christian, but there can be no doubt about their being dead, and that brings me to a somewhat wider, albeit more personal perspective. It is my conviction that the right to decide upon one's own destiny is basic to human beings. Denial of this right is at the heart of the plight of the Amerindians in South America (see also Kloos 1974:99ff). To recognize this right does not imply to leave everyone to his own devices. The contrary is true. In this world of differences in every sense conceivable, be it culture, race, power, interests, susceptibility to disease,
and what not, it implies to meddle with the affairs of
others to the best of one's abilities, for the benefit of
the weak in particular. Was, in general, what was done for
the Akuriyo, seen in this light, the best policy conceivable?

The first question that comes to mind is, of course,
whether it had not been better to leave them alone in the
forest. I believe that they could have survived for many
years. After all, they did survive already for several
generations. But remember, the Akuriyo answer to this
question was: no! Moreover, the position taken by an af-
firmative answer is unreal. In the first place because one
simply cannot fence off a territory indefinitely. Intrusion
into their territory, and ensuing contact was a matter of
time, missionaries or not. Looking back one can only say
that the Akuriyo have been fortunate that the people who
came were missionaries of the kind working in South Surinam.
In the second place, because once their existence was known
not only the missionaries showed interest; during one of the
early expeditions already the missionaries met a boat full
of French soldiers, who had tried to find the "Wild Indians"!
Although the Surinam Government tried to prevent the going
of casual visitors to the south, the situation of Akuriyo
territory is such that isolation is impossible.

Once (re)discovered the true choice was to intervene
in their way of life on the one hand, or to let them perish
on the other.

Contact meant for the Akuriyo among other things the
introduction of hitherto foreign and unknown diseases. Some
of these they got from the contacts in Surinam, others they
contracted probably in Brazil. Effective medical measures
could not be taken as long as the Akuriyo continued their
nomadic way of life. I believe that it would have been
better if the original plan of settling the Akuriyo in a
village of their own had been implemented - on the Oelemari
river or somewhere else. To me it seems probable that such
a station, that could be used as Akuriyo settlement (or as
a resort for those Akuriyo who wished to continue their nomadic way of life) would have saved many lives. The plan was rejected because there was not money enough to set up a new mission station and a medical station with resident personnel.

The second best alternative seems to have been the transfer of the Akuriyo to Trio villages. The Trio are their close relatives, culturally speaking. It is not entirely clear how the decision was taken to bring them to two villages, and to Alalaparú to begin with. It is clear, however, that the effects of a dietary change were severely underestimated, if they were envisaged at all. Here the policy as it was carried out clearly rested on insufficient knowledge (and, perhaps, imagination). After all, no one was fulltime involved in helping the Akuriyo. The usefulness of more information, based on research, was even underestimated. During the expeditions the missionaries gathered information as much as they could but, instead of a scientific outlook, theirs was a missionaries' outlook, which prevented them from interpreting social and cultural things in Akuriyo terms and Akuriyo meaning.

The Government of Surinam could have acted as counterbalance, but they simply had no policy of their own and could rely only on the missionaries (the missionaries take pains to avoid the impression that they are in charge, and the Government of course cherishes the opinion that the Government after all is responsible, but this is all facade). Furthermore, the Government was (and is) not accustomed to make use of the results of social research in their social policy. In August 1971, when the Akuriyo were in serious trouble, I received a letter from the District Commissioner of Marowijne (in whose district the Akuriyo live). He said that he had the impression that my research permission, given out in June of that year, was still valid, but that it might be necessary to postpone the fieldwork, "because of difficulties" (the nature of which he did not specify
in his letter). This is rather symptomatic: instead of asking me to come as soon as possible, the reaction was to keep me away. The difficulties of applied anthropology are not only of scientific nature: often they are political. The problem is not that we cannot apply our knowledge, the problem often is that we are not allowed to do so!

Partly as a result of insufficient meat supply in Alalaparu it was after a long debate decided to transfer the Akuriyo originally brought to that village, to Tëpu. Only one man, meanwhile married to a Trio woman, stayed in Alalaparu.

The Akuriyo in Tëpu were given Trio mentors, which was in many respects a very wise thing to do. One man was in charge of the Akuriyo in general and he really acted as a wise guide in practical affairs. The Akuriyo women were taken to the gardens and were taught to process the poisonous bitter manioc by Trio women and the relation between the women was good indeed. Trio men took the Akuriyo men with them on their hunting and gathering trips. In certain cases there were slight tendencies of exploitation but these were rare and unimportant.

What the Trio lacked, however, was an understanding of the situation in its long-term totality. In 1973, for instance, it became clear at least to me that the lack of success in hunting had several, negative, consequences for the Akuriyo. In the first place they did not have sufficient meat. In the second place it affected the moral condition of the men: they were loosing their self-esteem. The only alternative was to provide some of the Akuriyo men with guns. One or two of the younger Akuriyo already by then had shown that they were adept hunters with a gun. Several Akuriyo were trying to earn money by making Akuriyo artefacts and selling them to be sold in Paramaribo (a possibility opened for the Amerindians by the medical mission). They were saving the money for a gun! Thanks to a short memorandum on this problem written by the present author
two Akuriyo could in 1973 be provided with a gun of their own.

This brings me to another problem, already touched upon. Although one cannot say that the missionaries lost all interest in the Akuriyo once they were in Tēpu, their interest was highly selective and not very intense. The resident missionary was new in Tēpu and needed all his time to learn the Trio language and to carry out his duties as missionary among the Trio. Other missionaries, including those who had had much contact with the Akuriyo during the expeditions, were only occasionally in Tēpu and tended to see all practical problems in a religious perspective. When I pointed out the food problem to one of them, for instance, his practical answer was to intensify the teaching program carried out by the Trio elders, which consisted of singing Christian songs and the learning of Christian texts. I believe that the missionaries underestimated the practical difficulties the Akuriyo had to face in the Trio village. In fact, I am afraid that they were simply not aware of all problems. I am inclined to think that the problem of adjustment requires fulltime attention for a considerable period. In a sense I was in a much better position to assess the Akuriyo problems: in 1973 I lived for several months next to them. I constantly saw the returning hunters, silent and dismal when they returned without game, boisterous when they brought in a pig. I witnessed periods in which the Akuriyo were without meat for more than a week, partly because they were down in their hammocks with influenza and too weak to go hunting (and I paid one of the Trio to go hunting for them). I could compare the behaviour of the group, scattered over the village when they did not possess meat of themselves, close together when they did. But I was in Tēpu for only a short time. That was one of the reasons why my plan to help the Akuriyo to learn to read and write failed. In the first place I had severely underestimated the problem itself and its intricacies. In the second place
I just had not enough time.

Earlier in this paper I said that the Akuriyo left the forest and went to the Trio village out of free will. The Trio in particular had convinced them that village life was better than their nomadic life in the forest. Circumstances forced the Akuriyo to lose their own identity and to acquire a new one: a Trio identity. I think that had the mission been more aware of the consequences of its own activities the process would have required less casualties and for the surviving Akuriyo less misery.

One last word about the mission. The Barbados Declaration contains a rather harsh judgement with regard to the missions, and concludes that "suspension of all missionary activity is the most appropriate policy for the good of Indian society" (see Dostal 1972:378). This may well be true in many places in South America, but in general it is a dangerously sweeping statement. I fundamentally disagree with the basic points of view of the missionaries who contacted the Akuriyo, but I am convinced that suspension of their activity in South Surinam would be nothing less than total disaster for the Amerindians. These missionaries are giving their lives for the good of the Amerindians - good as they see it. How many anthropologists do the same?
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