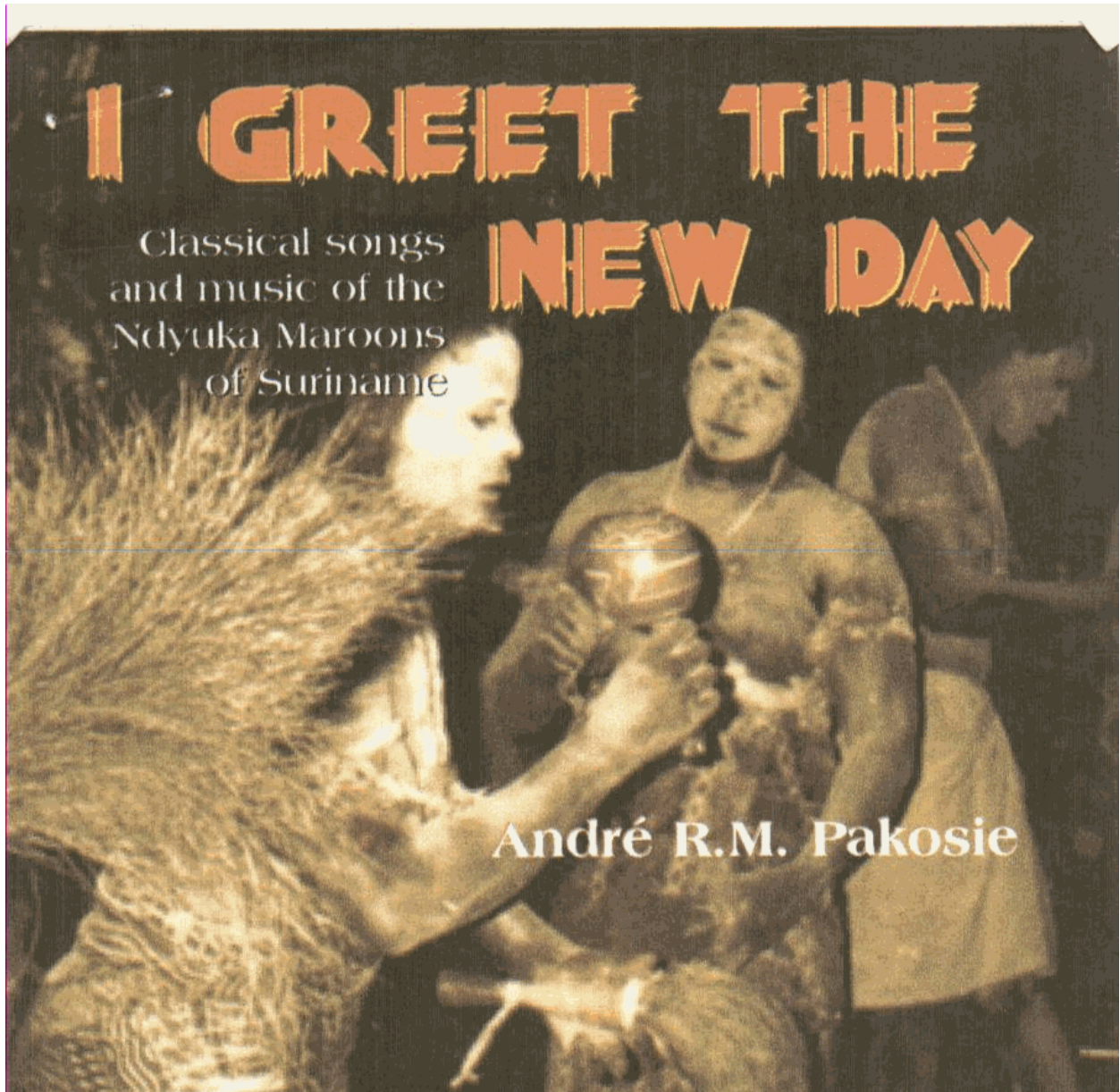


Ndyuka Maroons classical Songs and Music on CD

With: Obiyasingi, Mato/Anainsitoli, Susa, Awawa, Songe, Awasa, Lama en Loonse



One day in 1975, the year of Suriname's independence, I received a book from two close friends in the Netherlands. This book, entitled *Frimangron* (Land of Free People), dealt with the subject of Suriname's impending independence.

On the back cover of the book I read the following text: "Suriname is not a country, Suriname is a construction. Can a country do without a people, a culture, a language?"

Suriname has no people, even though there are several peoples living on its territory. It has no culture, even though one finds several cultures. It has no language, even though one hears many languages. Suriname was constructed by Dutchmen, to serve Dutch interests..."

Sure enough, the country about to gain its independence in 1975 was first of all a construction. And its several peoples, the descendants of all those who came to Suriname, involuntarily or of their own free will, were anything but one nation. Suriname does not have one culture, but many very different cultures, imported by its various peoples from various parts of the world.

THE MAROONS

One of the peoples of Suriname are the Ndyuka or Okanisi. Together with the Saamaka, Pamaka, Matawai, Aluku or Boni and Kwiinti they make up the Maroon communities of Suriname and French Guyana. Their ancestors were shipped as slaves to Suriname from several parts of Africa in the 17th and 18th century, and forced to work on the coffee, sugar and cotton plantations.

The Maroons did not passively await their liberation, which would come after more than 200 years of slavery. They broke their own chains and took refuge in the deep jungle, from where they fought a successful guerilla against their former masters, resulting in a number of peace treaties. The first

peace treaty was concluded with the Ndyuka on 10 October 1760, the second with the Saamaka on 19 September 1762, and the third with the Matawai in 1767.

Although no peace was concluded with the remaining Maroon groups, the former oppressors did recognize their freedom later on. Because they managed to free themselves at an early date (more than a century before the total abolition of slavery in Suriname in 1863), the Maroons were able to preserve their original African culture and develop it in liberty.

The Maroons have a matrilinear social order, meaning that children belong to the mother's family line. This line is bound to a *lo*. *Los* are the subgroups

making up a Maroon community. The Ndyuka community, for instance, consists of fourteen *los*. Each *lo* has its leader, the *kabiten*. At the head of a Maroon community (with the exception of the Kwiinti, because of their scanty numbers) is a *gaanman*. As first among equals, he is the head of all the *los* of his community.

The *gaanman* of the Ndyuka Maroon community since 1966 is Gazon Matodja. He belongs to the *Otoo lo*.

MUSIC AND SONG OF THE NDYUKA MAROONS

Owing to their freedom struggle, the Maroons have been able to develop their own culture in liberty. Their music and dance have been important factors in this development.

Music is the art of the aesthetic production of sound, melody, harmony and rhythm. People and things everywhere in the world make music. The wind in foliage makes a rustling sound which may strike us as music. The sound of the sea's rolling waves or the rush of a river's rapids can be music. Music may have a supporting function, it may be a stimulus, at times its role may be purely artistic. The music and dance of nature peoples, like the Ndyuka, also serve to pass on to their children and subsequent generations their experiences in the eternal game of life. For people without a written tradition, music and dance are a means of holding on to their cultural heritage. They provide a foothold for

those who are hard put to preserve and develop their own identity, an identity which you can show to the world and which you stand for. Music and dance are important in the whole world for the self-esteem, resolve and historical sense they convey, so that new generations may face the unknown future with skill and confidence.

In the musical tradition of the Ndyuka Maroons, all matters of life are dealt with in song — the love-play between man and woman, the condemnation of immoral behaviour, the freedom struggle, sorrow, pain, death, spirituality and events of the past. Besides conveying the insights and warnings contained in poetic texts, music and dance, music and dance also serve to pass on lessons in how to deal with emotions evoked by experiences. The fact that the Maroons come from different parts of Africa is reflected in the diversity of their music.

The music and songs on this CD are a part of the rich tradition of the Ndyuka Maroons. This CD will teach future generations of Maroons, who understand this music, the truth about their past and enable them to express this in music, song and dance. Others, too, who lend a careful ear to this music, will find themselves inspired.

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De opnames zijn gemaakt in Suriname: in de Cottica regio, de Tapanahoni regio en in Paramaribo

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Deze unieke CD is te bestellen bij:

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