



generations-long wars designed to either capture or kill the Boni Maroons is instructive in that regard (see *The Boni Maroon Wars in Suriname*).

By the mid-18th century, the Dutch had been forced by over a century of Maroon guerilla warfare to sign treaties with three of the most powerful Maroon communities: the Ndjuka, Saramaka and the Matawai. All of these Maroon communities had evolved over generations from fugitive African – from any different backgrounds – into new ethnicities which adopted the already mentioned names. Most importantly, they had soundly defeated all of the imperialist forces fielded to capture or kill them, while continuing to expand their numbers and offer an ever-growing threat to the Dutch colony.

The treaties came with yearly ‘gifts’ of all kinds that the Dutch would deliver to the Maroons: textiles, pots and pans, guns, powder, axes, knives, mirrors, nails, liquor and just about anything agreed upon during the periodic sit-downs between the parties. The underlying objectives of the imperialists were to both rid themselves of a dangerous enemy and turn them into valuable allies.

Yet once it became known to the still enslaved African workers that they could no longer rely on the Ndjuka, Saramaka and Matawai for refuge and protection, they began to seek out smaller Maroon concentrations. In the early 1700s, one of those small groups was headed by an African named Asikan Silvester. Born into this group was a child called Boni. His mother was a fugitive African and his father either African or Amerindian. Subsequently, the group chose Boni to be its new head, after Asikan became too old to serve in that position. This group of Maroons would eventually become known to the Dutch as a new center of resistance, and for the next two generations Boni would lead them, and they would be known to history as the Boni Maroons – becoming an ethnicity. Thus, the Boni Maroons just replicated what the imperialists thought they were suppressing by the signing of the treaties with the other Maroons. Consequently, they would not sign any more treaties with either the Boni’s or any other Maroons – up until the end of the slave period.

Boni – for his part – would lead his group to aggressively wage war on the imperialists until his death in his mid-sixties.

Yet even while the Boni’s became the main fighting force amongst all of those Maroons who were still at war with the Dutch, they still observed and respected the democratic wishes of any fugitives or Maroon groups they dealt with; never trying to centralize all control in their hands. Although they were past masters in the use of coordinated guerilla campaigns amongst all of the decentralized groups – during which a unified command was essential – they still never demanded that

