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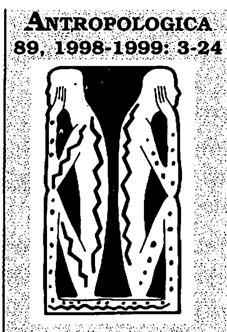

Seeking the Ancestors

Michele Goldwasser

Introduction

While the colonial period precipitated the decimation of Amerindian populations throughout the Caribbean, it also spawned the emergence of a new ethnic group — the Garínagü. Called "Black Caribs" by colonialists, the Garínagü evolved from intermarriages between the Island Carib and escaped African slaves on the island of Saint Vincent. Today, they live in Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and throughout the United States. Many Garínagü continue to speak their own language, an Arawak-based dialect, sometimes as the principle language in their homes even in the United States. They call themselves Garínagü, from the Carib Kallinago, when speaking in the collective, and use Garífuna, from the Carib Kalipuna, when speaking in the singular. While primarily Catholic, they also practice their indigenous rituals, cook cassava in open hearth ovens throughout Central America, and identify first and foremost with their Garífuna community. The Garínagü take great pride in their history, tracing their ancestry back to the island of their genesis, Yurumei, a Carib term meaning "Blessed Land" and the Garífuna name for Saint Vincent. More and more, however, Garínagü are seeking their roots in their ancestral homelands in West Africa and South America. In doing so, they are helping to uncover the extent of Amerindian migration and trade throughout the Caribbean region.

Oral tradition among the Amerindians of Saint Vincent and the Garínagü has repeatedly maintained that their ancestors came from the Orinoco Delta. William Young wrote in 1795 that the "Red Charaibs" (or "Yellow Caribs", used to distinguish them from the "Black Caribs" or Garínagü) "had a tradition, that their forefathers came from the banks of the Oronooko, whence coasting Trinidada, and Tobago, to Grenada, and thence by the Grenadines, they arrived at St. Vincent's, subdued the native inhabitants, called Galibeis, and possessed themselves of the

island" (Young 1971:5). C. Gullick, in a thorough study of the creation myths of the Vincentian Caribs, found that they contained "common elements, for example, all myths connect the Island Caribs to northern South America" (Boucher 1992:3; see Gullick 1985:25-38). In contrast to Young's record, three of the Carib myths Gullick collected state that they came "from the land of the Galibies in Guiana" (Gullick 1985:35). "Galibies" is used to refer to the Caribs of the Maroni River area in Surinam, though at the "time of the European conquest there were Caribs on the Courantyre, Barima, and Orinoco Rivers who also could have been the so-called "Galibies" (Kloos 1971:13; Gullick 1985:35).

The Garífuna today also maintain their ancestors came from the Orinoco Delta. Perhaps more intriguing, they use the word "warou" when describing the indigenous population they encountered in Central America.[1] Douglas Taylor reported this in 1951, writing that "there are the Kekchi, Mopan, and Yucatec Maya Indians, all of whom the Carib [Garínagü] call uarau, from the name of the Warrau Indians, who inhabit the delta of the Orinoco" (Taylor 1951:40). In Central America, the word is still commonly used today to simply mean "Amerindian". For example, in a book describing his own culture, Justin Flores (Don Justo) published a poem entitled Garínagü Waguiya (We are Garínagü) which contains the following lines describing his ancestors:

Hayabin fayafayeina	(They came sailing)
Lumaguiyen Duna Orinugu	(from the Orinoco River)
Lun ubauhun Yurumei	(to the island of St. Vincent)
Lidan lubarawan Garífuna	(in the Carib sea)

The poem continues speaking of the Afrikanu Wayuna Weugeuri (Male African Ancestors):

Lun Yurumei Biabin	(You come to Yurumei)
Aganawaun Warau Garífuna.	(to procreate with the Garífuna Warou).

(Flores 1979:85)[2]

What memories of life in the Orinoco Delta continue in the traditional language and thought of the Garínagü today? What were the historical influences of the indigenous populations of the South American continent on the people of the Caribbean and Mesoamerica? These questions can be approached by reviewing the history, both oral and written, of the Garínagü.

[1]More recently in Honduras, "warou" is also being used to refer to ladinos, people of Hispanic or mixed ancestry. In all cases, the word carries some negative connotations (R. Cayetano, e-mail communication)

[2]Translated by Jessie Castillo.

Early History of Saint Vincent

Debate still exists regarding the pre-colonial history of the early inhabitants of Saint Vincent. Often called Island Carib to distinguish them from Caribs on the South American mainland, the indigenous population of Saint Vincent has puzzled scholars. Archaeologists disagree about what constitutes Island Carib ceramics, while modern linguists show that these "Caribs" speak an Arawakan language, with only the males using some Cariban elements (Boucher 1992:2). Until recently, most scholars accepted seventeenth century French Dominican missionary accounts that the Caribs were an offshoot of the Galibis of the Guianan coast, who had, some unknown centuries before, island-hopped north along the Lesser Antillean chain, destroying Arawakan male inhabitants and taking their females as wives or slaves. The missionaries believed that this account explained the curiously different languages of the sexes, the males speaking a Cariban dialect. Though modern scholars insist upon the largely Arawakan character of both Island Carib languages, the Cariban linguistic remnants are still explained within this assumed historical context (Boucher 1992:2).

Taylor concurs with the invasion theory, citing that "this linguistic evidence and the historical fact that a common motivation among warriors of northern South America was the acquisition of women argues strongly for the traditional viewpoint of a pre-Columbian invasion and conquest" (Boucher 1992:4).

In contrast, anthropologist Louis Allaire suggests that the Island Caribs may have arrived just a generation or two before Columbus. Gullick proposes that a small group of Carib men migrated rather than invaded the islands (Gullick 1980:470; Boucher 1992:5). Gullick later leaves open the question, stating that "it is even debatable whether (i) the Caribs replaced the Arawaks in one fell swoop, (ii) lived together with them, or (iii) are themselves really Arawaks (Gullick 1985:25-26). Peter Hulme, accepting Jalil Sued Badillo's hypothesis, supported this latter view, explaining that those labeled "Carib" by Columbus did not differ ethnically from the "Arawaks." Columbus perceived non-ethnic enmities by economically and politically diverse groups as signifying ethnic differences. Thus, Columbus "and subsequent European writers were then responsible for grossly magnifying the differences between "Caribs" and "Arawaks," names not used as ethnic identifiers by the aborigines themselves. And so, once again, the colonized came to accept typologies fashioned by the colonizers" (Boucher 1992:5).

Oral tradition among the Garínagü today generally agrees with the first hypothesis, that Carib warriors from South America invaded the islands, thus explaining the differences still found among male and

female speech. Women, the captured Arawaks, raised the children and naturally taught them their language and traditions, and, therefore, Arawak language and traditions prevail. Irving Rouse concurs with this, explaining that the Island Carib:

> came from the Guianas and Trinidad, where they had lived side-by-side with the Arawaks. By the time of Columbus they had penetrated the Lesser Antilles, but only as far as the southern end of the Leeward Islands. If my inferences from their traditions are correct, they arrived in war parties, which conquered the Igneri [Arawak] population, subjugated or drove out its men, and took its women as wives. The warriors were apparently too few in number to have substantially changed the biological composition of the previous population or to have replaced its language and the domestic aspects of its culture. The invaders were only able to impose their own name, their pidgin language, and masculine aspects of their ancestral culture (Rouse 1992: 25).

Evidence suggests that prior to "the arrival of the Spaniards, the memory of an uninterrupted commerce and relations with the continent of South America was still alive" (Lovén 1935:51). Lovén interprets Pané's writings to show that "peaceful intercommunication and trading intercourse" existed between Guiana and the Antilles (1935:561). He also cites a Warao legend that tobacco grew on distant island called Nibo-yuni, or "Man-without", because only women inhabited it. Lovén sees this as variation of the Haitian legend of Matininó, or "land of women", so that "the Warraus must have originally obtained tobacco from the Antilles" (Lovéná 1935:52). Donald Lathrop, in a conversation with Johannes Wilbert, agreed that "the Caribbean functioned for at least two thousand years as 'a wide-open avenue of trade and intercommunication among all points on its shore' and that 'the bulk of the trade was in the hands of peoples of Arawakan speech'" (see Wilbert, 1993:111).

The Emergence of the Garínagü

More controversial, especially between scholarly and traditional viewpoints, is the arrival of Africans in Saint Vincent and the subsequent genesis of the Garífuna people. Simone Dreyfus suggests that Africans were introduced into the area as early as 1504 (Dreyfus 1982:14; Gonzalez 1988:150). Africans certainly could have been

present on Saint Vincent at any time from the start of the slave trade in 1517. Early Carib raids on Puerto Rico, such as one recorded in 1529 when "eight Carib pirogues raided San Juan and captured 25 Indians and Negroes" continued throughout the next century (Barome 1966; Gullick 1985:44). Armond de la Paix first records African presence in Saint Vincent in 1646. Rochefort reported in 1658 that Africans were "slaves" of the Caribs (Rochefort 1966:295; Gullick 1985:44).

Early records state that a shipwreck occurred off Saint Vincent in the seventeenth century, thereby explaining the large numbers of Africans present on the island. A document in the British Calendar of State Papers, 1661-1668, describes the inhabitants of Saint Vincent as "all Indians, and some negroes from the loss of two Spanish ships in 1635" (Taylor 1951:18). Young writes that the "Negroes, or Black Charaibs (as they have been termed of late years), are descendants from the cargo of an African slave ship, bound from the Bite of Benin to Barbadoes, and wrecked, about the year 1675, on the coast of Bequia, a small island about two leagues to the south of St. Vincent's" (1971:6; see also Conzemius 1928:187). Members of the Garífuna community today scoff at this origin, asking how shackled African slaves could escape a shipwreck. Indeed, this narrative origin does have the markings of legend. Rather than admit to numerous captures by Carib warriors or escapes by African slaves, it gives the early European community an explanation for African presence on the island that negates Carib and African strength and resourcefulness.

More recent scholars mention this shipwreck but cite also the evidence of Carib raids and African escapes (see Gonzalez 1988:26). Flores, speaking from the Garífuna point-of-view, takes the origin a step further, writing that Caribs deliberately set out to rescue African slaves. "The deliverance of the slaves became their primary sport. It was anything to harass their Spanish enemies, became their game. It was no wonder, that very soon these Africans learned the Carib language and took Carib Indian wives, for their own protection" (Flores 1979:16). Du Tertre's report of "a complaint by Martiniquan planters that more than 500 of their slaves had been kidnapped by Caribs from nearby islands" helps to verify the extent of Carib raids (Du Tertre 1667-1671:574; Gonzalez 1988:26). Island Caribs encouraged male captives to cohabitat with Carib women and their children were fully accepted within the group. Gonzalez suggests that the "Europeans reporting on this matter mistook a kind of bride service for chattel slavery of the sort they themselves practiced" resulting in reports of African slaves being held by Caribs (1988:26).

Whether the Island Carib rescued Africans from shipwreck, captured slaves from nearby islands, or accepted maroons into their community will continue to be debated. The fact remains that the

"Black Carib" population in Saint Vincent quickly grew, posing an economic and political threat to the "Yellow Carib" communities. Philip Warner reports that by 1676 Saint Vincent had "3,000 Negroes" (Taylor 1951:21). Labat writes of Saint Vincent:

> This is the centre of the Carib Republic: the place where the savages are most numerous — Dominica not approaching it. Besides the savages, this island is also inhabited by a very great number of fugitive negroes, for the most part from Barbados, which, being to windward of Saint Vincent, gives the runaways every possible facility for escaping from their masters' plantations in boats or on piperis or rafts, and taking refuge among the savages. The Caribs formerly brought them back to their masters, when they were at peace with them, or took and sold them to the French or to the Spaniards. I don't know for what reason they have changed their method, nor what has induced them to receive these negroes amongst themselves and to regard them as belonging to one and the same nation (Labat 1931:166-167; Taylor 1951:22).

Taylor argues that while the Island Carib befriended the Africans, no real fusion took place between them. By the early eighteenth century, "Black Caribs" far outnumbered "Yellow Caribs", occupying the windward side of the island. Labat reports that the "Yellow Caribs" accused "Black Caribs" of kidnapping their wives and daughters, abductions most likely caused by the predominance of male slaves escaping to the island. Yet Labat later writes of the Caribs and Africans together: "Our vessel was no sooner anchored than it was filled with Caribs and negroes come to see us and to ask for brandy. All these gentlemen were rocoued — that is, painted red, and wore — most of them at any rate — a little strip of cloth over their parts" (Labat 1931:168; Taylor 1951:23). Whatever the relationship between Caribs and Africans in the early years of what Virginia Kerns calls the "period of Black Carib genesis," Africans adopted the language, the name, and many cultural traditions of the indigenous Carib population (Kerns 1977:22). By the end of the seventeenth century, however, "the Reds and Blacks constituted two separate ethnic units" (Kerns 1977:22).

There is little question that animosities grew between "Black Caribs" and "Yellow Caribs", primarily as the "Black Carib" population increased and the land available for all Carib habitation decreased. Estimates vary, citing as many as four thousand "Black Caribs" out of a six thousand Carib population in 1683. By 1762 estimates ranged from two to five thousand "Black Caribs" with only about one hundred remaining "Yellow Caribs" on the island (Boucher 1992:97). Part of this

decrease came from a large exodus of "Yellow Caribs" seeking refuge in Trinidad and the Orinoco basin in the 1740s (Boucher 1992:106; see also Gullick 1985:52). This choice of sanctuary also suggests continued memory of and/or communication with indigenous groups in the Orinoco Delta.

Today, the few remaining "Black Caribs" and "Yellow Caribs" in Saint Vincent live in distinct settlements. Their oral tradition underscores the strong division between the two groups, especially at the time of the Carib War in 1795 when "Yellow Caribs" failed to come to the aid of "Black Caribs." Inter-ethnic divisions, though, also seemed to be present. As with Hulme's hypothesis that Columbus mistook inter-ethnic animosities for the existence of separate ethnicities, animosities among the Carib seem to ignore the possibility of inter-ethnic enmities. As Labat wrote, both "Black" and "Yellow" Caribs may have seen themselves as "one and the same nation."

Oral tradition recorded in Belize suggests the need to acknowledge the diversity of groups living under any one ethnic category. Dr. Joseph Palacio of the University of the West Indies in Belize has begun an oral history collection project among his community. He interviewed Mrs. Felicita Francisco, a descendant of Gulisi, the daughter of the Garífuna cultural hero, Chatoyer. The following is excerpted with permission from part of that interview:[3]

M.F.: "Well, you know, we are the result of intermixture. But the Garífuna themselves were subdivided into tribes. My grandmother used to tell me about the Arawaks (she used the term in English then in Garífuna Arawaga). They were the Garífuna who were the scared ones. Then there were the Oreyuna; they were brave. Even as the guns of the English flared into their faces, they did not budge but forged ahead. For that matter the English had to get the help of the French. And it is for this reason that we are now here. But we have now put ourselves down probably because of our heavy intermixture (with others).

Now let us get back to the tribes among the Garífuna. There were the Oreyuna; the Awawarguna (not too clear; it could also be Wawagun).[4] There were the Oligin. There were the (she delayed for a while searching for the name). There were six tribes. There were the Masiragana (this was prompted by a

[3] In keeping with Dr. Palacio's text of his interview, "M.F." refers to Mrs. Francisco and "J.O.P." refers to Dr. Palacio. Comments in parentheses are Dr. Palacio's. Comments in brackets are my own based on early statements in the text. Italics, missing from the original outline transmission, are my own.

[4] This seems to be a confusion of Arawaks/Arawaga above.

man who sat throughout the interview). Sawaina (this again was at the prompting of the same man). We have now found five of them. There were the Habaraguna (also at the prompting of the same man). Yes they were the ones who ganibayan wuribu[5] (liked to fight). The man said: they were the ones who liked to cook and eat late into the night.

The Masigarana were the ones who liked to habeyuhan (defecate) by their houses. For that reason the Oreyuna would not ichaha (want to give a son or daughter in marriage) to them. The Awawarguna were the galabana ura (clear skinned ones). Then the Oligin were the lazy ones; they remained sitting at home not wanting to work. The Oreyuna also would not want to ichaha to them.

J.O.P.: "These tribes must have then lived in different parts of St. Vincent?"

M.F.: "Yes, they lived in different parts and deliberately selected from among themselves for marriage purposes. You will not marry into that raza [extended family] if your father knows what faults are among them. They ichahati honougua (selected for marriage purposes among themselves). This happened when they were still in St. Vincent. They were also still powerful."

Mrs. Francisco's recollections make it clear that different tribes were considered extended families and that some animosities existed between the groups. Their everyday life, though, continued to reflect their Carib/Arawak ancestry and to mirror traditions practiced by indigenous groups in the Orinoco Delta.

J.O.P.: "What was their livelihood before they became involved in the great war?"

M.F.: "They had their own means of livelihood because they were hard working people, especially the Oreyuna. They made their own cloth; their own thread; their own food. They made cassava bread which they wrapped up in gasibu (a wild plant with a broad leaf) to stow away."
Mrs. Francisco continued:

M.F.: "With respect to their clothing, there was a kind of tree (she tried to get its name), gurumurei. From the deer skin they made a square piece (her words) and (she showed it with her

[5] This should read *ganigibayan wuribu* (Jessie Castillo, personal communication).

> hand) this long exactly the same way that I am pointing it out to you now. She (i.e., My grandmother) would tie it with her hand on the lap and break the gurumurei bark into two halves and scrape it. Next thing there comes from this gamisa mandangina (a kind of cloth used to make clothing for daily wear). For this reason I saw that when my grandmother wanted to make cloth she found a tree that was thick enough to make the amount that she wanted.
>
> Now with respect to councha (a thickish kind of rough twine) they made their own from cotton. After taking away the seeds of the cotton she (i.e., my grandmother) rolled the pieces together into thread on a deer skin that she placed on her lap for protection. This is the same protective sheathe they used in preparing cloth from the bark of the tree.

The Garínagü in Central America today still practice Garífuna traditions, especially the making of cassava, in a manner remarkably similar to Arawak practices in the Amazonian region. Moreover, Taylor found in the 1950s that the language spoken in Central America "still resembles that of their Indian forbears to such an extent that they can understand much of Father Raymond Breton's seventeenth century Dominica Carib recordings, when these are read to them with the proper phonetic adjustments; although the dialect of Saint Vincent already differed considerably from the former, in all probability, at the time their own ancestors were deported thence one hundred and fifty years ago" (Taylor 1951:38). The Carib population remaining in Saint Vincent has to a great extent lost its traditions and its culture. What allowed these same traditions to survive and flourish in Central America? This question can only be answered by reviewing the history which led to the deportations of 1797.

The Carib War

The Carib population of Saint Vincent lived with a constant threat of attack by Europeans. A treaty signed at Basse Terre, Guadeloupe, in 1660 gave the Carib perpetual use of Dominica and Saint Vincent in exchange for a cessation of raids on French and English settlements in the Caribbean. The treaty proved short-lived, however. The next one hundred years witnessed continued British attacks on the islands, French attempts to capture "Black Caribs" for transport to Hispaniola, and intervening Franco-Carib alliances against the British. Then, in 1763 at the signing of the Treaty of Paris, both Dominica and Saint Vincent were formally annexed by England. The British confined the Caribs (mainly "Black Caribs") to a portion of the

island in 1773, interrupted only during the years of the American Revolution. During this time, though, the "Black Caribs" prospered under the leadership of Chatoyer, called "the founder of the Carib Civilization" by Sir William Young. Chatoyer's brother, for example, had nine slaves working his cotton plantation. The Caribs raised cotton and tobacco and vegetables for sale to the Europeans (Taylor 1951:24).

European politics again echoed in the Caribbean. In 1794 French revolutionary Victor Hugues recaptured Guadeloupe from the British and a year later prompted Chatoyer to instigate a similar revolt in Saint Vincent. Chatoyer died in the first few days of battle, but with French aid the Caribs continued fighting with varying success. In the summer of 1796, reinforcements sent from England overwhelmed the Caribs and led to their eventual deportation.

Mrs. Francisco described the defeat differently. In her version handed down by Chatoyer's daughter, her great great grandmother, the Caribs saw the arrival of a British ship by the shore of Saint Vincent.

M.F.: "After a few days they dove to go to bore holes in it. It was then that the really heavy fighting started. But try as he may the English could not defeat the Garífuna. He had to get the help of the French.

Now at this time they had dug areas in the ground where they hid their women. The Garífuna did not wear any clothes up to the time of their arrival here. They only wore clothes around their waist.

While their women were down below, the men were busy fighting. But there was a muladu who had befriended the Garífuna and told the English, 'For you to defeat these people you have to let loose cattle into their farms.' They did this to starve out the Garífuna. After a long period of this siege, a woman who was hungry and tired of suffering, took off her tigami (loin cloth); tied it on a stick and raised it high. It was then that the fighting stopped. . . . They then put the Garífuna into boats to ship them this way."

The idea of deporting Garínagü from Saint Vincent came nearly twenty-five years prior to the actual deportation in 1797. The Earl of Hillsborough sent the following message to the governor of Saint Vincent in a letter dated April 18, 1772:

> . . . if necessity demand the removal of the charibbs, you do take up such vessels as can be procured, to serve as transports for the conveyance of them to some unfrequented part of the coast of Africa, or to some desert island adjacent thereto,

> care being taken that they be treated on the voyage with every degree of humanity their situation will admit of; and whatsoever may be judged necessary to subsist them for a reasonable time, and with such tools and implements as may enable them to provide for their future subsistence (Gonzalez 1988:19-20).

Almost exactly twenty-five years later, similar instructions ordered the Garínagü deported to the island of Roatán, off the coast of Honduras. Frightened by repercussions of the French Revolution in the West Indies, the British reaction to the Carib War was swift. By October, 1796, a total of 4,195 Garínagü, 44 slaves, and 102 "Yellow Caribs" were captured and sent to the island of Baliceaux. During the next five months, however, nearly 2,400 Garínagü died from disease, probably yellow fever or typhus, aggravated by malnutrition (Gonzalez 1988:21). Prior to deportation, the slaves and all lighter-skinned Caribs were returned to Saint Vincent. This resulted in the separation of families. Those who remained in Saint Vincent eventually were granted lands in restricted areas. These included both "Black Caribs" and "Yellow Caribs". Many later died in the 1812 eruption of Mt. Soufrière, while others fled to Trinidad thereafter. The descendants of those who remained in Saint Vincent live today in separate indigenous communities, one at Sandy Bay composed principally of "Yellow Caribs" and one at Rose Banks inhabited by a few "Black Caribs." Their own recognition of ethnic differences underscores the distinctiveness of the "Black Carib" and "Yellow Carib" groups in the late 1700s. These self designations, however, were undoubtedly overlooked by the British in the actual deportations of 1797.

Accounts of the deportations vary greatly. Conzemius reports that the H. M. S. Experiment transported the Garínagü to Roatán, landing on February 25, 1797 (Taylor 1951:26; Conzemius 1928:189). Durón, a Honduranian historian, reported two men-of-war and a brigantine transported the deportees, landing in April (Taylor 1951:26; Durón 1927:99). Gonzalez' investigation of the British records and a Spanish account (Sáenz 1797) names eleven ships, including four that were lost, abandoned, or captured by the Spaniards (Gonzalez 1988:35-36n10). Mrs. Francisco recalls the tradition that twenty-four ships were used in the deportations, twelve carrying whites and twelve carrying blacks. A storm caused nine of the ships with whites to sink and three of the ships with blacks to sink. Today, the Garínagü officially commemorate the arrival of the ancestors on April 12, 1797, proclaimed a national holiday in Honduras during the 1997 bicentennial.

The tragic manner in which Garífuna families were separated, the devastating trauma of the massive loss of life on Baliceaux, and the callous uprooting of a people from the home of their ancestors failed to

defeat the Garínagü. Today, the Garínagü proudly exclaim that they were never slaves. Their tenacity in the face of oppression has allowed them to flourish and cling to their traditions. Taylor found the "tales of the Dominica Carib nearly always turning on natural or supernatural marital problems and misfortunes, while those of the Black Carib deal principally with competition or conflict between individuals of the same sex, in which the despised and ill-used always win out in a more or less miraculous way" (Taylor 1951:139). Tales often reflect life itself, as in the miraculous way the Garínagü survived the deportations. If asked how they survived, many Garínagü would answer "with the help of the ancestors." They live in Central America today still among their ancestors from Yurumei.

Life in Central America

Landing at Roatán, the Garínagü quickly founded a settlement. At the invitation of the Spanish governor, many Garínagü migrated to the mainland, spreading out along the coast and establishing a large settlement at Trujillo. Gonzalez asks why so many Garínagü left Roatán, an island that was literally handed to them (1988:43). She cites oral tradition recorded by Beauçage that they left "because there were no cohune (Attalea cohune Mart.) palm trees there, whose fronds were needed to roof their houses." Gonzalez continues, explaining that this exemplifies "oral tradition that is of little help" (1988:42). Taken literally, it may not explain the exodus from Roatán. Taken metaphorically, however, it may indeed explain the subsequent migrations throughout the Central American coast. Mrs. Francisco recalls that "Gulisi mesebetu (did not feel at home at) Roatán and she crossed over to Trujillo." After giving birth to thirteen sons, she and others continued their migrations, searching for "a place that lenege (looks like) Yurumein." The Garínagü migrated in search of places which reminded them of their homeland, and their ancestors. In the early 1800s they continued south along the coast into Nicaragua, founding the villages of La Fe and Orinoco. In essence, some may have redefined the land in terms of their ancestor's homeland in the Orinoco Delta.

Politics also intervened, forcing more migrations. In 1832 many Garínagü joined the royalist forces in an abortive attempt to overthrow the republican government. They fled to British Honduras, now Belize, arriving on November 19. Garínagü in Belize and the United States celebrate this day, a national holiday in Belize. Today, the Garínagü continue to live in villages along the coasts of Nicaragua, Honduras, Belize, and in Livingston, Guatemala.

In addition to searching for places that lenege Yurumein, and naming a village after ancestral lands, the Garínagü seem to have related the people they encountered in their new land to those encountered by their ancestors. "Warou" became the Garífuna word for the Amerindians in Central America, and today is used for Amerindians in general (see Suazo 1991:56 and R. Cayetano 1993:87). I was told by one Garínagü that when they first arrived at Roatán, they were "just like the warou." Moreover, in popular speech, Garínagü call the Honduran dollar, the lempira, named after the great Lenca cacique Lempira, simply "warou" or fiádürü warau (warou dollar) because of the picture of an Indian (Lempira) on it. Even more intriguing, Lempira is a Warao term. Could the Garínagü have sensed a relationship between the Amerindians in Central America and the actual Warao from the Orinoco Delta?[6]

While that question may never be answered, similarities do seem to exist between the Warao and the indigenous groups in Mesoamerica. Wilbert recognized "Mesoamerican parallels to features of Warao culture" (Wilbert 1993:234), noting that ". . . the Warao have been a mobile seafaring nation for thousands of years and probably have assimilated cultural traits not only from the South American mainland, but also from Mesoamerica and the Caribbean as well" (Wilbert 1993:148n4). Moreover, during Spanish times the Warao language "was used as lingua franca by the neighboring tribes as well as by the Spaniards" (Steward 1948:870), suggesting a widespread Warao influence at least throughout the Orinoco region. Additionally, Peter Furst noted that both "the wisharatu-temple-idol complex and the hoa complex of the Warao are in fact strongly reminiscent of Mesoamerican religion and ritual" constituting "puzzling parallels" (Wilbert 1993:126-7n6; see also Wilbert 1993:126-132). These "puzzling parallels" prove even more perplexing when examining specific ethnic relations in Central America.

The Miskitu of Honduras and Nicaragua

While the Garínagü call other Amerindian groups warou, they refer to the Miskitu as idudu. Taylor finds the term "in its Island Carib form, etutu" and states that it "was in Breton's day applied to the Caribs' arch-enemies, the mainland Arawak" He posits its etymological

[6] Roy Cayetano reports that "warou" in Honduras seems to be used for Ladinos, persons of Hispanic or mixed ancestry. While this contradicts the popular usage of fiádürü warau, it might also suggest knowledge of the Warao from the Orinoco Delta as Spanish-speakers, a distinction made in differentiating Amerindian groups in Trinidad (see Goldwasser 1996:). The use of fiádürü warau may even connote knowledge of Lempira as a Warao term. In both Honduras and Belize, the term "*warou*" has negative connotations.

meaning as "stranger," or "enemy" (Taylor 1951:40)[7] In popular usage, idudu actually connotes "a person who is fairly dark in complexion with long straight hair" (R. Cayetano, e-mail communication), descriptive of the African-Amerindian Miskitu. Like themselves, the Miskitu emerged as a distinct cultural-linguistic group around the middle of the seventeenth century. "It has been suggested, and it seems probable, that the Mosquito are a purely historic group, whose origin lies in the miscegenation of Sumu Indians with negroes who were shipwrecked on the Mosquito Cays in 1641" (Newson 1986:43; see also Conzemius 1932:17). Again, a shipwreck formed the basis of explaining the presence of escaped African slaves, changing the date of the shipwreck in different versions (see Newson 1986:43n166). The Bishop of Nicaragua described the origin of the "Zambos-Mosquitos" in 1711 as follows:

> In 1641, a ship laden with negroes was shipwrecked on the Atlantic coast and in part between the San Juan river, in the province of Nicaragua, and the city of Trujillo, in the province of Honduras . . . one third of the negroes were gathered together and the rest took refuge and settled in the foothills of those mountains occupied by carib Indians [indios caribes] who suspicious and fearful of those new arrivals made war on them and for a few years it was very bitter and in time the negroes defeated the caribs and these retired into the mountains towards the lands of Segovia and Chontales . . . With women of the conquered, the conquerors multiplied and because these first strangers are already dead, they call their descendants zambos because they are the sons of negroes and Indian women" (Newson 1986:43; from AGI AG 299 Bishop of Nicaragua 30.11.1711).

As in the Garífuna legend of origin, this narrative accounts for the existence of the emerging African-Amerindian group by means beyond

[7] The continued use of the term *idudu* for the Miskitu by the Garínagü warrants further research. Could the term also be the Warao word for "drum"? as taylor found, nicknames for different ethnic groups are highly prevalent among the Garínagü and their neighbors. "The Creoles sometimes refer to the Caribs as "crabs", this being both a play on their English name and a reference to their 'living in holes by the seaside'" (Taylor 1951:39n3). Likewise, I was told that the Garínagü call Creoles *uadabu* (conch) and *dobu* (rock or stone) when Creoles are around and the Garínagü do not want them to know they are talking about them (see also Taylor 1951: 39). In the same vain, I was told that *idudu* was a Warao term, making it quite intriguing that *warou* refers to all Amerindians and a Warao word refers to the Miskitu. Its Warao meaning (drum) seems to only make sense as a nickname. The Miskitu "bailan al ritmo de un vibrante tambor couando celebran un caso, una fiesta cualquiera o la navidad" (Bueso Bueso 1986: 12), and so the nickname may apply.

European control (a shipwreck), the presence of "Carib" Indians (used without regard to actual ethnicity), animosity between "Caribs" and "Negroes" leading to the eventual defeat of the "Caribs", and the abduction of women of the conquered who begat the future generations. Once again, this early European version of history negates Amerindian and African strength and resourcefulness.

The Miskitu are descendants of the Sumu, a Lenca group belonging to a Macro-Chibchan linguistic stock. The Warao speak a language classified as either independent or Chibchan, suggesting it is related to the languages spoken in southern Mesoamerica. The Miskitu can be found along the Atlantic coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, and live in areas around Trujillo. Garínagü and Miskitu came into early contact with each other and reportedly were at first enemies. Relations between the two groups could not have remained antagonistic for long, however. For the most part, the Garínagü until recently have followed ethnic-endogamous marital unions. Some intermarriages between the two groups, however, did take place.

Creoles, people of African and European ancestry, also have a separate term for the Miskitu — waika.[8] The word means "brother-in-law" in the Miskitu language and is also sometimes used by Garínagü in referring to the Miskitu. Interestingly, it is also a name of a subtribe of the Yanoama, who speak a Macro-Chibchan language and live among the Arawaks and Cariban groups in northeast South America, including the Orinoco region. The similarities in language suggest multiple unrelated encounters between the people of Mesoamerica and the Orinoco occurring at different periods in history. Whether the Garínagü sensed such historical relationships consciously or not requires far more research. Without question, though, the Garínagü then and now value the importance of their ancestors and the roots of their ancestral line lead back to the Orinoco Delta. A need to invest their new homeland with names and images of ancestral lands seems, therefore, quite natural. In religious ritual, moreover, the Garínagü regularly manifest the ancestors to honor and commemorate them.

The Ancestral Religion

Garífuna ritual most clearly underscores the importance of the ancestors to the Garínagü. The principle rites, including the dugu, are devoted to the ancestors. Specific names of deities and their mythological narratives do not form part of these indigenous rituals. The Garífuna people I spoke with did not know specific names of deities or their

[8] Waica is also the name of Yanomamo language tentatively classified in the Macro-Chibcha phylum (Greenberg 1960).

mythological narratives and do not feel these have survived[9] Flores, though, does discuss gods existing representing the elements, calling Bunguiyu,[10] the God of Thunder, their chief. He also writes: "However, our deep-rooted belief in the existence of the deity of the little unseen people, we call Aharri, Idahadoo, Susiya, Duwendu, Umiyau,[11] Agayuma, Eugeuriyu, Hiyuruha,[12] Abinyarageulai, etc., remains. These spirits or fetishes, are polymorphous, and can assume whatever shape or form they wish. They may take the form of animals, or giant land-crabs, frog or iguana, and can be used by those gifted with the ability to do good or bad things to an individual" (Flores 1979:89)[13] These most often appear in the folk narrative traditions among the Garínagü. Garífuna ritual remains the domain of the ancestors.

The Garínagü practice three main types of ancestral worship: 1) the Amuyadahani (Bathing of the Dead); 2) the Chugu (Feeding of the Dead); and 3) the Dugu (Feasting of the Dead). The dugu is "the most sacred, elaborate and the one demonstrating the climax of Garífuna respect, appreciation for and feeling of communion with the Ancestors" (S. Cayetano and F. Cayetano; see Palacio 1973). When illness or misfortune strikes, and more conventional means fail to help, Garífuna people often turn to a buyai (spiritual healer), a term from the Carib boyé (shaman). The buyai holds an arairaguni (bringing down) with the hiuruha (spirit helper — from the Island Carib term iouloúca) (Taylor 1951:142) in order to ascertain the needs of the gubida (deceased ancestor). Each buyai has his or her own principle hiuruha, who in turn has multiple hiuruha helpers. Hiuruha are often deceased buyais and may communicate the need to hold a dugu.

Should a dugu be prescribed, ritual planning begins. Relatives consult with the buyai who consults with the hiuruha on all aspects of the preparation. Family members come from all over for the dugu, often held over a three-day period. Important in the preparation is determining who will wear the ritual costumes. The ritual clothing is dyed with rocou, producing an orange-red color. Up until the 1960s, ritual participants could be found who still painted their faces with rocou. Today, this has been replaced by the "use of guseue (roucou) paint during the intentional contact with spirit forces has been replaced by guseue-dyed cloth which is worn in comparable situations" (Wells 1982:45). The red-orange color is believed to attract the gubida.

[9]Primarily West African narratives have survived and are still told today. These include especially Anansi stories.

[10]The Garífuna word for God.

[11]This appears to by Yemaya, the Yoruba deity of the sea.

[12]Spirit helpers, often deceased healers. This is discussed below.

[13]Most of these often appear in folk narratives.

Participants build a dabuyaba (ancestor house) which contains a gule (sanctuary) in the back and a madudu (table of offerings). William Young recorded naketi (grandmother) as the term for the offerings, marking them as offerings for the ancestors. "Today the Black Carib address their song of offering to nagutu, my grandmother" (Kerns 1983::186). Sacred dancers, drummers and singers perform throughout the ritual. The buyai leads the ritual performance, shaking a gourd rattle to summon the gubida from the mud floor of the sacred temple. Buyais believe the "hiuruha plays the maraca through the buyai" (Jessie Castillo, personal communication). Participants may manifest the gubida in owohani (ritual trance). Buyais may manifest their hiuruha, the spirits of past buyais who seek their ebu (living medium).

Were these rites practiced in Saint Vincent, or did they develop in Central America as a result of the need to remember the ancestors in a foreign land? Ancestor worship plays an important role in the rites performed throughout West Africa as well as among the Island Carib. Taylor finds the ancestor worship of the Garínagü strongly related to indigenous religion among the native population of the Caribbean. He writes:

> Ignerian (Arawak) elements came to predominate in the realm of religion, no less than in that of language; and that these greatly resembled, in general pattern, what has been reported for corresponding parts of the related Tainan (Arawak) culture of the Greater Antilles. Thus, the Taino's "cemí" appear to have been, like the hiúruha and the gubida of the Black Carib today, of two kinds: personally acquired, individual spirit-helpers on the one hand, and souls of the family dead on the other. Both kinds of spirits had a human origin, required offerings to be made to them of food and drink, whose "soul" only they consumed, and punished neglect or contempt with sickness or other afflictions (Taylor 1951:140).

Mrs. Francisco thinks otherwise, and she related the following in discussing adurugahani (participating in the dugu ceremony).

M.F.: "According to what my grandmother told us - now bear in mind that at that time they were maligilisitiyu (not going to any church). But they used to pray together. They had a special (her own words) sheep which they served (her own words) as their own god. But when it comes to the dugu she told us that it is manarit (not true). But since there were several tribes

among them it is possible that some did it but not others. In her own they did not do it. Right up to now there is the belief in me that it is not true.

Did the Garífuna ritual traditions survive the devastating loss of life on Baliceaux and the subsequent deportations? In all likelihood only a portion of the religious complex practiced in Saint Vincent was transported to Central America. Almost one-half the population taken to Baliceaux died, and other Garífuna remained on the island. Similarities in the religious complex found today among the Garínagü and the early indigenous populations of the Caribbean, as well as forms of ancestor worship practiced in West Africa, though, illustrate that the umbilical cord with the ancestors has remained unbroken. And it is precisely that cord which has allowed the Garínagü in Central America to maintain their culture in face of massive oppression.

Conclusion

Folklorists have long recognized that groups on the periphery, who have moved away from the center of their world, cling to their traditions far stronger than those they left behind. While this represents only one aspect of the reasons the Garínagü have retained their culture, it must not be overlooked. The Garínagü sought to find similarities between their new land and the land they left behind, Yurumei (Saint Vincent). To do this, they recast the Central American coast with memories of their ancestral past. Resemblances may already have existed, if, indeed, the Caribbean had functioned as a "wide-open avenue of trade and intercommunication among all points of its shore." The "puzzling parallels" between Warao culture in the Orinoco Delta and Mesoamerican ritual may well have been noticed by the Garínagü, allowing them to invest a strange land with memories of the old. And by remembering the ancestors, in ritual and everyday life, they have been able to maintain their culture and to preserve their freedom; they have remained first and foremost Garínagü. As Mrs. Francisco stated:

M.F.: "We were not slaves; we had our own culture; we have our own nation. So, we could say that we are strangers here on this land. It is because we did not want to be slaves and resisted all efforts to be enslaved. If those who first saw the ship off the coast had allowed it to land, they also would have been enslaved. But the Garífuna did not allow themselves to be enslaved. For that reason we are here. But our original home is South America.

Abstract

During the colonial period intermarriages between escaped African slaves and the Amerindian population on Saint Vicent spawned a new ethnic group, the Garínagü. In 1797, the British deported the Garínagü to the island of Roatán off Honduras. Migrating to coastal lands, they recast the Central American coast with memories of their ancestral past. They survived with the help of their ancestors, who manifested in ritual, popular speech, and re-imaginings of their new homeland. Called "Black Caribs" by colonialists, the Garínagü today live in Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and throughout the United States. They continue to speak an Arawak-based language, even in the United States, cook cassava, and practice their indigenous traditions. Investigation of their popular speech, oral history, ritual, and naming practices may provide clues to pre-Colombian ethnic relations as well as the extent of Amerindian migration and trade throughout the Caribbean in pre-colonial times. In particular, the use of the word "warou" for "Amerindians" suggests remembrances of the Orinoco Delta as the "original home" of the Garínagü.

Resumen

En la isla de San Vicente, durante la época colonial, los matrimonios efectuados entre esclavos africanos escapados y la población amerindia creó un nuevo grupo étnico: los Garínagü. En 1797 los ingleses deportaron a los Garínagü hacia la isla de Roatán frente a la costa de Honduras. De allí, los pobladores de esta etnia se diseminaron por las costas de América Central llevando con ellos sus memorias ancestrales. Estas creencias se manifestaron a través de sus rituales y el habla popular y les permitió sobrevivir en las nuevas tierras.

Llamados "Black Caribs" por los colonistas, los Garínagü actuales viven en Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala y a lo largo de los Estados Unidos de América. Continuan hablando un idioma basado en Arawak (aún en los EE.UU.), cocinando casava y practicando sus tradiciones indígenas. La investigación de su léxico popular, de su historia oral, ritual y de su práctica de poner nombres, podría darnos luces acerca de sus relaciones pre-colombinas y de la amplitud de la migración e intercambio Amerindio a lo largo de la region Caribeña en la época pre-colonial. En particular, el uso de la palabra "warou" para designar "Amerindios", sugiere reminiscencias del Delta del Río Orinoco como el "hogar atávico" de los Garínagü.

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