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## Introduction

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### Some remarks on the history of Carib research

Over a decade has passed since the meetings of the 40th International Congress of Americanists took place in Rome in September 1972, incorporating a symposium on the "Cultural and social structure of the Carib-speaking peoples," and these intervening years have seen considerable activity in the study of Carib peoples. The subsequent reader, *Carib-speaking Indians: culture, society and language*, (edited by Ellen Basso 1977), has done valuable service, publishing four papers originally given in Rome (by Arvelo-Jiménez, Dumont, Basso and Rivière, see Basso 1974), five additional papers (by Butt Colson, Durbin, Drummond, Kloos and Schindler), and Basso's introduction on the status of Carib ethnography. Other important compendia of material on Carib speakers have also been presented, notably in the Lowland South American Indian symposium at the 42nd International Congress of Americanists held in Paris in 1976, and at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association (see Kensinger [1978]-1981).

During this period too, a new set of anthropologists began fieldwork among Carib speakers, notably in the Guiana Highlands and neighbouring regions but also in the Xingú area South of the Amazon, and some of these have begun to publish extensively. Adams carried out a new study of the Barama River Caribs (1972, 1974, 1976, 1978), following the classic work of Gillin (1936) on this group. Thomas (1971, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1979), Mandé (1979), Urbina (1979), Urbina and Mandé-Urbina (1981), Urbina and Heinen (1982) researched on the Pemon groups of the Gran Sabana. Morales (1979), Morales and Arvelo-Jiménez (1981) have worked with the Kari'ña. Hames and Hames (1976), Hames (1979) and Frechione (1981) wrote on the Ye'kuana. Villalón (1978) and Henley (1979) researched the E'ñepa<sup>1</sup> whilst collaborative work between Henley and Mattéi-

<sup>1</sup> Villalón writes "E'ñapa" and Henley "E'ñepa." Mattéi-Muller and Henley (personal communication) point out that from a strictly linguistic point of view the correct phonemic spelling would be E'nepa.

Muller led to a number of interesting articles on the E'ñepa and adjacent groups (Henley 1975; Muller 1975; Henley and Mattéi-Muller 1978). A. Lhermillier (1980), N. Lhermillier (1980) and Paolisso and Sackett (1982) wrote on the Yukpa of the Sierra de Perijá. In the Upper Xingú, Central Brazil, Menget carried out his research with the Txikão (1977a, 1977b, 1979).

Several anthropologists already established in the Carib field not only continued publishing the results of their first studies<sup>2</sup> but began to broaden their previous investigations and also to undertake research with a second Carib group. Thus, Arvelo-Jiménez started additional fieldwork with the Kari'ña; Butt Colson began her collaboration with C. de Armellada (Armellada and Butt Colson 1976; Butt Colson and Armellada 1983), who had already produced a number of valuable works on Pemon myth and language (Armellada 1964, 1972, 1973; Armellada y Gutiérrez Salazar 1981); Denevan and Schwerin published together on the Karinya (1978); Coppens revived his earlier interest in the Ye'kuana. Work in applied anthropology took Heinen from the Warao of the Orinoco Delta into the Pemon and Ye'kuana fields of Carib research.

Previous pioneering monographs from the late 60s and early 70s, for example, by Schwerin (1966); Hurault (1968); Rivière (1969a); Civrieux (1970a, 1970b, 1974); Arvelo-Jiménez (1971, transl. 1974); Kloos (1971); Diniz (1972); Dumont (1972, 1976, 1978); Basso (1973); and Ruddle (1974, transl. 1977), were added to by new works such as those of Civrieux (1976, 1980); Coppens (1981); Henley (1982) and Thomas (1982).

Thus it had become obvious to a number of Carib specialists that there might profitably be a further taking of stock and a renewed concentration of efforts, since more than sufficient empirical data had accumulated to justify an extension of collaboration and comparative research into some major themes and problems in Carib studies. The 44th Meeting of Americanists, held in Manchester in September 1982, offered an excellent opportunity for this and a one day symposium was arranged under the title of "Carib political and social organization." The papers which we now publish in *Antropológica* are the revised versions of those written for that symposium, which were summarized by their authors and discussed at the meeting. We decided to focus on Carib political organization, considering it a topic broad enough for all Carib specialists to relate their current research to and to merit a concentrated attention, being likely to afford a maximum opportunity for analysis and the formation of ideas and theory. In choosing it, we also had in mind the interest generated by the much quoted and disputed work by Pierre Clastres (1974), on the nature of Lowland South American indigenous political structure and organization, and several other published works on these topics referring to specific South American linguistic groupings. Notably, research on the Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil recently presented in *Dialectical societies*, (edited by D. Maybury-Lewis 1979), has aroused an interest which is patent through references

<sup>2</sup> See Basso (1977: 19-22) for a useful bibliography of earlier works by Carib specialists. For recent articles on Venezuela Carib speakers and those of immediate neighbouring territory, see "Bibliografía antropológica reciente sobre Venezuela" (Wagner 1972, 1973; Wagner y Coppens 1974, 1975, 1976a, 1976b, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982).

in several of the papers we publish. The depth of analysis apparent in the rapidly increasing number of studies of the Yanomami/Sanema group of societies of South Venezuela and North Brazil has also provided stimulus, whilst the considerable research carried out in the North-west Amazon region (Hugh-Jones, C. 1979; Hugh-Jones, S. 1979; Jackson 1972, 1974) has made a decided impact. That Carib specialists in general felt that the time was appropriate to begin to put together for review some of the important ranges of ethnography and theories emerging from their most recent work, was confirmed by the full and generous response which the co-organizers received whilst arranging the Carib symposium at Manchester.

Apart from the wish to make a permanent record of that meeting and to preserve the stimulation which was achieved there through the mutual interchange of ideas and information, we anticipate that this present publication will be welcome both to those in the Americanist field and also to others who should find it useful to possess a range of up-to-date Carib ethnography and be acquainted with some of the main directions in which our research is taking us in analysis and theoretical formation. We are here publishing thirteen out of the fifteen papers which were presented.<sup>3</sup> Had it not been for personal commitments we should have been able to welcome several other well-known Carib scholars to the symposium and to participation in this publication. It was Peter Kloos who first pressed for the organization of a Carib symposium, although he could not take part. Among those who expressed a strong interest were Nelly Arvelo-Jiménez, Ellen Basso, Robert Carneiro, Jean-Paul Dumont and Daniel Schoepf. We are especially grateful to Patrick Menger who, at extremely short notice, ably acted as our discussant during the meetings. We also welcomed a number of other, non-Carib, specialists in our audience, who greatly contributed to the value of the discussion and, in this context, we single out Nancie Gonzalez and Johannes Wilbert.

We could not, at the symposium, nor can we here, pretend to be definitive as regards all Carib speakers, and the organizers especially regretted not having been able to include, amongst others, papers on the Wayana, Aparai and Akuriyo in Eastern Guiana, nor others in the Upper Xingú area. Moreover, each contributor could select only a portion of the ethnography and address but a few of the fundamental issues and problems available for consideration. Even the widely comparative papers (which turned out to be some of those focussing on kinship) had to be highly selective in the line of enquiry followed. However, taken all together the participants covered a substantial number of Carib groups and themes, whilst general acquaintance with the Carib literature allowed free reference to published works on areas not represented by participants and to sectors of

<sup>3</sup> The two papers not included here took the form of ethnographic notes. That by Helmut Schindler, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, was entitled "Acerca de la organización social de los Karihona" (see: Schindler 1982). It considered the social organization of a few dozen people, constructed mainly from their statements owing to profound change and destruction of their traditional society (see also: Schindler 1974, 1977). That by Edson Soares Diniz, Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP) at Marília, was entitled "Os índios Makuxí e seu convívio com os civilizados" (see: Diniz 1982). It related the principal kinds of changes which have taken place among the Brazilian Makuxí (Pemon) over more than 200 years of contact. A strong interest has been expressed in both these works and we very much hope that the authors will decide to publish them in due course.

information not directly covered by the symposium topic.

### The terms Kari'ña and Karaiva

This opportunity should not pass without a short note by non-linguists on the general designation of the peoples we are here covering, thus setting the stage for a more exhaustive, specialist study.

That the ethnographic breadth of the linguistic distribution of the name "Carib" (Kari'ña, Galibí, Karaíbe, Karaiva) had not been fully appreciated since the publication of Friederici's 1917 dictionary (Friederici 1960: 143-145) became clear to us when we read the remark by Dole (this symposium) expressing surprise that "white people [are] curiously enough... called Karaíba (*Kagaifa* in Kuikuro phonology)." Taylor (1958b) does not even mention the term Karaíba, but concentrates on the connection which traditionally has been called to the attention of readers; that between the terms "Cannibal" and "Carib," which he derives from the Arawak language of the Greater Antilles, having the meaning "manioc people."

It should, however, be pointed out that the term *Karaiva* is used by the Pemon, the Kapon, and the Ye'kuana to designate Portuguese speakers, i.e. Brazilians. On the other hand, Spanish speakers are divided. The Ye'kuana, for example, refer to the peninsular Spanish as *Fañudu* and to Venezuelans as *Yadanavi*. On the other hand, *Judunku* applies to Western Europeans and, specifically, to the Dutch.

Karaiva has, in fact, a pan-Amazonian distribution. In the Tupi-derived lingua franca known as Geral or Yeral the word is applied simply to any white, and Darcy Ribeiro notes in the Glossary of his 1976 novel *Maira*: "caraíba (from the Tupi kara'ib, 'astute,' 'intelligent,' or 'holy,' 'blessed,' 'sacred'): This name designates those who belong to a tribe of the Lesser Antilles. And, as in the present case, it is the name the Indians give to the white man."

It is ironic, and at the same time symptomatic of the linguistic, cultural and historical complexity of the European/Indian interrelationship, that the very name of "Carib" (and by implication of "Cannibal") which we apply to the conglomerate of a particular language group, should also designate a white man in many of the languages of the very same group. Similarly ironic and symptomatic is an almost standard question asked by the Indians: "Will we be eaten if we visit your cities?"

### The problem of Carib identity

Although we considered that our chosen title was specific and coherent enough for the present stage of comparative Carib studies, we realized that its parameters and its phrasing inevitably presented some basic difficulties. Political organization and its nature in traditional Lowland South America is a large and highly disputed topic, but we felt that being so important and basic it might profitably be investigated from a specific "Carib" angle. However, equally problematic is the classification of "Carib." The question of the existence of a discrete social and Carib identity had been discussed at the 1972 meeting in Rome, and subsequently Basso (1977: 12-19), took up this question. She listed eight

specific "traits" as seeming to constitute a "typical" Carib complex. Recording that "taken individually each trait can be found among other, non-Carib peoples" she nevertheless asserted that, taken together, these traits "seem to characterize the tribes whose languages belong to this linguistic group." However, even these have now been challenged (Villalón, this symposium), not all of the eight "basic Carib traits" being found among the E'ñepa, for example, amongst whom, as among the Wayana (Hurault 1968: Chap. 6), there is an elaborate and public male initiation festival, female initiation being private and attended by women only.

However, further consideration led Basso to another form of classification: that by geographical region and its concomitant - the association with, and cultural borrowing from, other linguistic groups. Listing some of the variety of tropical environments inhabited today by Carib speakers she referred to their relationships with neighbouring non-Caribs. She pinpointed the Carijona as sharing significant ethnographic features with their North-west Amazon neighbours, the Witoto and Bora and the Eastern Tukanoan; she designated the majority of Caribs as forming a culture area with Arawak and intrusive Tupi tribes, and identified a third sector consisting of the Carib speakers of the Upper Xingú basin who possess many characteristics indistinguishable from surrounding Tupi, Arawak and Trumai speakers. Since so many Carib and non-Carib groups are similar in so many respects, her conclusion suggested that Lowland American peoples might better be divided into social and cultural unities which encompass local groups of different language affiliation and historical origin. That is, specific geographical and ecological circumstances have given rise to a comparatively recent history of local interaction, dominating and transforming previous historical and linguistic unities and producing multi-ethnic societies.

It has always, in our opinion, appeared highly unlikely that Carib speakers qua linguistic family, constituted in all respects a discrete and unique unity. Classic works on Guiana,<sup>4</sup> such as those of W. E. Roth (1915, 1924, 1929) amply bear witness to the similarities and even identical customs which cut across linguistic boundaries. As Wilbert pointed out in the symposium discussion, and Morton exemplifies (see Morton, this symposium) with respect to indigenous theories about conception, we can see many links at the ideological level between a variety of Guiana peoples, Carib and non-Carib, and this has to be kept in mind if our conclusions on organization are not to be one-sided. Contributors to the symposium had therefore to meet the underlying query as to whether we could legitimately, or at least usefully, speak of a specific set of Carib political structures and modes of organization, knowing that we certainly could not do so with respect to isolated traits, of whatever type. In tackling this problem, it was noted that we should have to take into account factors which might prove transcendent in some instances at least, such as those of geographical distance and dispersal, with their concomitant

<sup>4</sup> By Guiana or Guayana we mean the geographical area lying between the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers, the North-east being bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North and North-west by the course of the Orinoco River, the South-west by the Cassiquiare and the course of the Rio Negro, with the Amazon to the South. This is the colonial term "Island of Guayana." This designation must not be confused with the nation of Guyana, formerly British Guiana.

ecological variations and differential influences, as noted by Basso. As Henley points out (this symposium), at the beginning of the 16th century when the Caribs (Kari'ña) of Guiana were at the height of their territorial expansion, they occupied an area stretching some 2,000 km. East to West, from the mouth of the Meta on the Middle Orinoco to the mouth of the Oyapock (on the French Guiana and Brazilian frontier), and at its widest points this area extended at least 800 km. in a North-South direction. Some groups had begun to colonize the islands of the Lesser Antilles. However, since the beginning of the 16th century, Caribs and Carib speakers alike have undergone modifications, often of a profound kind, brought about by intermixture and acculturation deriving from the Old World settlers and the different nation states developing out of the early colonies.

Bringing together researchers with extensive fieldwork experience in Guiana and also from the Xingú region South of the Amazon, seemed a good way of further airing this problem of wide dispersal, variety of physical habitats, social contacts and specific historical experience. We were therefore glad to include Gertrude Dole and her specialist knowledge of the Kuikuru and also to have the benefit in our discussion of Patrick Menget's research experience from the Txicão. We could however, only scratch the surface of the problem of comparison between the Caribs of Guiana and those South of the Amazon. (Refer to Map. See also Durbin 1977: 35 and Maps 2.2, 2.3). The profitability or otherwise of this line of enquiry will only be fully apparent as our knowledge deepens in both areas.

If, as seems clear, there are no hard and fast ethnic boundaries between Caribs and their neighbours, then we have to take these neighbours into account. For this reason the organizers invited the participation of Joanna Overing, who has published extensively on the non-Carib-speaking Uhuöttoja (Piaroa) of the Middle Orinoco, neighbours of the Ye'kuana who represent the westernmost sector of the traditional trade network linking together Ye'kuana, Pemon and Kapon, as well as others, Carib and non-Carib, to the North and South (Coppens 1971; Thomas 1972; Butt Colson 1973). It subsequently transpired that not only had references to her Piaroa publications been included in a number of symposium papers, but Karl Schwerin had used Piaroa kinship as a base from which to try to discover an essential Kari'ña one. In addition, Heinen was able to call on his knowledge of the Warao (a linguistically independent group and neighbours of the Kari'ña), whilst Edson Soares Diniz had carried out his research on the Makuxí (Pemon of Brazil), in relation to their Arawak-speaking Wapishana neighbours with whom they had interacted during a long history of hostility, intermarriage and trading (Diniz 1972).

### **Carib demography and social transformation**

Apart from the problems associated with the notion of a Carib identity which had remained open since the Rome Congress, it was soon noted in the symposium discussion that information on Carib demography needed up-dating. Basso (1977: 13) had estimated Carib speakers as falling "roughly between 20,240 and 27,100 persons." According to today's figures, although incomplete and in some instances

out-of-date, we find that Carib speakers are far more numerous, and in some cases at least are increasing rapidly. For example, the 1982 Venezuelan census of indigenous peoples, the preliminary results of which Heinen was able to report during the meeting, now show that there are about 12,000 Pemon speakers in Venezuela alone, whilst Diniz reported that the Brazilian Makuxí (Pemon) are now some 5,000. If another 5,000 Guyanese Makushi<sup>9</sup> are included (a very conservative figure based on the Guyana Amerindian Lands Commission investigation of 1969), then the Pemon (Kamarakoto, Arekuna, Taurepan and Makushi groups) number at least 22,000, so that even just this one Carib grouping now surpasses the total which Basso a few years ago envisaged for all Caribs in South America.

In relation to this disclosure and the papers by Villalón and Butt Colson on wider levels of Carib structure, Dole, Schindler and Schwerin referred to the enormous demographic variations existing between these and Carib groups with small or remnant populations of a few hundreds. They also noted the great differences resulting from contact with the national society and the processes of acculturation. The permutations in this respect are wide-ranging. They include the as yet isolated and independent Waimiri-Atroari; the small E'ñepa and Waiwai groups, still living traditionally in the main; the near 30,000 combined Pemon and Kapon groupings of the circum-Roraima area (Butt Colson, this symposium) who had escaped profound change up to the 1950s; the Xingú people with 300 years of demographic disturbance through warfare, depopulation and merging of tribal groups; and finally the very acculturated Kari'ña, with nearly 400 years of direct contact behind them and who, in the case of some of the Barama River Caribs, decimated by disease and the inroads of a mining economy, have recently taken refuge in the forests of Eastern Venezuela. The different kinds of effects and degrees of impingement by the national society were published shortly before the Manchester meeting by Henley (1982) for the E'ñepa, building on work by Ribeiro and Cardoso de Oliveira (Ribeiro 1970; Cardoso de Oliveira 1972a, 1972b; see also Henley 1978) on the moving fronts of national expansion. Some of the effects of mission teaching, mediated by groups of American Indians travelling and working temporarily outside their home region and initiating indirect contacts, had already been reported for the Kapon and Pemon groups (Butt 1960; Butt Colson 1971a). Amongst our papers, Adams for the Barama River Caribs, Dole for the Kuikuru and Heinen for the Ye'kuana particularly address the form and consequences of social transformations due to contacts with the national societies.

In the following survey, Audrey Butt Colson has endeavoured to isolate from our author's contributions some of their main ideas and theoretical arguments in order to present to the reader an outline of the diversity and breadth of the ground covered in this symposium.

<sup>9</sup> We use the spelling Makuxí for these Brazilian Pemon and Makushi for the Guyanese Pemon, in accordance with national custom and as a useful means for distinguishing the geographical provenance of sectors of one sub-division of the Pemon ethnic unity. The geographic and political division is formed by the Takutu and Ireng rivers, tributaries of the Upper Rio Branco.

MAP  
THE CARIB-SPEAKING PEOPLES OF THE GUIANAS  
(AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS)

The spelling of indigenous names has had to be determined in an arbitrary fashion, given the present lack of agreed forms. We have used autodenominations where these are certain.

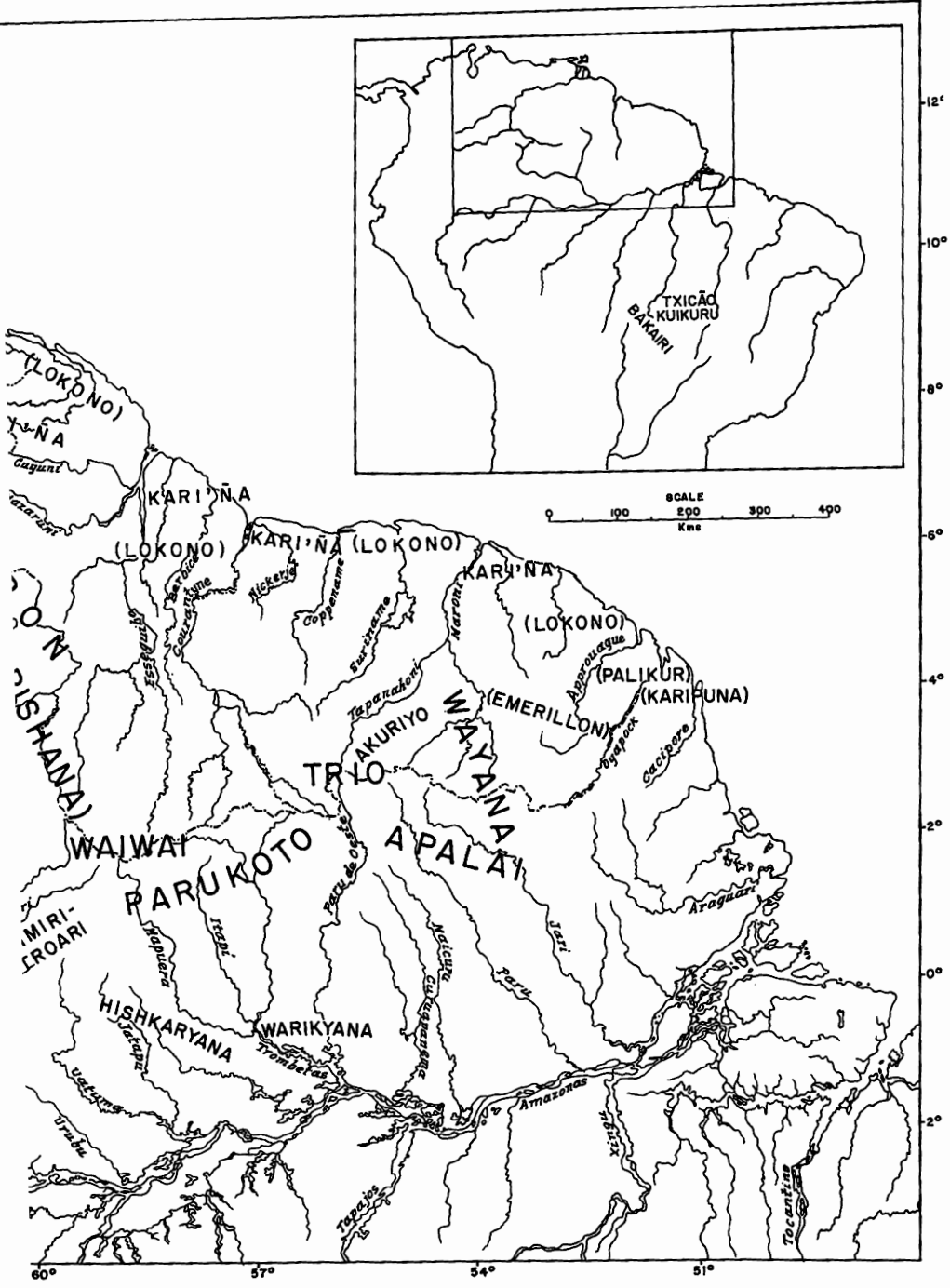
All major Carib speakers north of the Amazon and the best known of the Xingú groups are included. Two extinct Carib peoples, the Choto and the Tamanaku are specified, but for the location of the Kalinago reference should be made to the paper by Simone Dreyfus.

The only non-Carib groups in Guiana which are represented are those which have special relevance to the papers presented. At least twenty-three in the main map area have been omitted for purposes of simplicity and clarity.

The Editors thank Marcus Colchester and Paul Henley for their assistance in preparing the map.



# 3 OF THE GUIANAS (AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS)



# THE CARIB-SPEAKING PEOP

