
THE SUSPICION CONFIRMED: J.P.B. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG'S 1923 LINGUISTIC FIELDWORK IN ST. THOMAS AND ST. JOHN ON VIRGIN ISLANDS DUTCH CREOLE

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Abstract

The Danish-Dutch archaeological expedition to the US Virgin Islands in 1922 to 1923 included the Dutch anthropologist J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong. In addition to his archaeological work, he pursued a secondary aim: confirming the survival of Virgin Islands Dutch Creole (VIDC), a contact language spoken when the islands were a colony of Denmark, known as the Danish West Indies. De Josselin de Jong identified several native speakers. He recorded their narratives, later published in his 1926 volume *Het Huidige Negerhollandsch*. This collection provided a rare vernacular source, supplementing the predominantly missionary literature available at the time. In 2023, marking the centenary of the expedition, De Josselin de Jong's daily diary entries were published in Dutch on www.diecreoltaal.com. The present article examines the diary as an egodocument and its metalinguistic insights, exploring how the notes enhance our understanding of the conditions and authenticity of the 1926 VIDC collection. Through examples of the fieldwork process and interactions with informants, this study reveals the diary's value in affirming the reliability of De Josselin de Jong's documentation of VIDC, and it offers a closer view of the language as spoken in the early twentieth century.

Keywords: Virgin Islands Dutch Creole; US Virgin Islands; Danish West Indies; J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong; linguistic fieldwork; Creole languages; metalinguistic comments

1. Introduction*

In 1922–1923, a Danish-Dutch archaeological expedition visited the US Virgin Islands to study the artefacts and traces of the original Amerindian inhabitants of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. The Dutch anthropologist J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, who is considered to be the founding father of modern anthropology in the Netherlands, had a second agenda. Inspired by the 1905 publication *Het Negerhollands der Deense Antillen* by his Leiden colleague D.C. Hesseling, he had a suspicion that the Dutch-related Creole language of the former Danish West Indies had not yet become extinct, but was in fact still spoken.¹ Ultimately, the suspicion was confirmed: during a few months De Josselin de Jong was able to interview several of the (presumed) last native speakers of the language. The collection of stories was published in 1926 as *Het Huidige Negerhollandsch* (De Josselin de Jong 1926). Since most of the available sources of Dutch Creole up to that moment in time consisted of missionary material, this collection eventually became an important and reliable source of Dutch Creole vernacular. De Josselin de Jong (1926) is a key source of VIDC as spoken in the early twentieth century.

One hundred years after the expedition, I published De Josselin de Jong's diary that he kept during the expedition on www.diecreoltaal.com, which is devoted to Virgin Islands Dutch Creole (VIDC). The text was presented in Dutch, day by day from November 19, 2022, to August 23, 2023. The present article provides an overview of the fieldwork activities, contact with informants and examples of collected material traceable to the specific moments and locations of the interviews. This study focuses on an ego-document and the metalinguistic aspects of De Josselin de Jong's fieldwork, exploring the following question: How does the information in De Josselin de Jong's diary of the Danish-Dutch archaeological expedition contribute to a better understanding of the conditions and authenticity of his 1926 VIDC collection? In what follows, this article demonstrates that analyzing the metalinguistic information found in the diary indeed supplements De Josselin de Jong's collection of VIDC texts. In this way, it brings

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¹ The name “Negerhollands” was used to refer to Virgin Islands Dutch Creole since 1840. Today, the language is more commonly called Virgin Islands Dutch Creole.

us closer to the fieldwork context and supports the authenticity of the texts he collected.

2. Brief overview of early studies of native speakers

VIDC is known for the existence of early sources in the language, compared to other Caribbean Creole languages. Most of the early VIDC texts are missionary translations from German or Danish into the Creole by the Moravian Brethren and Danish Lutheran missionaries, respectively. Already in 1742, two letters by enslaved people were published (Zinzendorf 1742), from 1749/53 a manuscript of translated hymns was used (Isles & Weber 1749/1753) and from 1765 onwards, several hymnbooks and ABC-booklets were published (see Appel et al., this issue). From about 1780 until 1833, several large translations of missionary texts were prepared in manuscript and in print.²

In 1770 a grammar of the language was published in Copenhagen (Magens 1770). Since it was the first printed grammar of a creole language, it gave a broad, European, audience an opportunity to become acquainted with this language. A few years later, Oldendorp published a language description which was included in his *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brueder (...)* (Oldendorp 1777, Oldendorp 2000–2002: 681–715). These works gave interested readers outside the Caribbean the opportunity to study Dutch Creole (see also Stein, this issue).

The translations into VIDC by the missionaries of both the Danish Lutheran mission and the mission of the Moravian Brethren were often, if not always, made by non-native speakers of VIDC. Metalinguistic comments in these translations show the considerations of the translators about how to best connect with the new members of the speech communities, the enslaved speakers of the Creole language (Van Rossem 2017). Hardly any of the texts show a reflection of the day-to-day lives of the native speakers of VIDC. Although feedback on language use was given by the addressees of the translators, only few texts were written by native speakers; for some examples, see for instance the anonymous rebel or farewell song *E-Samja* (Van Rossem & Van der Voort 1996: 224–226) and the (slave) adds published in local newspapers (Bøegh et al. 2022).

² The regularly updated *Comprehensive bibliography of texts in or about Virgin Islands Dutch Creole* can be found on www.diecreoltaal.com (last accessed November 2, 2024).

In the second half of the 19th century, several scholars became interested in VIDC. At this point, the language was thought to be extinct or at least it appeared to be losing its position as the main language in the Danish West Indies, as speakers were and had been shifting to Virgin Islands English Creole (Bøegh 2021, Wied 1842–1847).

In 1871 the American philologist Addison Van Name published the first comparative study of Creole languages, a study in which he included VIDC. He did not only rely on historical sources, but also on the help of one Frederico Antonio Camps (Van Name 1871: 127), who seems to have been a near-native speaker, as he had lived on St. Thomas since he was six years old. His contributions are, compared to what was available in the written sources, unfortunately not very extensive. A few years later, the Danish physician Erik Pontoppidan not only published fragments of missionary texts (Pontoppidan 1881, 1887), but also proverbs and other examples of Dutch Creole vernacular.

In his search for text examples to study Caribbean Creole languages, the Austrian linguist Hugo Schuchardt got in contact with the physician Anthon Magens (1821–1898) on St. Thomas. In his letter from 1883, Magens presents an extensive description in VIDC of daily life for which he consulted his maid who was a native speaker, and he describes in VIDC a situation, a “pistarckle”³, which he encountered in Charlotte Amalie about a girl whose belly ache turned out to be the announcement of the birth of her child (Schuchardt 1914: 130–133). This letter was thought to be the only text in VIDC vernacular at the time of its publication. It was written in a spelling which was chosen by Anthon Magens to represent the spoken language as well as possible.

As a professor of Modern Greek, D.C. Hesseling was particularly interested in language change and creolization. His earliest publications in this field dealt with the development of Afrikaans from Dutch. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he got interested in VIDC, and while working on his 1905 book, an anthology of earlier texts and a language description, he also tried to learn whether VIDC was still spoken. Bishop Greider from St. Thomas was pessimistic and could only present three sentences and some metalinguistic comments. Hesseling’s 1905 work is therefore, like most earlier work, mainly based on the missionary texts and not

³ This word, derived from Dutch and/or Danish *spektakel*, existed both in Virgin Islands Dutch Creole and local English Creole (see Bøegh & Bakker 2021: 27).

on contemporary spoken VIDC. After all, the above-mentioned Magens letter was not published until 1914.

Although it is not confirmed by De Josselin de Jong in any of his publications, nor in his diary of his fieldwork on St. Thomas and St. John in 1922–1923, it may well be that his interest was caught by Hesselings' published work or through personal contact with his Leiden colleague. In fact, from various comments in the diary we know that a copy of Hesselings' *Het Negerhollands der Deense Antillen* (1905) was in his luggage, which shows that De Josselin de Jong at least wanted to try to find out whether he could still locate speakers (see section 4.1). After all, we must keep in mind that the lack of recent printed sources does not mean that the language had already become extinct.

In several, if not all, of the above-mentioned publications, background information appears to be of great interest. Metalinguistic remarks point to the authenticity and reliability of the recorded material and the reliability of the informants. For instance, knowing that Anthon Magens consulted his maid for his authentic VIDC text (Schuchardt 1914: 127) shows us that he relied on someone from a lower class when preparing his letter to Schuchardt.

Section 4 will explore the efforts De Josselin de Jong made to get in contact with speakers of VIDC and to record the texts which were eventually published in De Josselin de Jong (1926). Before that, section 3 will provide a sketch of the Danish-Dutch expedition.

3. Sketch of the expedition

Jan Petrus Benjamin de Josselin de Jong (1886–1964) originally studied Dutch Language and Literature. Through his contact with Dutch linguist and anthropologist C.C. Uhlenbeck, he entered the field of North American anthropology, traditionally combining cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. In the introduction of his study of De Josselin de Jong as an archaeologist, Effert (1992: 1–9) presents a good overview of De Josselin de Jong's study and inspiration. To begin to contextualize his fieldwork, it is important to mention the four-field approach of early twentieth-century anthropology. This approach was developed by Franz Boas, and can be recognized in De Josselin de Jong's publications.

Effert (1992: 5) shows for instance that he published in the fields of ethnology, linguistics and archaeology, related to several parts of the world, including North, Middle and South America, Africa and East Asia.

In 1921, the Danish archaeologist Gudmund Hatt and J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong planned the Danish-Dutch archaeological expedition to the Caribbean (Effert 1992: 28–35). They aimed to find artefacts of the first inhabitants of the Caribbean islands, and they visited these islands together or separately: St. Thomas (Hatt and De Josselin de Jong) and St. John (Hatt and De Josselin de Jong), and later on also St. Croix (Hatt), Santo Domingo (Hatt), St. Maarten (De Josselin de Jong), Saba (De Josselin de Jong), St. Eustatius (De Josselin de Jong) and Aruba (De Josselin de Jong).

On November 14, 1922, De Josselin de Jong left for Copenhagen where he joined Gudmund Hatt and his wife Emilie Demant Hatt. On November 21, they travelled from Copenhagen to New York. During the first part of the expedition, Hatt and De Josselin de Jong visited New York to get in contact with important anthropologists like Charles W. Mead, Pliny Earle Goddard, Clark Wissler, Nels Nelson and Franz Boas, and to gather information about what to search for during their excavations.

On St. Thomas, the archaeological activities were focused on Magens Bay (December 19, 1922 – February 3, 1923) and Crum Bay (February 5, 1923 – February 16, 1923). On St. John, several sites (for instance Bordeaux, Old Oven, Annaberg and Mary's Point) were visited between February 21 and March 22, 1923. In this article, I won't get into further detail about the archaeological activities. Effert (1992: 36–61) presents a complete overview and he is also able to refer to correspondence about the expedition, which is archived in Copenhagen.

The diary of this expedition is archived in the library of Leiden University in the Netherlands.⁴ The diary is written in Dutch. Effert's (1997) biography is in English, and it is thus accessible to an international audience interested in this expedition. An English translation of the entire diary is not available yet. Such an edition would present extra insights into the day-to-day archaeological activities related to the first inhabitants of St. Thomas and St. John. In the present article my focus is on the linguistic fieldwork, and only the parts of the diary that relate to that topic, have been translated into English. Figure 1 shows De Josselin de Jong during fieldwork in the US Virgin Islands.

⁴ Library University Leiden: Collection KITLV, signature: OR 385 (5–6).

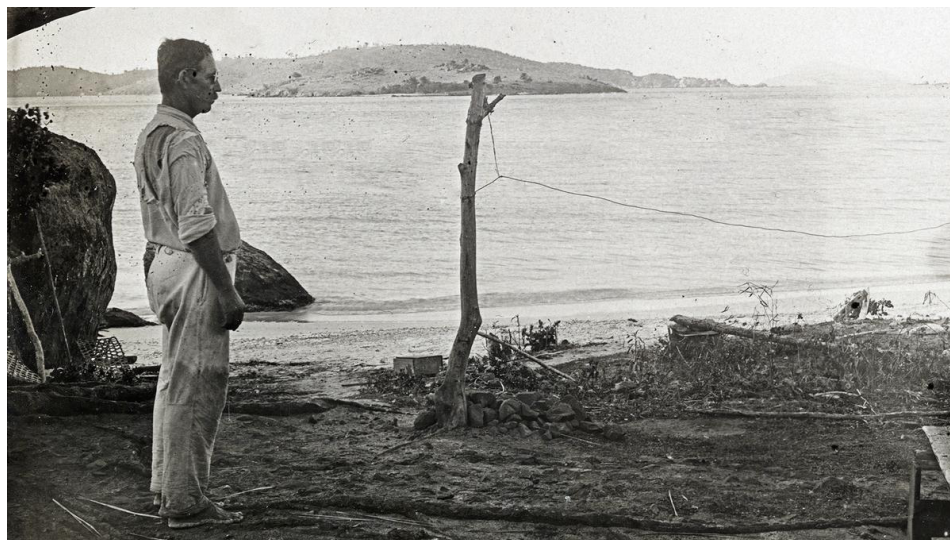


Figure 1. J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong in the US Virgin Islands. Photo: Gudmund Hatt. Reproduction: John Lee, National Museum of Denmark (gratefully acknowledged). Source: <https://samlinger.natmus.dk/dnt/asset/120757> (accessed November 7, 2024).

4. The linguistic fieldwork on St. Thomas and St. John

Already in his first lectures and publications after returning home from the archaeological expedition, De Josselin de Jong mentioned that he had met several native speakers of VIDC. However, only after reading his diary are we able to see a clear timeline in which we can track his search for information about the language, his endeavors to actually meet native speakers and to find written texts in VIDC. As I will show in section 4.1, some notes even inform us that he took the most recent publications about VIDC (Heseling 1905 and Schuchardt 1914) along with him as reference works.

In sections 4.2 and 4.3, I will present the day-to-day interactions with native speakers of VIDC from St. Thomas and St. John. Presenting the information in this way allows readers to follow the actual steps of De Josselin de Jong's linguistic fieldwork. A brief overview, without extensive examples, is available in Van Rossem (2017: 321–326).

During the final part of his visit, De Josselin de Jong had the opportunity to copy a missionary manuscript of Isaiah from the Old Testament. In section 4.4, I will examine what we know about this manuscript, including De Josselin de Jong's efforts to copy the entire text, and the significance

of this eighteenth-century manuscript for studying the early stages of VIDC.

4.1 Contemporary reference works

On the basis of the diary, we know that De Josselin de Jong brought along with him two publications about VIDC: Hesseling (1905) and Schuchardt (1914). He mentions D.C. Hesseling's 1905 work *Het Negerhollands der Deense Antillen* three times in his diary:

January, 1, Monday: I had hoped to be able to study some of Hesseling's book on Negerhollands today, but the "dairy room", in which our suitcases were kept, turned out to be inaccessible. There is something wrong with the lock and it cannot be repaired until tomorrow.^{5, 6}

January, 7, Sunday: The day was used for writing letters and reading Hesseling's book about Negerhollands.⁷

January, 14, Sunday: The afternoon was spent writing letters and reading Hesseling's book about Negerhollands.⁸

Not only is Hesseling (1905) of interest for the description of the language, the book also contains the most recent information about the use of the Creole. In his letter to Hesseling of January 31, 1940, Bishop Greider on St. Thomas had written:

The language in its purity is now spoken by a very few old people, principally those living in the country districts. The younger generation speaks a mixed dialect that is called Creole, but it contains very many English words ... Our people (...) speak

⁵ De Josselin de Jong's diary and his 1924 and 1926 publications are in Dutch. All translations into English and quotations in bold are by me, unless other translators are mentioned. De Josselin de Jong's views and language use are from the early twentieth century, and some words used by him may be viewed as offensive today; I have taken them as literally as possible from the diary, contemporary interpretations notwithstanding.

⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 43): "Ik had gehoopt vandaag wat in Hesselings boek over het negerhollandsch te kunnen studeeren, maar de 'melkkamer' waarin onze koffers, bleek ontoegankelijk. Er hapert iets aan het slot en dat kan pas morgen gerepareerd worden".

⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 49): "Den dag gebruikt voor brieven schrijven en lezen in Hesselings boek over het Negerhollandsch".

⁸ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 54): "Den namiddag besteed aan brieven schrijven en wat in Hesseling's boek over het Negerhollandsch lezen".

a comparatively pure English and there is no patois like in the French or Dutch islands. In fact, if anyone wished to study the language as it now is spoken, it would be best to do it immediately. (Hesseling 1905: 33–34)

It is evident that De Josselin de Jong wanted to get in contact with Greider. On January 30, 1923, he succeeded in meeting with Greider and, as we will read in a following section, this later resulted in him meeting native speakers of VIDC as well.

The second work on VIDC which De Josselin de Jong had taken along on the expedition was Hugo Schuchardt's 1914 article, in which the so-called *Magens letter* (Van Rossem & Van der Voort 1996: 238) was included. On Tuesday, February 6, De Josselin de Jong writes as follows in his diary (my emphasis), in connection with a meeting with a reverend:

February 6, Tuesday: He [Reverend Romig, CvR] knew a few old Negroes who knew "Creole", the brothers Prince at Mosquito Bay. After waiting there for some time until the two old gentlemen had enjoyed their breakfast (which they take after working in the fields for a while), we had an interview with them. *One of them can read and appeared to completely understand the letter published by Schuchardt in Negerhollands (...).*⁹

Since this letter was only published in Schuchardt (1914), De Josselin de Jong must have taken this separate article along with him, perhaps to ensure he had a good example of genuine vernacular VIDC available.

4.2 Virgin Islands Dutch Creole on St. Thomas

De Josselin de Jong's curiosity about the possibility of a Dutch Creole still being spoken, was being rewarded step by step. Already a day after his arrival in St. Thomas, he writes the following in his diary:

December 14, Thursday: We also met Mr. and Mrs. Holst there, also very interested in archaeological research. Mr. Holst himself collected folklore among the blacks and published it in a popular manner in Danish. His wife informed me that there

⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 68–69): "Hij wist een paar oude negers die "Creole" kenden, de gebrs. Prince aan Mosquito bay. Na aldaar eenigen tijd gewacht te hebben tot de twee oude heeren hun ontbijt genoten hadden (dat nemen ze na eerst een poos op 't veld gewerkt te hebben), hadden we een onderhoud met hen. Een van hen kan lezen en bleek den door Schuchardt gepubliceerde brief in negerhollandsch volkomen te begrijpen".

are probably still Negroes on St. Thomas who know [-Negro]¹⁰ Negerhollands, but I think that is a kind of lingua franca of later origin. (...).¹¹

Only a few days later, De Josselin de Jong received additional information from another source:

December 17, Sunday: Mr. Thiele (also a Dane), whom we met at the Holst family, informed me that the so-called “Creole” which is still spoken by some blacks on St. Thomas, is, in his opinion, indeed Dutch. According to him, there are still many people on St. John who speak it.¹²

At the end of January 1923, his wish to get in contact with native speakers of VIDC was almost fulfilled:

January, 30, Tuesday: I successively visited the consul Van Eps, who this time had no letters for me, Bishop Greider, who informed me that there are still several old people at the [-West] east end of the island who speak Negerhollands and gave me some addresses (...).¹³

January, 31, Wednesday: Mrs. Holst informed me that there are still people in the town who speak Negerhollands. She knows several.¹⁴

At last, with the help of Mrs. Holst, De Josselin de Jong got in contact with a native speaker of VIDC:

¹⁰ The diplomatic code “[-]” indicates that this text was erased by the author.

¹¹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 22): “We ontmoetten daar ook Mr. en Mrs. Holst, ook zeer geïnteresseerd in het arch. onderzoek. Mr. Holst heeft zelf folklore verzameld onder de negers en op populaire manier in het Deensch gepubliceerd. Zijn vrouw deelde mij mee dat er vermoedelijk ook op St. Thomas nog wel negers zijn die [-neger] negerhollandsch kennen, maar ik denk dat dat een soort lingua franca is van lateren oorsprong”.

¹² De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 29): “De heer Thiele (eveneens Deen) dien we bij de Holsten ontmoetten deelde mij mede, dat het zoogenaamde “Creoolsch” dat door sommige negers ook op St. Thomas nog gesproken wordt, naar zijn meening inderdaad Negerhollandsch is. Op St. Jan zijn volgens hem nog heel wat menschen te vinden die het spreken”.

¹³ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 63–64): “Ik bezocht achtereenvolgens de consul v. Eps, die ditmaal geen brieven voor me had, bisschop Greider, die mij meedeelde dat er bij het [-Weste] oosteinde van het eiland nog verscheiden oude menschen te vinden zijn die negerhollandsch spreken en mij eenige adressen gaf (...)”

¹⁴ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 65): “Mevr. Holst deelde me mee, dat er in de stad nog menschen te vinden zijn die negerhollandsch spreken. Zij kent er verscheidene”.

February, 3, Saturday: At 11.15 we left for the town, to the Holst family, as Mrs. Holst had promised to introduce me to an old lady who knows Negerhollands. I met the Holsts at lunch and gratefully accepted the invitation to participate. After lunch, Mrs. Holst took me to Miss Benedetti,¹⁵ a 73-year-old, not entirely white lady, who was willing to assist me with her knowledge. However, it will not be of much use to me, because she has forgotten a lot and cannot talk in Dutch. She managed to name me a black person, also living in town, who could probably relate more. He is even older than her and had served as a slave. To find out his address I must consult Greider; I don't have more time for that this afternoon.¹⁶

February 6, Tuesday: (...) He [reverend Romig, CvR] knew a few old Negroes who knew "Creole", the brothers Prince¹⁷ at Mosquito Bay. After waiting there for some time until the two old gentlemen had enjoyed their breakfast (which they take after working in the fields for a while), we had an interview with them. One of them can read and appeared to completely understand the letter published by Schuchardt in Negerhollands. They are probably useful, although they no longer have their former vocabulary available. We agreed that I would come back tomorrow at 10 AM and see what I could do with them. I hope I can get them to tell stories. However, they have little time: they don't think they can spare more than two hours a day. But if the work goes smoothly and they like it, they will probably have more time. Perhaps the presence of their parson today was not beneficial. (...).¹⁸

¹⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 8): "I owe information of various kinds to Aristeia Benedetti (St. Thomas; born 1850) (...)"

¹⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 66): "Om 11.15 naar de stad vertrokken, naar de familie Holst, daar Mevr. Holst me beloofd had mij te zullen introduceeren bij een oude juffrouw die Negerhollandsch kent. Ik trof de Holsten aan de lunch en aanvaardde dankbaar de uitnoodiging om mee te doen. Na de lunch bracht Mevr. H. mij naar Miss Benedetti, een 73-jarige, niet geheel blanke juffrouw, die gaerne bereid was mij met haar kennis bij te staan. Ik zal echter niet heel veel aan haar hebben, want ze is veel vergeten en kan niet in 't negerhollandsch vertellen. Ze wist me een neger te noemen, ook in de stad wonend, die waarschijnlijk wel zal kunnen vertellen. Die is nog ouder dan zij en heeft nog als slaaf gediend. Om zijn adres te weten te komen moet ik Greider raadplegen; vanmiddag heb ik daar geen tijd meer voor".

¹⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7) mentions only one of the Prince brothers: "XIV–XVI by Prince (Nisky, St. Thomas)".

¹⁸ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 68–69): "Hij wist een paar oude negers die "Creole" kenden, de gebrs. Prince aan Mosquito bay. Na aldaar eenigen tijd gewacht te hebben to de twee oude heeren hun ontbijt genoten hadden (dat nemen ze na eerst een poos op 't veld gewerkt te hebben), hadden we een onderhoud met hen. Een van hen kan lezen en bleek den door Schuchardt gepubliceerde brief in negerhollandsch volkomen te begrijpen. Zij zijn waarschijnlijk wel bruikbaar, al hebben ze hun vroegeren woordenschat niet meer paraat. We spraken af dat ik morgen om 10 uur terug zou komen en dan zou zien wat ik met hen kon doen. Ik hoop ze aan 't vertellen te kunnen krijgen. Ze hebben echter

February 7, Wednesday: From 10 to 12, I spent with the old Prince, with whom I partly worked through Magens' letter to Schuchardt, asking him all kinds of information. I hope to get him to narrate; he is starting to show more and more interest. It will continue tomorrow.¹⁹

February 8, Thursday: (...) and from 10–12 with the old Prince. He has now given me some text, still no folklore though. I asked him if he couldn't get us a worker; he will do his best.²⁰

Prince would present three, quite personal stories, later published in De Josselin de Jong (1926):²¹

- XIV: A personal remembrance of informant Prince. He tells how, as a boy, he got a thrashing because his father had to wait for him.
- XV: Prince's father was manager of an estate. His master allowed him to keep some of the sheep for himself.
- XVI: Prince's father catches one of the slaves in the act of stealing a turkey. The culprit prefers a thrashing to being sent to the 'fort'.

The following is text XV from De Josselin de Jong (1926: 111):

Mi popá wēs ēn meskene nabono dā plantái. So dā blaŋku a kā 'low am for hou som skap for am self. Elkēn niw mān am ha for lo 'n kapún almāl di juŋ bokn senr. Dā mēstər fan di plantái šini steki fan di skap sin hō fo merək di dā wa hotu fan am, sodat wenə sendu kom fo faŋ fo frufruko, di mēstər nu sa faŋ wa hotə fan mi popá.²²

weinig tijd: meer dan 2 uur per dag meenen ze niet te kunnen missen. Maar als 't werk vlot en hun bevalt zullen ze vermoedelijk wel meer tijd hebben. Misschien werkte de aanwezigheid van hun parson vandaag niet gunstig”.

¹⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 70): “Van 10–12 bracht ik bij den ouden Prince door, met wie ik Magens' brief aan Schuchardt gedeeltelijk doorwerkte hem daarbij allerlei inlichtingen vragend. Ik hoop hem aan 't vertellen te krijgen; hij begint steeds meer belangstelling te toonen. Morgen wordt het voortgezet”.

²⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 70): “(...) van 10–12 bij den ouden Prince. Hij heeft me nu wat tekst gegeven, nog een folklore evenwel. Ik heb hem gevraagd of hij ons geen arbeider kan bezorgen; hij zal zijn best doen”.

²¹ All Roman numerals in this article refer to the stories which are numbered this way in De Josselin de Jong (1926).

²² The phonetic orthography is that employed in De Josselin de Jong (1926). A macron indicates a long vowel (for instance: *ā* is pronounced /aa/). An acute accent shows whether a syllable is stressed (for instance: in *plantái* the final syllable is stressed). A

Translation: ‘My father was a manager on the plantation. So the whites had allowed him to keep some sheep for himself. Every new month, he had to castrate all the young bucks. The master of the plantation cut a piece of the sheep’s ear to mark it which belongs to him, so when they come to catch for (the) market, the master will not catch what belongs to my father’.

The question posed to Prince about hiring a worker for the archaeological work is of interest, as this person would later become a new informant:

February, 9, Friday: At 10 o’clock I was back and went to Prince. (...) I received some text from Prince again, but no folklore. However, in the morning he had sent us another elderly man who stated that he could narrate in the language. Prince’s intention was that he would work for us (digging), but anyway I decided to check his use of Negerhollands. At 1 o’clock he appeared again and I worked with him until 5 o’clock. His advantage over Prince is that he cannot read or write and that he wants to and is able to tell stories. It promises to be so interesting that I will devote all my time to it for the time being, which is easy since the excavations provide not much to do.²³

February 10, Saturday: Worked from 8–12 and from 1–4 with the old Negro. He knows the language well, although he has also forgotten some words. Sometimes these come back to him while he is telling the story, but from an ethnological point of view his stories are not worth much, even though he cannot read or write. These Negroes have been in contact with civilization for too long. The “old-time story” he didn’t have from a book (another one had been read to him at the time), he told me about the Bremen town musicians.²⁴

word which is printed in italics in De Josselin de Jong (1926) originates from English (Creole) and not from Dutch Creole.

²³ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 71): “Om 10 uur was ik terug en ging ik naar Prince. (...) Van Prince kreeg ik weer wat tekst, maar geen folklore. Hij had echter ‘S morgens een anderen bejaarden man naar ons toegezonden die verklaarde in de taal te kunnen vertellen. Prince’s bedoeling bleek weliswaar dat hij voor ons zou werken (graven), maar ik besloot in ieder geval den man op negerholl. te onderzoeken. Om 1 uur verscheen hij weer en tot 5 uur heb ik met hem gewerkt. Hij heeft boven Prince van dat hij niet kan lezen of schrijven en dat hij wil en kan vertellen. Het belooft zoo interessant te worden, dat ik voorloopig al mijn tijd eraan zal geven, wat te gemakkelijker kan daar de opgravingen zoo weinig te doen geven”.

²⁴ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 71–72): “Van 8–12 en van 1–4 gewerkt met den ouden neger. Hij kent de taal goed, hoewel ook hij wel enkele woorden vergeten is. Soms komen ze weer bij hem op onder het vertellen. Maar van een ethnol. standpunt beschouwd zijn zijn verhalen niet veel waard al kan hij niet lezen of schrijven. Deze negers zijn al te lang met de beschaving in aanraking geweest. Als een ‘old-time story’ die hij

The name of this informant is not previously mentioned in the diary, but since this story is published in De Josselin de Jong (1926: 16, story VI), we know that the old man who was introduced on February 9, is William Anthony Joshua.²⁵

In 1985, US Virgin Islands linguist Gilbert Sprauve interviewed Mrs. Alice Stevens, the last native speaker of VIDC. During these conversations, which took place in lectures at the University of the Virgin Islands, Sprauve read her this story by Joshua in English and asked her to translate it into VIDC. Although the story was unknown to her, there appeared to be hardly any difference between Joshua's texts and Stevens's translations (see Van Rossem 2017: 253–255).

Joshua is the source of texts I–XIII, which are all lengthy folktales and stories resembling fairy tales, without personal notes; they consist of fifteen pages in print, while Prince's stories fill only one page. De Josselin de Jong writes:

February 12, Monday: From 8–12 we worked again with old Joshua (...) In the afternoon Emil Francis,²⁶ an elderly Negro from Smiths Bay, East End, appeared, who had been summoned by reverend Romig because he also knows Negerhollands well. It turned out that he could indeed still speak the language quite well and was very interested in it, but he could not tell anything. I could probably get him started after two or three interviews, but as he lives on the East End, that's not possible. In the meantime, it is useful to get information from different people. Very little is noticeable about individual differences in pronunciation. So far, Joshua is the best object, although his English is virtually unintelligible. This afternoon I could also have worked with a very old Negro woman, but since Francis had driven especially from the East End to be interviewed by me, I had to postpone the interview with the old woman until tomorrow. Francis was neatly dressed in a black jacket, white piqué shirt and stiff double collar, without a tie, and white and blue striped trousers – a Panama hat with a huge brim on his head.²⁷

niet uit een boek had (een andere was hem indertijd voorgelezen) vertelde hij me de Bremer stadsmuzikanten”.

²⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): “I–XIII are dictated to me by William Anthony Joshua (Nisky, St. Thomas; born 1858)”. De Josselin de Jong mentions his name in his diary on February 12, 1923.

²⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): “XVII by Emil Francis (Smiths Bay, East End, St. Thomas; born 1854)”.

²⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 73): “Van 8–12 weer gewerkt met den ouden Joshua, terwijl Hatt met 2 man aan de 2^e opgraving werkte (Georges en Jeremiah hadden een nieuwen arbeider meegebracht, Frederic genaamd) en Mevr. Hatt toezicht hield op één arbeider in de eerste opgraving. Morgen wordt de bemanning aanmerkelijk versterkt

Emil Francis contributed only one text, XVII (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 25–26), which is, it would appear accidentally, attributed to Prince in the summary: “Prince remembers an earthquake and a cholera epidemic about 1871” (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 112). This text is later also included in Hesseling’s comparison between Papiamentu and VIDC (Hesseling 1933: 281–282). The text reads as follows:

Də dómnnē wa a dōp mi si nām a *Mr. Wit*, domni fa Hernhut. Mi a lo lo a skōl a di jā 1871. Di skōlhus a kā fal. So ons a ha fo hou skōl a di kérék. *And* da di ótkwēk a fin oⁿs an ons a ha fu kurí abít it fa di kérék. An mi mā lo drā melək a Kwati an mi di ótkwēk am a kri di stibn. Astə di *gale* di seləf jā di a ha kálara. Muši fulək wa mi wēt a dōt. Ons na kan lo we it fa Kwati. Də dómnnē na listá ons lo ēntēn pat abiti it fa di plantai.

Translation: ‘The parson who baptized me, his name is *Mr. Wit*, parson from Herrnhut. I went to school in the year 1871. The schoolhouse had fallen apart. So we had to have school in the church. And there the earthquake found us and we had to run outside, away from the church. And my mother was going to take milk to Kwati and because of (= as a result of) the earthquake she had the convulsions. After the storm in the same year there was cholera. Many people that I knew died. We cannot run away from Kwati. The parson won’t allow us to go any way out of the plantation’.

The next day, the interviews continued:

February 13, Tuesday: This morning from 8–10 I did Negerhollands with old Joshua, from 10–12 with the 79-year-old black woman²⁸ who, however, could not

daar de oude Joshua 2 man mee zal brengen. ’S middags verscheen Emil Francis, een bejaarde neger van Smiths bay, East End, die door reverend Romyn op ontboden was omdat hij eveneens nog goed Negerhollandsch kent. Hij bleek ook inderdaad de taal nog behoorlijk te kunnen spreken en er veel belang in te stellen, maar hij wist niets te vertellen. Waarschijnlijk zou ik hem na 2 of 3 interviews wel aan den gang kunnen krijgen, maar daar hij aan East End woont kan daar niet van komen. Het is intusschen wel nuttig van verschillende personen informatie te krijgen. Van individueele verschillen in uitspraak is heel weinig merkbaar. Totnogtoe is Joshua het beste object, al is zijn Engelsch vrijwel onverstaanbaar. Vanmiddag had ik ook kunnen werken met een heel oude negerin, maar daar Francis expresselijk van East End was komen rijden om zich door mij te laten uitvragen moest ik het onderhoud met de oude vrouw tot morgen uitstellen. Francis was netjes aangedaan met een zwarte jas, wit piqué overhemd en stijf dubbelboord, zonder das evenwel, en een wit en blauw gestreepte broek. Een Panemahoed met enormen rand op zijn hoofd”.

²⁸ Her name is not mentioned in this diary, however it is quite possible this is Helena Mitchell (St. Thomas; born 1844) (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 8).

or did not want to narrate. She also speaks softly and has difficulty understanding what it is about when I ask for further explanation. Joshua is really much better. He is not ashamed to tell stories and he understands very well what it is about. He told me today – and most likely he is right – that the old Negro stories became extinct because the clergy forbade them to be told to children.²⁹

February 16, Friday: Worked with Joshua on Negerhollands the entire day.³⁰

February, 20 Tuesday: At 11 o'clock I paid a farewell visit to old Prince, to whom I gave 2 dollars for his instruction in Negerhollands.³¹

On the 21st of February 1923, De Josselin de Jong left St. Thomas for St. John. The three informants discussed thus far, that is, Prince, Joshua (both from Nisky, east of Charlotte Amalie) and Francis (Smith Bay, East End), contributed only seventeen of the 103 total texts (33% of the informants, 16% of the texts, however about 26% of the entire corpus, based on the length of the texts). The 1883 letter by Anthon Magens (Schuchardt 1914) was at that time considered to be the most recent sample of VIDC vernacular. It is therefore interesting to read that De Josselin de Jong used this text in his conversations with the newly found native speakers.

4.3 Native speakers of Dutch Creole on St. John

From February 21 until March 2, while on St. John, De Josselin de Jong and Hatt continued their archaeological expedition, exploring several sites where artifacts were found. However, on March 3 it appears that De Josselin de Jong also must have asked his host, Reverend Penn, to look for speakers of Dutch Creole. As we have mentioned before, according to Thiele, there would still be many people on St. John who could speak

²⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 73–74): “Van Ochtend van 8–10 negerhollandsch gedaan met den ouden Joshua, van 10–12 met de 79-jarige negerin 28 die echter niet kon of wou vertellen. Ook spreekt ze zacht en begrijpt slecht waar ’t om gaat als ik om nadere uitlegging vraag. Joshua is werkelijk veel beter. Hij geneert zich niet om verhalen te doen en begrijpt heel goed waar ’t om gaat. Hij vertelde me vandaag – en hoogstwaarschijnlijk heeft hij gelijk – dat de oude negerverhalen uitgestorven waren omdat de geestelijken verboden ze de kinderen te vertellen”.

³⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 75–76): “De heelen dag met Joshua Negerholl. gewerkt”.

³¹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 77–78): “Om 11 uur bracht ik een afscheidsbezoek aan den ouden Prince, wien ik 2 dollar gaf voor zijns onderricht in negerhollandsch”.

VIDC. Figure 2 shows Reverend Penn and a group of locals, some of whom may have known VIDC.



Figure 2. Photo from St. John of workers grating manioc roots. The man in the white shirt to the right is Reverend Penn, De Josselin de Jong's host in St. John. Photo: Gudmund Hatt. Reproduction: John Lee, National Museum of Denmark (gratefully acknowledged). Source: <https://samlinger.natmus.dk/dnt/asset/120752> (accessed November 14, 2024).

On the same day, Hatt went to explore Browns Bay, but he did not find anything worth exploring further. This gave De Josselin de Jong the possibility to get back to his linguistic fieldwork:

March, 3, Saturday: (...) I stayed at home to record some Negerhollands. The old man whom Penn had recommended to me turned out to know the language well but he had forgotten many of the old stories. He will now refresh his memory with

someone else who knows the stories but not the language and then tell me everything next week.^{32, 33}

Although his name is not mentioned on this day, the chronological order which De Josselin de Jong seems to stick to in his 1926 publication, points to Testamark as the source of the first texts recorded on St. John:

March, 5, Monday: In the morning I did Negerhollands with Testamark.³⁴ Then he couldn't tell me anything anymore. In the afternoon, on the advice of Mrs. Penn I tried it with another old black person: Robert George³⁵ but he couldn't tell me much either. Like Joshua on St. Thomas, he told me that the missionaries had previously forbidden those stories to be told to the children, which is why no one knows many of them now. Tomorrow I'm going to try my luck with an old woman.³⁶

Robert George contributed only two texts. The first one, XXVIII, is an An-ansi story. The second one, XXIX (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 32), is a fable which is directly related to the period of slavery:

³² In De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7) the name of the informant is missing from stories XXIII–XXVII. Since no informants are mentioned between Testamark and George, I think number 'V' is missing in 'XXII' and should be read as 'XXVII'. These stories should be attributed to Testamark. On the other hand, since De Josselin de Jong mentions three male informants with last name Testamark, a few of the stories may be by Edwin Testamark. From the text of the diary on March 8, it is not likely George contributed anything. (Which is in contrast to a claim in Van Rossem 2017: 330, 338.)

³³ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 83): "(...) ben ik thuis gebleven om wat negerhollandsch op te nemen. De oude man dien Pen me daarvoor had aanbevolen bleek de taal goed te kennen maar van de oude verhalen veel vergeten te zijn. Hij zal nu bij een ander die wel de verhalen maar niet de taal kent zijn geheugen gaan opfrischen en me dan de volgende week alles vertellen".

³⁴ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): "XVIII–XXII by John Abraham Testamark (St. John; born 1859, passed away in the hurricane of Sept. 1923)". This comment shows that De Josselin de Jong also had contact with people on the Virgin Islands who knew the informants, or at least Testamark, after his visit to the Caribbean.

³⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): "XXVIII–XXIX by Robert George (St. John; born 1845)".

³⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 84): "Ik heb 's morgens met Testemmark negerhollandsch gedaan. Toen wist hij niets meer te vertellen. 'S middags heb ik op raad v. Mrs. Penn 't met een andere ouden neger geprobeerd: Robert George, maar ook die wist me niet veel te vertellen. Evenals Joshua op St. Thomas vertelde hij me dat de zendelingen vroeger verboden hadden die verhalen aan de kinderen te vertellen, vandaar dat nu niemand er veel kent. Morgen ga ik mijn geluk bij een oude vrouw beproeven".

Di hon a nē ši fripampi. Am a stokúi di abini ēn gat. Di roto a nēm di it. Am a sker di. Di hon a blamé di puši fo di pampi wa kā sker. Di puši sē, dat di roto a du di, na am. So dā hon a flig astā dā puši en dā puši a flig astā dā roto. So fan di dag dā dā puši a lō astā dā roto en dā hon astā dā puši.

Translation: ‘The dog took his manumission certificate. He hid it in a hole. The rat took it out. He tore it up. The dog blamed the cat for the certificate being torn. The cat said the rat did it, not him. So the dog flew after the cat and the cat flew after the rat. That’s why from that day, the cat chased the rat and the dog chased the cat.’

The next days, De Josselin de Jong writes as follows in his diary:

March, 6, Tuesday: This morning I first visited Mrs. Anna Testamark, 82 years old, an entertaining elderly lady, who of course speaks fluent Negerhollands and who is probably full of folklore. However, I couldn’t get her to tell me stories.³⁷ She told me that Ludwig Joseph, a 65-year-old acquaintance of hers, could tell me all kinds of stories. After I saw L.J., I agreed with him that he would come to me at 1 o’clock in the afternoon. He also came and was willing to tell what he knew, but it turned out he didn’t know any stories.³⁸ He will now get the old woman to come and tell me tomorrow for \$1 a day.³⁹

March, 7, Wednesday: This morning old Anna Testamark appeared. However, it turned out that she could say next to nothing. I think she’s a bit weak-headed. I bought a stone from her, perhaps an ordinary cobblestone, for ½ dollar to put her in a good mood, but it did me no good. At half past nine I sent her away and went myself to Roofers Daniel,⁴⁰ whose mother, according to A. Testamark, knows a lot of the old stories. R. confirmed this and I will have to visit the old woman. She lives on Mary’s Point. In the afternoon Ludwig Joseph appeared again, whom I had ordered just to be sure. He gave me a little bit of text and other than that, I mainly

³⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): “XXX–XXXI by Anna Catharina Testamark (St. John; born 1841)”.

³⁸ He related quite a number of stories to Ludwig Joseph (St. John; born 1858). See De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): “XXXII–XXXVII, LXXXIII–LXXXVIII”.

³⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 84–85): “Vanochtend heb ik eerste een bezoek gebracht aan Mrs. Anna Testamark, 82 jaar oud, een vermakelijk oudje, dat natuurlijk vloeiend negerhollandsch spreekt en vermoedelijk vol folklore zit. Ik kon haar echter niet aan ’t vertellen krijgen. Ze zei me dat Ludwig Joseph een 65-jarige kennis van haar me alle mogelijke verhalen zou kunnen vertellen. Nadat ik L.J. had opgespoord sprak ik met dezen af dat hij ’s middags om 1 uur bij me zou komen. Hij kwam ook en was bereid te vertellen wat hij wist, maar verhalen bleek hij niet te kennen. Hij zal nu van de oude vrouw gedaan zien te krijgen dat ze me morgen komt vertellen voor 1 dollar per dag”.

⁴⁰ Not mentioned in De Josselin de Jong (1926).

recorded vocabulary. He advised me to try my luck with Albert Christian,⁴¹ who lives in Palestine (near Emmaus). After 5, I visited Christian. He indeed said he could tell me something and we agreed that he would come to me tomorrow at 8 o'clock.⁴²

Anna Testamark presented only two short Anansi stories. According to De Josselin de Jong, Ludwig Joseph did not know any stories, however he contributes five short Anansi stories, a number of sentence-length stories and a memory of the hurricane of 1916, which looks somewhat like Emil Francis's story about the earthquake. Interesting is story LXXXVIII.⁴³ It is a part of the nursery rhyme "Three blind mice", which was also recorded in 1936 by Frank G. Nelson (Van Rossem 2014, 2017: 291, 295), which enables comparison with a time depth of about 13 years. The name of Nelson's informant was Henrietta Francis. The two versions of the nursery rhyme follow here:

Ludwig Joseph (St. John, 1923, De Josselin de Jong 1926: 63):
Dri blin muši. Ki hoso sini kurí. Sini lo kurí fan də *farmer's* wif. Widi šini en stet mi ēn kambusmes? Mi noit kā ki ēngut leiki dida abini mi lif. Jen ki wa *sport*!
Translation: 'Three blind mice. Look how they run. They are running from the farmer's wife. Who cut a tail with a kitchen knife? I have never seen something like this in my life. You see what sport!'

⁴¹ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): "XXXVIII–XXXXIV by Albert Christian (St. John, born 1850)".

⁴² De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 85): "Vanmorgen verscheen de oude Anna Testamark. Ze bleek echter zoo goed als niets te kunnen vertellen. Ik geloof dat ze wat zwakhoofdig is. Ik kocht een steen van haar, misschien een gewone keisteen, voor ½ dollar om haar in een goed humeur te brengen, maar dat baatte me niet. Om half tien stuurde ik haar weg en ging zelf naar Roofers Daniel wiens moeder volgens A. Testamark een hoop van de oude verhalen kent. R. bevestigde dit en ik zal de oude vrouw dus moeten opzoeken. Ze woont op Mary's Point. 'S middags verscheen Ludwig Joseph weer, dien ik voor alle zekerheid besteld had. Van hem kreeg ik een klein beetje tekst en verder nam ik hoofdzakelijk vocabulair op. Hij raadde me aan m'n geluk eens te beproeven bij Albert Christian, die te Palestina (vlak bij Emmaus) woont. Na 5 bezocht ik Christian. Die zei inderdaad wel wat te kunnen vertellen en we spraken af dat hij morgen om 8 uur bij me zal komen".

⁴³ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7) contributes this text in the first place to Ludwig Joseph, but later on also to Henry Roberts. Since text LXXXIX is about the phallic dance (see below) where De Josselin de Jong met Roberts for the first time, LXXXVIII must have been told by Ludwig Joseph.

Henrietta Francis (Frederiksted, St. Croix, 1936, recorded by Frank G. Nelson,⁴⁴ Van Rossem 2017: 295):

Tri blain mishi. Ki hose sen kurre. Sen kurri awé wit dā fāma che wif. Sens sne af sens stet wit a gebrāta mēs. Me noit mo ka ki so en got a me lif lēke dri blain mishi. Translation: ‘Three blind mice! See how they run! They ran away with the farmer’s wife. She cut off their tails with a carving knife. I never had seen such a thing in my life as three blind mice’. (Translation by Henrietta Francis, 1936)

This week in 1923 already appeared to be a fruitful one by Wednesday, March 7. The most interesting day, however, was yet to come:

March 8, Thursday: This morning I worked until 11 o’clock with Albert Christian, who dictated some stories to me – all the ones he could come up with. His Negerhollands is not always correct and because he has insufficient command of the language, his narrative style is also clumsy. At 11 o’clock we went together to Edwin Testamark⁴⁵ who lives nearby. He remembered something, which I wrote down. If he hears or remembers more stories, he will let me know. At 1 o’clock, I left for Henry Roberts⁴⁶ who lives at Bordeaux – on horseback. At the top of the hill lives Georges Testamark, who was also mentioned to me by Christian as someone who could tell me something. However, this turned out not to be the case. The old man was weaving baskets and appeared to be quite drowsy. His wife told me that he was out of his wits. She was clear headed, but she only knew Negerhollands moderately and claimed not to know any old stories. She went to call Roberts for me and in the meantime, I chatted with her mother in Negerhollands. By the time Roberts showed up, news of my presence had apparently reached other neighbors. At least it didn’t take long before a crowd of both sexes and various ages gathered around us. Roberts, together with an old woman, started performing one of the old “jokes”, which involved a lot of singing and ended in a phallic dance – much to the amusement of the audience. After I agreed with Roberts that he would come and work with me tomorrow, I left. It was impossible to write anything in the noise and a few old women were quite a nuisance. They begged for money and made an unpleasant commotion. The young men looked embarrassed and ashamed during the performance. A young girl – particularly pretty – enjoyed herself immensely. A most interesting afternoon.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The transcription is by Frank G. Nelson, 1936.

⁴⁵ Not mentioned in De Josselin de Jong (1926).

⁴⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7): “XXXXV–LXXXII, LXXXVIII–C, CII–CIII by William Henry Roberts (St. John; born 1863)”.

⁴⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 86–87): “Van ochtend heb ik eerst tot 11 uur gewerkt met Albert Christian die me eenige verhalen dicteerde – alle die hij kon verzinnen. Zijn Negerhollandsch is niet altijd even correct en doordat hij de taal onvoldoende beheerscht is zijn verhaaltrant ook onbeholpen. Om 11 uur gingen we samen naar Edwin Testamark die in de buurt woont. Die herinnerde zich nog iets, wat ik opschreef. Als hij

The song related to the phallic dance was recorded as text LXXXIX, which includes several footnotes (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 63):

Henry Roberts (St. John, 1923, LXXXIX, De Josselin de Jong's footnotes are placed between brackets):

Maria! (The woman is calling her maid servant.) Ali (Hello) frou! Di kā (Read: ju kan. The narrator must have been mistaken here.) gi di hou man dā servet, ta am *fix* (Intended: to wash.) ši futu. Nu sē di hou man, am kan ko bo di estā trap, bot pasó am ko mē fê.

Ju bóroma bóroma zepo mi a la ē! (This is what the man sings. According to the narrator, these words do not have any sense. 'Boro' is, however, a word for 'vulva'.) Haridín haridín, Diñ diñ diñ! (With these words the dancing couple performed the music. The man: haridín; the woman (joining in): diñ.)

Maria! Ali frou! Ju kan sē di hou man, am kan ko kan di bere, bot pasó am *take* enestā gut!

Maria! Ali frou! Ju kan sē di hou man, am kan ko bo di bere, bot paso am *take* mi bil!

Maria! Ali frou! Sē di hou man, am kan risóp mi saja, bot pasé am *take* mi bil!

Maria! Ali frou! Sē di hou man, am kan du mi di! (She means: her body.) O, ju du mi di, a fa ju di bi (Older: da fan ju di bin 'it's yours').

(After this, the actual dance started, where the man was ever approaching the woman with expressive body movements and holding a stick as a phallus before him, only to touch the woman in the end.)

Translation: 'Maria! Hello madam! You can give the old man the napkin, let him wash his feet. Now tell the old man, he can come up the first stairs, but watch out

meer verhalen hoort of zich herinnert zal hij 't me laten weten. Om 1 uur vertrok ik naar Henry Roberts die op Bourdeaux woont – te paard. Op den top v.d. heuvel woont Georges Testamark die me eveneens door Christian genoemd was als iemand die me wel wat zou kunnen vertellen. Dit bleek evenwel niet 't geval te zijn. De oude man zat manden te vlechten en bleek tamelijk suffig. Zijn vrouw zei me dat hij niet erg bij de pinken meer was. Zij was dat wel, maar zij kende maar matig Negerholl. en beweerde geen oude verhalen te kennen. Zij ging Roberts voor me roepen en intusschen converseerde ik met haar moeder wat in negerholl. Toen Roberts verscheen was het nieuws van mijn aanwezigheid blijkbaar ook tot andere burens doorgedrongen. Het duurde tenminste niet lang voor er een heele schare van beiderlei geslacht en diverse leeftijden om ons heen zat. Roberts begon samen met een oude vrouw een van de oude "jokes" ten beste te geven, waarbij veel gezongen werd en die eindigde in een phallischen dans – tot enorme hilariteit van het publiek. Nadat ik met Roberts had afgesproken dat hij morgen met me zal komen werken vertrok ik. Het was onmogelijk onder het lawaai iets op te schrijven en een paar oude vrouwen waren tamelijk hinderlijk. Ze bedelden om centen en maakten onaangenaam veel leven. De jonge mannen keken onder de voorstelling verlegen en beschaamd. Een jong meisje bijzonder knap – genoot buitengewoon. Een hoogst interessante middag".

if he comes too far. / Ju boroma boroma zepo mi a la ee, hariding, hariding, ding ding ding / Maria! Hello madam! You can tell the old man, he can come next to the bed, but watch out, if he touches (lit., “takes”) something! / Maria! Hello madam! You can tell the old man, he can come on the bed, but watch out he touches my buttock! / Maria! Hello madam! Tell the old man he can pull up my dress, but watch out if he touches my buttock! / Maria! Hello madam! Tell the old man he can do it to me! O, you do it to me, it is yours!⁴⁸

De Josselin de Jong’s description of the collected stories is quite extensive; see De Josselin de Jong (1926: 5–7) in which he describes the different genres like old-time stories and stories from books (European fairy tales, the Anansi spider stories). He also recognizes the use of several stories as part of ceremonial meetings. The meeting which he attended on March 8, 1923, is mentioned among the descriptions and with regard to these disappearing traditional ceremonies, the following texts of Henry Roberts, LXL–C, all so-called “story-house” songs, are therefore of considerable interest, and should be studied more closely in relation to Virgin Islands cultural history.

From March 8 onwards, for about the next two weeks De Josselin de Jong would work with his most productive informant, Henry Roberts.⁴⁹ He writes as follows in his diary:

March, 9, Friday: I worked all day with Roberts, who turned out to be a rich source of folklore. He’ll come again tomorrow.⁵⁰

March, 10, Saturday: Worked with Roberts all day. Tiring work, because R. is a poor storyteller and is unable to give explanations.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Unfortunately there is no translation by De Josselin de Jong himself: the last story of which a translation or summary is available is LXXXI.

⁴⁹ In Van Rossem (2017), William Henry Roberts is consistently called *William* Roberts. From De Josselin de Jong’s diary it is clear, however, that *Henry* was his first name.

⁵⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 87): “Den heelen dag heb ik met Roberts gewerkt, die een rijke bron v. folklore bleek te zijn. Morgen komt hij weer”.

⁵¹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 87): “Den heelen dag met Roberts gewerkt. Vermoeiend werk, doordat R. een slecht verteller is en niet in staat uitlegging te geven”.

March, 12, Monday: I will continue to record folklore here and will leave for St. Martin before the end of the month (if possible). Today I worked with Roberts all day again.⁵²

March, 13, Tuesday: Worked until 4 o'clock with Roberts.⁵³

March, 15, Thursday: Today was the last time I worked with Roberts, who stated this afternoon that he now knows nothing anymore. Moreover, he must plant in view of the upcoming new moon.⁵⁴

March, 17, Saturday: I spent this day working through some of my texts. I need further information about several places, including the various plants used for medicine. (...) Roberts let his daughter inform me that he will be visiting me again on Monday. And Ludwig Joseph, whom I met on the way, said he would come on Tuesday.⁵⁵

March 18, Sunday: Today I wrote letters, went to church and studied my texts.⁵⁶

March 19, Monday: I worked with Roberts all day. Some of the stories he told me, he had apparently cobbled together himself, but they were interesting because of the words. After the third one I told him I had enough of this kind now. His supplies are now exhausted again, but if he can remember anything, he will come tomorrow and let Joseph know that he should not come. If he doesn't come tomorrow, he might come on Thursday.⁵⁷

⁵² De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 88): “Ik blijf hier folklore opnemen en vertrek voor het eind van de maand (zoo mogelijk) naar St. Martin Vandaag weer den heelen dag met Roberts gewerkt”.

⁵³ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 88): “Tot 4 uur gewerkt met Roberts”.

⁵⁴ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 88–89): “Vandaag voor ’t laatst met Roberts gewerkt die vanmiddag verklaarde nu niets meer te weten. Bovendien moet hij planten met het oog op de aanstaande nieuwe maan”.

⁵⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 90): “Ik heb dezen dag aan het doorwerken van een deel van mijn teksten besteed. Over verschillende plaatsen moet ik nader informatie hebben, ook over de diverse planten die voor medicijn gebruikt worden. ’s Middags weer gebaad in de baai. Roberts liet me door zijn dochtertje meedeelen dat hij Maandag weer bij me komt. En Ludwig Joseph die ik onderweg ontmoette zei Dinsdag te zullen komen”.

⁵⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 91): “Vandaag brieven geschreven, naar de kerk geweest en in mijn teksten gestudeerd”.

⁵⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 91): “Ik heb den heelen dag met Roberts gewerkt. Eenige verhalen die hij me deed had hij blijkbaar zelf in elkaar geflanst maar ze waren interessant om de woorden. Na het 3^e heb ik hem gezegd dat ik nu genoeg van dit soort had. Zijn voorraad is nu weer uitgeput, maar als hij zich nog wat te binnen kan brengen

In two places, De Josselin de Jong presents a glimpse into his fieldwork practices. In the excerpt of text LXXIV (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 122), he writes, about Henry Roberts: “A product of the narrator’s personal fantasy, which he keenly enjoyed himself”.

The following excerpt, LXXV, contains the following remark by De Josselin de Jong: “A tale of the same type as the previous one: interesting, not only from a psychological point of view, but also on account of the rather detailed description in the vernacular of the sugar-making process”. This is yet another clear example of the anthropological view highlighting an important aspect of the history of labor on St. John (see also Van Rossem 2017: 338).

De Josselin de Jong writes as follows in his diary about the next days:

March, 20, Tuesday: Neither Roberts nor Joseph showed up this morning, so I spent the day further working on my texts.⁵⁸

March, 21, Wednesday: Since I had no one to work with, I spent the day working on my texts again.⁵⁹

March, 22, Thursday: In the morning I worked with Roberts. He brought me some spiders, among others Anānši; He had not been able to find Tekoma. At 11 o’clock I had asked him everything I still had to ask him, but with not much success, as he is actually unable to explain anything. Testamark and Joseph are much more intelligent. So this day was not a success for my work. It’s about time for me to leave.⁶⁰

On March 23, De Josselin de Jong returned to St. Thomas. On St. John, De Josselin de Jong had interviewed six informants. They had presented him

zal hij morgen komen en dan Joseph laten weten dat die niet moet komen. Als hij morgen niet komt, komt hij misschien Donderdag”.

⁵⁸ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 92): “Noch Roberts noch Joseph zijn vanochtend verschenen, zoodat ik den dag heb doorgebracht met ’t verder doorwerken van mijn teksten”.

⁵⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 92): “Daar ik niemand had om mee te werken heb ik deze dag weer besteed aan ’t doorwerken van mijn teksten”.

⁶⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 93): “’s Morgens heb ik met Roberts gewerkt. Hij bracht eenige spinnen voor me mee o.a. Anānši; Tekoma had hij niet kunnen vinden. Om 11 uur had ik hem alles gevraagd wat ik hem nog te vragen had, met niet heel veel succes evenwel daar hij feitelijk niet in staat is iets uit te leggen. Testamark en Joseph zijn veel intelligenter. Zoo is deze dag voor mijn werk geen succes geweest. Het is hoog tijd dat ik wegga”.

a total of 86 of the 103 texts (67% of the informants, 84% of the texts, however about 74% of the entire corpus, based on the length of the texts). In chronological order these informants are Abraham Testamark, Robert George, Anna Testamark, Ludwig Joseph, Albert Christian and Henry Roberts. Edwin Testamark and Georges Testamark were also consulted, but they did not contribute any texts. Among the large number of texts, several were mentioned by De Josselin de Jong (1926) as presented twice (Van Rossem 2017: 337–338):

- XXIII (Abraham Testamark, St. John) – LXII (Henry Roberts, St. John)
- XXXX (Albert Christian, St. John) – XXXXVII (Henry Roberts, St. John, other actor in story)
- XXXXI (Albert Christian, St. John) – LXVII (Henry Roberts, St. John)
- XXXXII (Albert Christian, St. John) – XXXXV (Henry Roberts, St. John)
- XXXXIV (Albert Christian, St. John) – LXVI (Henry Roberts, St. John)

In addition, text XXXIII appeared three times in De Josselin de Jong (1926). To show differences and resemblances between the three contributors, I will present some sentences from XXXIII (Ludwig Joseph, St. John, 4 lines, p. 33), XXXXI (Albert Christian, St. John, 24 lines, p. 35) and LXVII (Henry Roberts, St. John, 33 lines, p. 52–53).⁶¹

(1)

XXXIII: Bru Anánsi am a lō jit di pot skon. (Brother Anansi he went to eat the pot clean.)

XXXXI: Anánshi a kā kōk də frokós. (Anansi had cooked the breakfast.)

(2)

XXXIII: Wani sini a rup am, am a se: hêêêê! (When they called him, he said: hé!)

⁶¹ Since every informant has his own version of this story, the number of lines differs and not all sentences exist in three versions.

(3)

XXXIII: sini a rup mi fo dōp kin. (The called me to baptize (the) child.)

(4)

XXXIII: Huso di kin nam? (What is the child's name?)

XXXXI: Anánshi a frā am, wa di nām fa di kin. (Anansi asked him, wat is the name of the child.)

LXVII: (...) Tekoma a frāg am: hoso di kin nām? (Tekoma asked him: what is the child's name?)

(5)

XXXIII: Ēstu begin. (First begin.)

XXXXI: Anánshi a sē: di nām fa di kin 'Mi-džis-kā-bigín'. (Anansi said: the name of the child is 'I have just begun'.)

LXVII: Am sē, dā kin nām 'Ēstubigín'. (He says, the child's name is 'First begin'.)

(6)

XXXIII: Hêêêê!

XXXXI: Am a bli werá, am a skrēw it werá: hêêêê! (He stayed again, he yelled it again: hé!)

(7)

XXXIII: Wa ju lō rup mi fo? (What are you calling me for?)

XXXXI: Anánshi a sē: wa skot ju? (Anansi said: what do you want?)

(8)

XXXIII: Fo lō dōp kin werán? (To go baptize child again?)

XXXXI: Sini lō rup mi werán fo kō dōp di kin. (They are calling me again to come baptize the child.)

(9)

XXXIII: Bru, wa di kin nām? (Brother, what is the child's name?)

XXXXI: Anánshi a frā am werán, wa dā nām fa di kin. (Anansi asked him again, what is the name of the child.)

LXVII: Tekoma a frāg am: Bju, hoso di kin nām? (Tekoma asked him: brother, what is the child's name?)

(10)

XXXIII: Də kin nām Haləf. (The child's name is Half.)

XXXXI: 'Džis-in-di-midi'. ('Just in the middle'.)

LXVII: Am a sē a Tekoma: hiⁿ, Bju, di kin ši nām 'Midlwe'. (He said to Tekoma: hey, brother, the child his name is 'Halfway'.)

LXVII: (...) Ham a sē a Tekoma: di kin nām 'Haləf mi haləf'. (He said to Tekoma: the child's name 'Half with half'.)

(11)

XXXIII: Hêêêê!

XXXXI: Am a skrēw it werán. (He yelled out again.)

(12)

XXXIII: Wa sa lō rup mi fo? (What are you calling me for?)

XXXXI: Am a sē: bru, wa skot ju? (He said: brother, what do you want?)

(13)

XXXIII: Huso di kin nām? (What is the child's name?)

XXXXI: So weni am a drāi, am a frāg am, wa di nām fa di kin. (So when he turned, he asked him, what is the name of the child.)

LXVII: Nu weni am kā klim abobo fo lo fin Tekoma a werək, Tekoma a frāg am: Bju, hoso di kin nām? (So when he climbed up to find Tekoma working, Tekoma asked him: brother, what is the child's name?)

(14)

XXXIII: Mi kā kabá. (I have finished.)

XXXXI: 'Ka kabá'. ('Have finished'.)

LXVII: Am a ānturt, am sē: hm, Bju, di kin nām '*Finish*'. (He answered, he said, hmm, brother, the child's name is '*Finish*'.)

This comparison of the vernacular varieties presented by different informants is only an example of a possibility for a follow-up study. Unfortunately, there are no comparable texts from St. Thomas and St. John with the same content.

In the diary, De Josselin de Jong does not refer to his linguistic fieldwork after leaving St. John. Some years later, De Josselin de Jong explicitly mentioned the ones who helped him to study this dying language:

Although none of my dark-skinned friends and teachers will read these pages, I do not wish to omit to mention their names, and to indicate as accurately as possible each one's contribution to these texts. (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 7–8)⁶²

5. The Isaiah manuscript

In a letter of June 15, 1773, the German missionary Johann Böhner writes how he enjoys translating biblical texts:

For me the Bible is a holy and invaluable book, and I have my satisfaction in translating from it into Creole. [I] have also brought the New Testament into more than one copy, the four Evangelists in Harmony, the Acts of the Apostles and so on. The first book of Moses, *the Psalms from the prophet Isaiah* (...) (Böhner, June 15, 1773, cited in Van Rossem 2017: 98, my emphasis)

In 1777, Oldendorp mentions this manuscript in his history of the Moravian mission in the Danish West Indies:

Böhner had to struggle with many difficulties in the course of his translation, some of which were caused by the poverty of the Creole language and others by the conceptual limitations of the Negroes. The latter, for example, have no idea of the nature and color of snow. Thus, in order to bring them to understand the text, Böhner had to translate the expression white as snow in Isaiah 1:18 in a different manner, but rendering the same concept. He used the following: Your sins shall be as white as linen. (Oldendorp 1987: 540,⁶³ Van Rossem 2017: 103)

Since connecting with an audience of people who were not familiar with biblical jargon, nor with some European concepts as a whole, was a priority, adaptation was an important task for the translator: he had to use a meaningful comparison. See Van Rossem (2020: 384) about the possible concepts, in this case snow, that could be compared to the color white.

Oldendorp knew the manuscript and was even able to quote from it. The above-mentioned translation of Isaiah, however, has remained unknown to today's researchers, since it is not present in the Unitäts Archiv

⁶² De Josselin de Jong (1926: 7–8): “Ofschoon geen mijner donkere vrienden en leermeesters deze bladzijden zal lezen, wil ik toch niet nalaten, hunne namen te vermelden en ieders bijdrage tot deze teksten zoo nauwkeurig mogelijk aan te geven”.

⁶³ Unfortunately, I only know this information from about 1762 from the 1987 English translation. Oldendorp (2000, 2002) which is the edition of Oldendorp's manuscript of his mission, does not include the years 1761–1766. I did not have the opportunity to consult Oldendorp (1777) for the present study.

in Herrnhut, Germany.⁶⁴ De Josselin de Jong does mention this translation in his diary on February 6, 1923, as one of three texts (my emphasis):

After the interview [with the Prince brothers, CvR], I went with R[omig, CvR] to his house – on the way we looked at the school and attended the lesson for a while – where he showed me three books in Dutch: a psalm book, a New Testament *and an Isaiah in ms.*⁶⁵

Reverend Romig lived in Nisky, St. Thomas. From February 21 until March 23, 1923, De Josselin de Jong was on St. John. A day after his return to St. Thomas, on March 24, he visited Romig:

After dinner I went to Romig who immediately allowed me to copy the Isaiah manuscript in Negerhollands that the Moravian mission possesses. I can take it to my room or come and write at his place. I’ve been writing all afternoon.⁶⁶

De Josselin de Jong described the process of copying the text as follows:

March 25, Sunday: Copied from 10–1 and in the afternoon until 4 o’clock.⁶⁷

March 27, Tuesday: I don’t think I’ll finish the manuscript before I leave; but in that case I can take it with me.⁶⁸

March 28, Wednesday: I spent the whole day at Romig’s today doing some copying.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ In the anonymous hymnbooks which were published by the Moravian Brethren in 1774 and 1784, the following verses from Isaiah were included: Anonymous (1774): Isaiah 11:10 and 11, 18: 2 and 7, 52, 10–12 and 15, 60: 3 and 5; Anonymous (1784): Isaiah 11:10–11, 52:15, 60: 3.

⁶⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 69): “Na het interview ging ik met R. mee naar zijn huis – onderweg bekeken we de school en woonden de les een poosje bij – waar hij mij 3 boeken in negerhollandsch toonde: een psalmboek, een nieuw test. en een Jesaja in ms”.

⁶⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 94): “Na het eten ging ik naar Romig die me dadelijk toestond het Jesaia-manuscript in Negerhollandsch dat de Moravische missie bezit, te copieeren. Ik kan het meenemen naar mijn kamer of bij hem komen schrijven. De heelen middag heb ik zitten pennen”.

⁶⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 94): “Van 10–1 en ’S middags tot 4 uur gecopieerd”.

⁶⁸ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 95): “Ik denk niet dat ik met het manuscript klaar kom vóór mijn vertrek; maar in dat geval mag ik het meenemen”.

⁶⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 95): “Ik heb vandaag den heelen dag bij Romig doorgebracht om te copieeren”.

March, 29, Thursday: Copied this morning.⁷⁰

April, 1, Sunday: Spent the rest of the day (after breakfast) reading, copying and writing letters.⁷¹

April 2, Monday: Spent the morning and part of the afternoon copying.⁷²

April 3, Tuesday: First copied in the afternoon and then went back to town; visited the Holst family at 5 o'clock. I was unable to meet Thiele, who seems to own a Negerhollands book.⁷³

April, 4, Wednesday: After breakfast first visited Romig. Then to the city, where, in Thiele's office, I finally got my hands on the Creole psalm book, which is currently in Thiele's possession. Too bad it doesn't belong to him, so he couldn't give it to me.⁷⁴

April, 5, Thursday: I copied in the morning.⁷⁵

On Friday April, 6, De Josselin de Jong left St. Thomas for St. Maarten. On April 20 he travelled from St. Maarten to Saba, and on May 7 he travelled from Saba to St. Eustatius. In his notes we see he is still working on his copy of the original manuscript:

April, 22, Sunday: In the afternoon, letters written and copied.⁷⁶

May, 6, Sunday: Used all day for writing letters and ms. copy.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 95): “Vanochtend gecopieerd”.

⁷¹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 98): “De rest van den dag (na ‘breakfast’) doorgebracht met lezen, copieëren en brieven schrijven”.

⁷² De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 98): “Den ochtend en een deel van den middag doorgebracht met copieeren”.

⁷³ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 99): “’S middags eerst gecopieerd en daarna weer naar de stad gegaan; om 5 uur de familie Holst bezocht. Ben er niet in geslaagd Thiele te treffen, die een Negerholl. boek heet te bezitten”.

⁷⁴ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 99): “Na het ontbijt eerst Romig bezocht. Daarna naar de stad, waar ik, in Thiele's kantoor, eindelijk het Creoolsche psalmboek in handen kreeg, dat op ‘t oogenblik in Thiele's bezit is. Jammer dat ‘t hem niet toebehoort, zoodat hij ‘t mij niet kon geven”.

⁷⁵ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 100): “’S morgens heb ik gecopieerd”.

⁷⁶ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 110): “’S middags brieven geschreven en gecopieerd”.

⁷⁷ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 118): “Den heelen dag gebruikt voor brieven schrijven en hs. copieëren”.

May, 13, Sunday: Stayed at home all day; letters written and ms. copied.⁷⁸

May, 20, Sunday: Letters written and copied until 4.30.⁷⁹

May, 26, Saturday: All day long, that is, until 5 o'clock in the afternoon, copied. If I can stay here for a few more days, I'll be done with it.⁸⁰

May, 27, Sunday: Copied all day long. 23 more pages.⁸¹

May, 28, Monday: Copied in the morning (I was done at 12 o'clock) and wrote and read some letters in the afternoon.⁸²

The next day, May 29, De Josselin de Jong left St. Eustatius for St. Thomas via St. Maarten. He arrived at St. Thomas on June 1st. Unfortunately, in his diary he does not mention returning the *Isaiah* manuscript to Romig. Perhaps even more unfortunate is that De Josselin de Jong never mentions his own copy of the manuscript again, despite the significant effort he made to complete his transcript on time.

I am unaware of the whereabouts of these manuscripts, if indeed still extant, and where they are located today. It seems most likely to me that the original Böhner manuscript of *Isaiah* is archived by the Moravian Brethren in St. Thomas. De Josselin de Jong's copy is not available in the library of Leiden University in the Netherlands. I had expected to find it there, since other material by De Josselin de Jong, originally archived by the *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, is archived here.

6. Aftermath and use in subsequent research

The first one to mention the linguistic findings of the archaeological expedition in writing is De Josselin de Jong himself. In his report about the archaeological expedition for the *Maatschappij ter bevordering van het*

⁷⁸ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 122): “Den heelen dag thuis gebleven; brieven geschreven en hs. gecopieerd”.

⁷⁹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 125): “Brieven geschreven en gecopieerd tot 4.30”.

⁸⁰ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 128): “Den heelen dag. d.w.z. tot 's middags 5 uur, gecopieerd. Als ik nog een paar dagen hier kan blijven kom ik ermee klaar”.

⁸¹ De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 128): “Den heelen dag gekopieerd. Nog 23 pagina's”.

⁸² De Josselin de Jong (1922–1923: 128): “'S morgens gecopieerd (om 12 uur was ik klaar) en 'S middags wat brieven geschreven en gelezen”.

Natuurkundig Onderzoek der Nederlansche Koloniën (Society for the Promotion of Natural Science Research of the Dutch Colonies), he writes:

I used the last days of our stay on the island to investigate Negerhollands, which turned out to be still spoken by several older black persons. (De Josselin de Jong 1923: 5)

I myself stayed a few more days on St. John to complete the writing of a series of Negerhollands stories, and then also left for St. Thomas, where I only had the opportunity to go across to St. Martin a week later. This week, however, did not pass unused, as I had the opportunity to copy an unpublished Negerhollands manuscript in the possession of the Moravian mission on St. Thomas. (De Josselin de Jong 1923: 6)

In 1924 and 1926, respectively, De Josselin de Jong published his linguistic findings in an article and a book entirely devoted to this subject. It was not until more than twenty years after the expedition that his description of the archaeological findings appeared (De Josselin de Jong 1947).

In *Algemeen Handelsblad* (May 6, 1933), Hesseling writes in an announcement for a presentation that De Josselin de Jong was able to record texts that were narrated to him by the old people themselves: “Thanks to this work by an eminently qualified linguist, it is now possible to view Negerhollands historically, which is very rarely the case with Creole languages”.

Hesseling (1933) published a comparison of Papiamentu and VIDC, in which he regularly refers to De Josselin de Jong’s contribution; for instance:

If we had, since the end of the seventeenth century, documents as excellently observed and recorded as the texts collected by Josselin de Jong, we would be better able to explain the change of vowels and fricatives; Now we have to confine ourselves to assuming, often to guessing. (Hesseling 1933: 276)

Moreover, Hesseling even added an addendum to his 1933 article, in which he discussed findings and additions based on new insights from De Josselin de Jong’s linguistic fieldwork and Schuchardt’s article (Hesseling 1933: 286–288).

In the international field of contact linguistics, it wasn't until 1937 that John E. Reinecke, in his groundbreaking dissertation *Marginal Languages*, referred to De Josselin de Jong. In his chapter 'The Negro Dutch of the Danish Antilles' (Reinecke 1937: 394–425), he writes as follows:

This work [Hesseling 1905, CvR] suffers from one important defect: its author had not himself heard the creole Dutch spoken. But the texts recorded a few years later by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong excellently furnish the necessary supplementation. This section rests chiefly upon the work of these two writers. (Reinecke 1937: 394)

From this publication onwards, De Josselin de Jong (1924, 1926) are essential publications for the study of VIDC as it was spoken by its native speakers in the early twentieth century.

When US Virgin Islands linguist Gilbert Sprauve in 1969 was presented in a US Virgin Islands newspaper as a scholar who was studying the French-related Creole language of St. Lucia and Dominica, he was approached by a lady in the street speaking in a language which appeared to be Dutch Creole. It turned out to be Mrs. Alice Stevens, who eventually became the last native speaker of VIDC. This was a starting point for the study of the last stage of this Creole language (Adams 1977, Sabino 2012). Until that time, the only texts available in VIDC vernacular were the texts collected by De Josselin de Jong (1926). Sprauve therefore used these stories and the wordlist for his interviews with Stevens. A beautiful recording is the previously mentioned comparison of "The Town Musicians of Bremen", of which Sprauve presents an English translation, which was then translated into Dutch Creole by Mrs. Stevens (Sprauve 1985, Van Rossem 2017: 253–255).

In 1986 the German linguist Thomas Stolz studied De Josselin de Jong's material quite thoroughly in order to compare the twentieth-century variety with the one which was used in earlier texts, from the eighteenth century, for his diachronic approach to the study of VIDC.⁸³

The last one to learn VIDC from Alice Stevens was the American linguist Robin Sabino (Auburn University), who studied VIDC thoroughly.

⁸³ The eighteenth-century VIDC texts consisted of, for instance, the language descriptions of Magens (1770) and Oldendorp (1777), but also included the slave letters from the Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut which were discovered and transcribed by Peter Stein, to be published in the near future.

In her comprehensive glossary of VIDC (Sabino 2012: 233–292), she includes De Josselin de Jong’s (1926) material, which is indeed closely related to her own fieldwork data from her interviews with Mrs. Stevens 60 years later. It is, however, unknown to me whether Sabino used De Josselin de Jong’s texts for comparison during the interviews.

For his 2017 PhD thesis, Robbert van Sluijs digitized all texts from De Josselin de Jong (1926), as well as adding linguistic glosses, word for word translations and free translations, in order to convert these texts into a format appropriate for modern corpus-based linguistic research. Van Sluijs extensively studied the use of tense, mood and aspect-markers, not only within the sentences, but also as these were used in running texts. These texts are at the moment in Clarin-format digitally available in *The Language Archive, Negerhollands*, which is hosted by Max Planck Institute in Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

In Van Rossem’s (2017) philological study on the authenticity of VIDC texts, De Josselin de Jong’s work is also included. Since De Josselin de Jong’s transcriptions are in a phonetic alphabet, for the first time, the spoken language is represented in a trustworthy manner, accompanied by a concise wordlist, with English translations and summaries. However, Van Sluijs (p.c.) has pointed to the fact that De Josselin de Jong was an anthropologist, focused on the stories, and not on creating a concise language description.

At the moment, information about VIDC vernacular documented by De Josselin de Jong’s informants and through the speakers working with Adams, Sabino and Sprauve is being used in a project to create new conversations to be used in a textbook to revitalize this Creole language (Sprauve et al., in progress).

7. Further study

Using the diary to learn more about De Josselin de Jong’s 1926 collection provides interesting insights into the fieldwork, the informants and their stories. It contains a wealth of metalinguistic information. We can read about his attempts to find native speakers, expectations regarding their language competence, where to meet them, their ages, etc. De Josselin de Jong describes the circumstances under which the conversations took place, the length of the interviews, and since the collected texts are available, it is possible to determine how intensive the interviews were.

On the basis of the information about the speakers of VIDC, it appears that the stories in De Josselin de Jong (1926) are presented in chronological order of their collection. The diary also reveals that not all persons who were introduced to De Josselin de Jong as speakers of VIDC actually made linguistic contributions. De Josselin de Jong also mentions positive or negative qualities of his informants, which can ultimately be used in assessing the reliability of the texts. In addition, a closer study of the contents of the stories may show a thematical order within the collections of each informant.

From his diary it appears that De Josselin de Jong re-read his notes of the fieldwork, and I assume he may have added comments and/or changes and improvements. These may help to provide extra information about the conversations and interviews with his informants. Since these fieldnotes are not part of the diary, nor in his publications of the texts, there might be a possibility they were archived elsewhere. Unfortunately, these are not present among the other material of De Josselin de Jong in the library of Leiden University.

As I mentioned above, there is likely more to be discovered. For example, we do not know the whereabouts of both the original eighteenth-century Isaiah manuscript and its twentieth-century copy by De Josselin de Jong. The Old Testament features rich language that challenged the translators' adaptability. We now know that the translator of this text, Johann Böhner, made efforts to connect with his audience linguistically (Van Rossem 2017). Therefore, I believe that locating the Isaiah text will provide insights beyond just its content.

In Rigsarkivet (the Danish National Archives) in Copenhagen, letters between De Josselin de Jong and Hatt are archived. Effert (1992) refers to these letters. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to consult them. I wonder whether De Josselin de Jong ever discussed his linguistic fieldwork with Hatt, since information about this does not appear in the diary.

I cannot imagine that De Josselin de Jong did not discuss his linguistic discoveries during his fieldwork, for instance with D.C. Hesseling. Unfortunately, I have never seen letters or other egodocuments related to this, for instance in the library of Leiden University, where other egodocuments of these scholars are archived.

De Josselin de Jong's (1926) book contains an extensive glossary; however, there seems to be a difference between the words mentioned in

the glossary and the words used in the texts, as they do not always match. A closer study of the texts will enrich the glossary.

Since most of the VIDC texts seem to have been recorded and archived, new information about this language will not only be found in the texts themselves, but also in metalinguistic information from, for instance, egodocuments like letters and diaries. As Jacobs & Parkvall (2020, 2023) have shown with their recent discoveries of nineteenth-century Skepi Dutch Creole texts, a closer look into egodocuments may yield more than we had expected thus far.

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