NEGRO RIDDLES FROM SURINAM

BY

A. P. AND T. E. PENARD

INTRODUCTION

It is not only fascinating to inquire into the popular beliefs of a community, but it is a matter of some importance to note and preserve the fragments of folklore. Even childhood games, nursery jingles, and riddles are worthy of serious study. Indeed, the seemingly trivial thoughts and expressions, faithfully handed down from child to child, from generation to generation, may contain clues of scientific interest, not only to the folklorist, but to the ethnologist, psychologist, and sociologist.

In Surinam the Riddle or “Lai-tori” has, so far, received very little attention from investigators. We recollect only four published sources of information on this subject, as follows:

1. J. G. Spalburg, Bruine Mina, De Koto-Missi, Paramaribo, 1913, p. 10; one example.
2. Hugo Schuchardt, Die Sprache der Saramakkaneger in Surinam (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 14, no. 6, 1914, p. 41); two, very crude.
4. (Anonymous), Surinaamsche Lai-tori’s (Onze West, Friday, 15 November, 1918); ten examples.