

## bijlage 2. English summary

The Bushmasters: an ethnographic guide to the nature of Western Suriname.

This master thesis concerns the way professional Amerindian bushmeat hunters perceive their Western Suriname rainforest environment. The majority of the indigenous population (approximately 1500 people) of the region is of Arawak, Warau, Carib or mixed descent. Shifting cultivation, hunting and fishing provide most of the daily needs. Commercial hunting brings additional income. Four residents gain substantial income by trading bushmeat.

The hunter's perception of the forested environment should be regarded on three different levels. First, the hunters make a clear distinction between a communal forest and the surrounding forests. All members of the community are free to use the resources within the communal forest, including game and forest for shifting cultivation. Traditionally there are no land titles or territorial divisions except for the direct vicinity of houses and cultivated areas.

The government however, has granted most of the communal forest to multinational mining companies (BHP/Billiton and Alcoa) and Asian logging companies (Musa, Birjaya and Dynasty). Furthermore, three artificial lakes for powering hydroelectric plants are planned, partly within the borders of the communal forest. The communal forest, rivers, game and fish are heavily affected by the large-scale exploitations. This means a dramatic loss of the resources on which the culture and traditions of the indigenous population depends. The current government policy therefore has to be classified as ethnocidal. National legislation on indigenous rights is almost absent and do not live up to international standards and conventions (including those Suriname is obliged to enforce).

On a sub-communal level, the resources within the communal forest are associated with specific persons, families or groups. They don't own these resources but are better skilled or equipped to extract them. This differentiation within the community stems from the specialization in one or another subsistence or commercial activity which community members employ in addition to general subsistence farming, fishing, hunting and gathering. Broadly speaking, the inhabitants of Washabo and Section tend to be more often engaged in commercial fishing and the growing of cash crops, while the inhabitants of Apura are habitual hunters. The specialization in hunting techniques contributes to a more minute association of specific game with specific hunters.

Hunters tend to cooperate in fixed groups, which are specialized on specific game and/or by specific techniques. They share booty equally among them, sell to a specific middleman and carefully manage information on the whereabouts of game. Misinforming of rivals is considered licit. Specialized techniques are hunting at night from a canoe, from an elevated seat or while walking on abandoned logging- or mining-tracks, and daylight hunting by canoe or pursue. All hunters use (mostly Russian made) shotguns.

Commercial valuable game is peccary (*tayassu* spp), deer (*mazama* spp), large rodents (*hydrochaeris hydrochaeris*, *agouti paca*, *dasyprocta* spp), tapir (*tapirus terrestris*) and some large birds (*crax* spp, *penelope marail*, *tinamus major*). Game that is always taken, sometimes exchanged but never sold are tortoises (*chelonoidis* spp), iguanas (*iguana iguana*) and armadillos (Dasypodidae). Toucans, macaws, sloth's and monkeys are occasionally shot. These and other animals are either not very tasteful or too small to spend cartridges on. Commercial bushmeat finds its way to the capital and towns at the coasts of Guyana and French Guiana. Laws on the hunting and trading of bushmeat exist, but are not enforced in Western Suriname.

On examining the skills on which these specializations are based the third level of the indigenous perception of the environment is reached. The hunters look upon the rainforest (floor, borders, under storey, canopy, roads and waterway) as a collection of clues that might guide them to game. The most common clues consist of footprints in dirt-tracks and forest-floor, unusual bend branches, the coloration and brightness of animals retina-reflection produced by torches, crackling noises, calls of game-animals, calls of non-game animals indicating the presence of game and various smells. These clues have to be discovered by using techniques (bodily and artisanal) such as looking at the right places, walking at a certain pace or scanning forest borders with torches.

This perception is made legible to ethnographic research by separating acts from the phenomena these acts produce (clues) and from the skills needed to proceed to the next act. These three aspects cohere in an ongoing perceptual engagement with the environment, which results in an enlarged capacity to acquire game ('wheel of agency'). Information, knowledge and equipment support the development of this agency. In the formulation of this approach I relied on the works of Tim Ingold (2000), Wim Zweers (1995) and Ton Lemaire (2002).