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Caribs, Maroons, Jacobins, Brigands, and Sugar Barons: The Last Stand of the Black Caribs on St. Vincent

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Perhaps the one of the most important historic events in Eastern Caribbean history and also one of the most fascinating was the defeat and exile of the last independent indigenous group in those islands, the Black Caribs, by the British in the Second Carib War, 1795-1796. This war was part of a regional conflict between the French islanders and their allies against the British, called the War of the Brigands. This regional war was in turn a part of the larger conflict between the British and Revolutionary France.

For France the conflict in the Eastern Caribbean was a sideshow that helped divert British power from the main conflict in Europe. For the French settlers and Caribs on St. Vincent, who sought to expel the British from their island, it was a fight for survival. For the British Empire the goal of the conflict was to expand and secure British power in the Caribbean, defeat their French rivals for empire, and counter the values of the French Revolution. The more parochial goals of the English planters on St. Vincent were to defend their plantations and the capital of Kingstown from marauding French and Carib attackers, who were seeking to push them off the island, and to then defeat them and expel the Black Caribs from the prime sugar cane growing lands that they still held.

The general outline of Vincentian history is consistent with the history of the Western Hemisphere and much of the rest of the world that was controlled by European colonial powers.

It follows with a succession of indigenous groups, colonization and conquest by Europeans, the introduction of new population, indigenous resistance, removal, extermination, or depopulation of the indigenous groups, conflict between rival colonial powers, and eventual control by one power. After long tenure the greatly altered society is then granted autonomy and independence in the late 20th century, but the lasting effects of colonialization linger.

While the history of St. Vincent follows the general pattern of colonial history for the region, and for similar territories world wide, it does have its unique aspects. Among these is the prolonged resistance of the indigenous inhabitants, the Caribs, to occupation by the European powers. The Caribs were among the most successful Native American groups in resisting conquest. Their last strongholds in the Eastern Caribbean were on Dominica and St. Vincent. St. Vincent was the last of the Windward Islands to be totally subjugated. This was not accomplished until 1797. By contrast other islands, such as Barbados and St. Kitts, were settled, and successfully controlled nearly a hundred and fifty years earlier by the British ("Caribbean Time Line").

Another unique aspect of St. Vincent's history was that the first important contact between the indigenous Caribs and the Old World was not with Europeans, but rather with Africans. African refugees came largely from slave ships that wrecked on the reefs or as escapees by boat and raft from the slave islands of St. Lucia and Barbados to St. Vincent and the nearby Grenadine Islands. Others were captured in raids on the European held islands or purchased as slaves by the Caribs. These people intermarried with the Caribs, and adopted their culture. Eventually the resulting Black Carib group developed out of this blending of African and Carib cultures. With the continuing migration of escaped slaves to St. Vincent the

population that was of mixed ancestry eventually predominated. These were the people who eventually led the final resistance to the British takeover of their island in 1796.

The difficulty of putting down the resistance of first the Caribs, and later the Black Caribs meant that St. Vincent was one of the last of the Lesser Antilles to become part of the Sugar Empire that dominated the Caribbean economy for nearly two hundred years, and was a great source of wealth for the colonial nations of Europe. The slowness of the introduction of the sugar plantation economy to St. Vincent meant that large-scale slavery was also late in being introduced into the islands. This did not occur until the sugar lands controlled by the Black Caribs were taken over after the last Carib War ended in 1797. As slavery was abolished in St. Vincent in 1832, large-scale production of sugar on plantations by large numbers of African slaves was a phenomenon that lasted just over a generation on St. Vincent.

Caribs

The best known of the indigenous groups that once occupied St. Vincent and the Grenadines are the Caribs. These people arrived about 1200 AD from the mainland according to carbon 14 dating (de Silva xv). They moved up the island chain from the mainland as far as Eastern Puerto Rico, displacing, exterminating, and incorporating the Arawak population. They had a tradition of war and raiding, especially for women. The origins of their drive into the islands from the mainland may have been similar to their predecessors, the Siboney and Arawaks, but the French missionary, Fr. Adrien Le Breton, who lived among them from 1693 until 1702 recounts an oral history told to him by Caribs that explains the tradition of why they left the mainland to conquer the islands of the Lesser Antilles. According to the story the Caribs had been slaves or subjects of mainland Arawaks, and had been freed in the 11th Century. From

that point they had spread into the Caribbean, driving out or incorporating the island Arawaks already there (de Silva xix).

The term Carib was not originally used to designate the people of the Lesser Antilles, and as with the Arawak, it would not have been used by the people themselves. Linguistically and culturally the Carib were not really very different from their Arawak victims. Fr. Raymond Breton lived among the Indians of Dominica from 1641 to 1655 and reported that the Island Caribs called themselves Kalinago (Davis 1) or Callingo for the men and Callipunam for the women (Johnson 2). The term Kalinas has also been used for these people (de Silva xxii). Today anthropologists prefer to designate them Kalina (Johnson 2). To refer to all the people of the Lesser Antilles as a single ethnic group probably makes about as much sense as labeling all the contemporary people of Western Europe as a single group. Though they spoke a language from the same basic language family, and had similar origins on the mainland of northern South America they were as different from each other as Spaniards would be from the Italians, French, and Portuguese at the time.

The origin of the term Carib may have for its basis accounts based on the writing of Christopher Columbus himself. In conversations with the Taino (Arawak) inhabitants of Hispaniola Columbus was told of the Caniba or Canima of the small islands to the southeast, who raided the peaceful people of the larger islands, and ate their flesh. These people also found their way into the underworld of the local mythology (Davis 1). Columbus recorded what the Taino told him about these people. In Cuba on November 4, 1492 he learned that the Caniba "had but one eye and the faces of dogs" (Davis 1).

It seems that the name Carib has it origins in these encounters with the Taino and Columbus. The Taino word *Caniba* means manioc people or people of the manioc clan, and is

the root word for both Caribbean and cannibal (Davis 1). Apparently the Spanish hispanicized *Caniba* into *Caribas* or *Caribes* (de Silva), which became Caribbees, Charibs, or Caribs in English, and Caraibes in French (Johnson 1). Van der Plas gives an alternate explanation. He claims that the Arawaks of the mainland, whom the Caribs had rebelled against, moving first to Tobago, and then up the chain of islands to the north, may have called them Carib, meaning rebels. They called themselves Callingos. St. Vincent was called Youlou or rainbow, a diety, the Mainland Caribs, Balouemhounum, and the Island Caribs, Oubaohonum (11). According to Adams the Callingos said the word Carib meant devastator, and was given to them by their Arawak enemies, and then adopted by the Europeans (6). The first explanation seems the most logical, though the term may have had multiple meanings in different contexts.

The Caribs did contribute other words to the English vocabulary though the Spanish. The term cacique is widely used in the Americas to signify a chief. Buccaneer is the name used for the European freebooters of the times, who raided Spanish shipping. The name is derived from the Carib word *boucan*, which is a system for curing meat over an open fire on a raised wooden platform. When the freebooters were not raiding Spanish ships or settlements they made a living hunting the wild cattle of Western Hispaniola, curing the meat on *boucans*, hence the name *boucaneers*. Cigar, hammock, and hurricane are words borrowed from the Caribs (Hoebel 572, de Silva 9).

The word cannibal, eater of human flesh, was derived from Caniba or Carib. This may prove to be a misnomer. In James Michener's 1989 epic historical novel, Caribbean, he graphically depicts the invasion of a peaceful Arawak village by grizzly Carib warriors, who murder the men, to be dismembered for the cooking pot, and capture the women and children. The boys are to be fattened up for the pot, and the women used as slave wives and concubines.

Others depict the Caribs as ruthless marauders, and murdering cannibals who followed the hapless Arawaks up from the Amazon basin, and ate their way up the chain of islands to Puerto Rico ("Caribs" 1). The peaceful Arawaks, or Tainos, were only saved from inevitable annihilation, rape, dismemberment, and being eaten by the Caribs through the intervention of the Spanish, who managed to eliminate them before the Caribs got the chance. This view of the Caribs is today being challenged by a closer look at the cannibalism myth by revisionist historians and anthropologists.

Were the Caribs cannibals? This myth seems to have begun with Columbus, and the stories that were related to him by the enemies of the Caribs, the Tainos of the Greater Antilles. A review of documents from the early explorations of Europeans in the Lesser Antilles reveals evidence of low-scale raiding and slave taking, but no reliable evidence of cannibalism (Davis 1).

The stories of cannibalism by the Island Caribs made their way to Europe, and became part of the European view of what they considered a savage people. Shakespeare's Caliban, was a cannibal slave (Johnson 1). De Foe's Robinson Crusoe lived in fear of cannibals, and rescued Friday from the cooking pot.

Perpetuating the cannibal myth served a political and economic purpose. In the 16th century, Pope Innocent IV declared cannibalism a sin deserving punishment by force of arms (Salisbury 1). Free Indians, who were potential Christian converts, were not supposed to be forcibly enslaved, and were protected by the Spanish Crown and the Church. In 1503 Queen Isabel issued a decree protecting Indians from capture, arrest, harm, or evil to their persons or possessions (Johnson 2). Of course, this was largely ignored in the Americas. An edict in 1511 defined Caribs as any Indians who were hostile to Europeans, behaved violently, or consumed

human flesh. These people were deemed without souls, and liable to be enslaved (Davis 1). Queen Isabela decreed that only cannibal Indians could be enslaved. This gave the Spanish an economic interest in lumping as many Caribbean Indians as possible into the Carib designation, thereby making them potential targets for capture and enslavement (Salisbury 1). Uraba la Cosa may have deliberately misled the Queen to justify his 1504 voyage of plunder and slaving along the South American coast (Johnson 3). Perpetuating the cannibal myth ensured political and moral support for Indian slavery, and eased those with any conscience by relegating the Indians to less than human status. This myth lingers with us today.

In 1595 Sir Walter Raleigh encountered the island, and had reports of cannibalism. An earlier French vessel's crew had been devoured. More likely they had been boarded, murdered, and robbed, perhaps for liquor. The tales of cannibalism may have been a way to keep aggressors away from the islands (Van der Plas 4). The violence by Caribs against Europeans was largely a reaction to violence, and enslavement by the Spanish, and others against them. Vengeance was an important motivator in Carib warfare. Vengeance for past depredations at the hands of Europeans led to raiding and violence against European settlements from the 1500's on in the Antilles. Some of these were successful in driving Europeans out of the islands, at least for a time.

There is little evidence for Carib cannibalism. In response to the allegation that Caribs were cannibals in earlier days the French priest, Pere Labat, who lived with the Caribs of Dominica, and knew them well, wrote "'If they were cannibals in those days, why are then not cannibals now? I have certainly not heard of them eating people, whether Englishmen with whom the Carib are nearly always fighting, or Allouages Indians of the mainland near the Orinoco with, whom they are continually at war'" (Johnson 3). Other Europeans with

experience living with the Caribs relate no examples of cannibalism that mirror that depicted by Michener.

There are examples of ritual cannibalism. Caribs believed in sympathetic magic, the idea that they could acquire strength and courage by simply biting and chewing on the cured limbs of an enemy killed in battle. Caribs would carefully preserve the appendages of a few chosen fallen enemies, and hang them from the roofs of their meetinghouses as war trophies. This is similar to the taking of scalps in North America, by both Indians and some colonials, and the taking of heads by other warlike people in the Americas and elsewhere, including at times European fighters. Some Americans in Vietnam are alleged to have taken Viet Cong ears as trophies. Pere Rabat describes an account of ritual cannibalism.

> To arrange a war party an old woman enters the *carbet* (meeting house), and harangues the guests to excite them to vengeance. She recounts the wrongs that they have suffered at the hands of their enemies and recites a long list of their friends and relations what have been killed. When she sees that they are properly heated by drink and showing signs of fury, she throws the *boucanned* (cured) limbs of some of their enemy into their midst. The Indians thereupon fall on the limbs, cutting, tearing, biting, and gnawing them with all rage . . . . (de Silva 32).

Similar stories are told by a 17th Century Dutchman who lived with mainland Indians similar to the Caribs, and by Luisa Navarrete, a 16th Century Kalina slave on Dominca. After successful raids one or two male captives would be ritually killed in a victory ceremony, and pieces of their flesh were put into a pot. An arm or leg was preserved to remind them of the hatred of their enemies (Johnson 2). Young boys were initiated by being rubbed down with the fat of a slaughtered Arawak in hopes that they would absorb the Arawak's strength and courage ("Caribs" 2). While these practices may seem gruesome, the Europeans of the time had their own brutal tortures for captured escaped slaves, heretics, and rebellious Indians that rival or surpass that of their Indian enemies. While cannibalism was decried in Europe as heathen,

Europeans of the time thought nothing of consuming "medicines" made from the dead bodies of executed prisoners or the desiccated flesh of Egyptian mummies (Salisbury 1).

There is no archaeological evidence for large-scale cannibalism in the Caribbean. The best conclusion is that, with the exception of possible isolated circumstances and the ritual cannibalism described above, the Caribs were no more cannibals than their European and Indian enemies. The myth was perpetuated for the purpose of those who benefited from promoting it and by the lack of knowledge of the reality of Carib life by everyone else.

The fact remains that a people called the Caribs by Europeans occupied, and controlled much of the Lesser Antilles Islands for at least four hundred years until finally exterminated or removed by the Europeans. They fought valiantly, and sometimes successfully to resist European domination and the last to be defeated were the Caribs of St. Vincent. But by the 18th Century these were a changed people, caught between big power politics and warfare, and at times manipulating it to maintain their sovereignty, and even being changed genetically through the infusion of European and especially African peoples into their population.

What is known of traditional Carib culture and how they used the land on St. Vincent when they were in control has been preserved by the writings of French missionaries, and others, and the work of archaeologists. Caribs practiced the slash and burn agriculture common to the Circum-Caribbean peoples (de Silva 12). They grew cassava, potatoes, yams, cotton, tobacco, beans, corn, and other Native American crops. The women did the farming. Fish were an important part of the diet. The men and boys hunted birds, land crabs, agoutis, manicous (fox-like animals, possibly possums), and collected conch, saving the shells for horns to signal their arrival on peaceful voyages. They collected the wild foods of the reef and forest. Feral goats and pigs left by the Spanish were hunted using javelins and hunting dogs. They hunted other

types of animals, using specialized types of arrows, blunt ones for birds. Some birds were tamed, and kept as pets, or as future meals (de Silva 17-18).

They were excellent mariners. They built huge piraguas or ocean going dugout canoes, up to fifty feet long and seven feet wide, carrying fifty warriors each. They were reinforced with thwarts, side planks on the gunnels, caulking, ribs or seats, used stone ballast, and sails. Long voyages were made, up and down the island chain, from the South American mainland up as far as Florida, and as far west as the Greater Antilles. Most islands are within sight of each other and require less than a 24-hour passage between them by piragua. Raids were conducted by piraguas (de Silva 26).

Before a raid a more or less democratic meeting was held in which the women participated. War or peace was decided in these meetings (de Silva 29). The motivation for war was revenge, and the capture of women, food, and slaves. An *ubutu* or war chief would decide on the day of the attack. The Caribs were armed with war clubs, wooden swords, stone knives, bows, poisoned arrows, and fire arrows ("Caribs" 2). All were made of wood, stone, or bone. Prior to leaving for the attack they would paint themselves, and get worked up into a frenzied state. They would then paddle out to attack a usually weaker people. Attacks were made under cover of night, and were sudden and brutal. It began with a hail of fire arrows into the thatched roofs of their victims. As they exited their homes they were set upon with war clubs and arrows. After a victorious battle they returned in their canoes with their own dead, and with captured men and women ("Caribs" 2). The men were destined to be killed in ritual celebration, or kept as slaves, while the women became wives or concubines, being distributed by the *ubutu*.

Carib villages were built along the coast high up so lookouts could be posted in case of attack. The favored location was on the rugged Windward Side of the island, which gave the

advantage to the defenders who knew the rare coves and safe landing beaches. In the event of attack those that lived closer to the forest could flee into the jungle for safety. The villages usually consisted of 50 to 60 families, headed by caciques. The authority of the *ubutu* was during wartime. In peace the *tuibutuli hauthe* supervised fishing and farming. The *boyez,* or shaman, handled the magico-religious duties, and dealt with illness, often attributed to witchcraft. Elders and retired warriors were respected, and played an important role in decision-making. Marriage was polygynous. The sexes were segregated residentially. Women had their own separate huts and males, from age four, lived together in *carbets,* or large men's houses. They slept in hammocks. Infants had boards tied to their heads to flatten them for beauty. Clothing consisted of a small cotton loincloth, body paint, and ornaments, feathered headdresses for special occasions ("Caribs"). There may have been between 9,000 and 10,000 Caribs on St. Vincent during the early period of contact with Europeans. This was later augmented by refugees from the islands conquered by Europeans, especially the French and British.

The initial contact with Europeans was minimal. The Spanish were not much interested in the Lesser Antilles, with their aggressive natives and no gold. They preferred the more populated and rich lands of Meso-America and Peru. The Caribs of St. Vincent were initially successful in resisting European encroachment on their island by a combination of aggression toward outsiders, and forming alliances with them when expedient. Other islands sought aid from St. Vincent and Dominica, the Carib strongholds, in times of trouble. When the French attacked Guadaloupe, St. Vincent sent hundreds of warriors to help, but they were defeated. Refugees fled to Dominca, and some to St. Vincent. When the French invaded Martinique in 1635 the Caribs sent 1500 warriors from Dominica and St. Vincent, but were defeated again. This began a long-term hatred of the French by the Caribs. Guerilla warfare continued from

1636-1639. In one raid the Caribs loaded 800 warriors into 15 piraguas, and attacked the French from St. Vincent and Dominica (de Silva).

The Caribs would trade with the Europeans for goods, but steal wine, incurring French retribution, massacre, and the destruction of whole villages (Van der Plas). In 1639 the British became the target of Carib raids on Antigua and Barbados after attempts to enslave Caribs on Dominica by trickery. Caribs burned plantations, and massacred settlers and turtle hunters. French and British colonists' attempts to settle St. Vincent were repelled by the Caribs in the early 17th Century (Van der Plas).

The first outsiders to successfully settle on the islands were not French or English Europeans, but rather Africans, whose descendants may have made up the majority of the population by the time the French and English gained a toehold on the island in the 18th Century. The African connection becomes mixed up with that of the Caribs to the point that it is hard to distinguish between Africans and Caribs by the beginning of the 18th Century. From that point on the term Carib was used almost interchangeably for the people of St. Vincent who were living in indigenous fashion, culturally Carib, whether of Indian, African, or of mixed descent.

Africans in St. Vincent

The first outsiders to permanently settle St. Vincent were from Africa. This began as early as the beginning of the 17th Century, when captured, escaped, or purchased African slaves entered the island, and became an important part of the Carib population. This is somewhat analogous to the Seminole experience in Spanish Florida.

Historians have speculated about pre-Columbian contact between West Africa and the Caribbean. Edgar Adams sites Ivan Van Sertima's *African Presence in Early America* and Harold G. Lawrence's (Kofi Wangara) *Mandinga Voyages Across the Atlantic* as books that

address the unconfirmed idea that West African explorers from Mali in the early 14th Century may have been the first from the Old World to contact people in the Caribbean. Apparently Prince Abubakari of Mali outfitted two voyages in 1307 and 1312. One consisted of 200 vessels, and the other of 2000. The purpose was to explore lands to the west (Adams 4). Beyond that not much else is known, but it is possible that West Africans, by plan or by accident, may have made it across the Atlantic. Whether this actually occurred, and can be confirmed, is anybody's guess. It is also possible that the occasional fishing or trading dugout may have been driven across the Atlantic, and into the islands of the Caribbean.

No significant evidence of any pre-Columbian African contact with St. Vincent exists. The first likely Africans to arrive on St. Vincent were unwilling passengers on European slave ships from Africa. This began quite early. As soon as Europeans brought Africans to the New World some escaped to St. Vincent, some were shipwrecked on the coast, and in the Grenadines, and some were captured or otherwise acquired by the Caribs, and brought to the island.

St. Vincent received African refugees as early as 1635 when two Spanish ships carrying slaves were lost in the area (Adams 5). Father Vasquez Espinosa wrote in the 1620's of five hundred shipwrecked Africans stranded in the Grenadines when a Portuguese slaver ran into the islands. The Africans dispatched the Portuguese. Their fate is unknown, but they may have joined the Caribs on St. Vincent. Raiding Caribs often captured Africans in their attacks on European plantations, settlements, and shipping. These people were brought back to St. Vincent where the women became Carib wives and the men slaves or were freed, eventually to marry Carib women, adding to the mix in the population. Caribs and Africans had a common enemy the Europeans that sought to enslave them and take their lands. They often made common cause against their oppressors. By 1672 it was estimated that six hundred runaway slaves were living

with the Caribs on St. Vincent and Dominica. Besides these runaway slaves, known as Maroons, and the people of mixed African/Carib ancestry, the Caribs held an increasing number of Africans as slaves.

The growing numbers of slaves, free Africans, and mixed Black Caribs became a destabilizing force. The Windward side of St. Vincent attracted escapees from Barbados, who could steal a boat or make a raft, and ride the currents for a couple of days and wind up free on the eastern shore of St. Vincent (Muilenburg 2). In 1675 the Dutch ship, *Palmira,* was wrecked by a hurricane on Bequia in the Grenadines (Adams 6). The surviving African captives were from a notoriously warlike tribe known as Mocos. The Caribs transported them to St. Vincent where they were difficult to control. Those of African descent were beginning to outnumber the indigenous Caribs. Maroons in the mountains sought women, held by the Caribs.

The Caribs resorted to a drastic measure to regain control over a minority they had adopted into their midst that was quickly becoming the majority. They began killing African males at birth, while sparing the females. The Africans revolted, killing some of the Caribs, and withdrawing to the mountainous Windward Coast, where the Maroons had established themselves (Muilenburg 3). The Governor of Martinique intervened in the dispute between the two groups, and offered to arbitrate. He drew a line called the "Le Barre de l'Isle", which divided up the island between the two groups. The native Caribs, known as the Yellow or Red Caribs, received territory on the Western or Leeward Side of the island, while those of African and mixed descent, known as the Black Caribs, received the Eastern or Windward half. Despite this agreement harmony between the two groups was never completely restored. They would cooperate against outside invasions, intermarried, and shared a common language and culture, but from this point on the Black Caribs dominated affairs on the island. Some Yellow Caribs

migrated to the mainland, Trinidad, or Tobago. By 1730 there were about 6,000 free Africans and 4,000 Caribs on the island (Adams 6). By the end of the 18th Century when the British fought a series of violent wars against the Caribs of St. Vincent, they were largely fighting the Black Caribs, as the Red Caribs' numbers had dwindled down to the hundreds, though this has been disputed by some observers, such as the French revolutionary officer, Moreau de Jonnes, who lived among the Red Caribs during part of the Second Carib War. Moreau De Jonnes places them in the majority of the Carib population and includes them as active participants in the fight against the common British enemy.

How the ethnicity of Caribs is defined may differ between observers, often for political reasons. Sir William Young identified the Black Caribs as African colonists and considered them identical to the Maroons of Jamaica. He also labeled the Red Caribs as the true indigenous people of the islands and numbered them at just a few hundred. He claimed that the Black Caribs usurped the lands of the rightful indigenous owners, the few remaining Red Caribs, raided them for women, and therefore had no rightful claim on the lands. This was a convenient claim in that the British crown was perfectly willing to step in and replace the Black Caribs by taking over the lands they had occupied for generations. William Young was an advocate for the removal of the Black Caribs from St. Vincent, plantation owner, and son of the first Sir William Young, a land commissioner appointed by the crown to distribute land for sugar cane plantations from the islands captured at the end of the Seven Years War. He wrote the book about the beginning of the Second Carib War most often cited in accounts of the times. He was also the official that signed the removal order to expel the Black Caribs from St. Vincent in 1797. Moreau de Jonnes, a French gunnery officer, on the other hand, lived among the Caribs, was sympathetic with their cause, and while he wrote about his experiences decades after they were

over, he did become the premier statistician of France, so his account of the relative numbers of Red to Black Caribs might be considered more accurate. Moreau de Jonnes says that physically it was not difficult to distinguish between Red and Black Caribs or between Black Caribs and African slaves.

The new group of mixed African/Carib people, the Black Caribs, called themselves the Garifuna (plural Garinagu), or cassava eaters. They lived much like their Yellow (Red) Carib cousins, were tough fighters, resisted the settlement of Europeans, routing the French in 1719 when they sought to exploit tension between the two Carib groups by invading the island unsuccessfully (Muilenburg 3). They later had good relations with the French, traded with them by sea, learned French, and were allied with them during conflicts with the British. Culturally then Black Caribs were indistinguishable from their Yellow or Red Carib cousins. They practiced skull deformation by tying boards the foreheads of their infants, buried their dead in a flexed fetal position, spoke the same language, and had the same material and non-material culture as the other Caribs, having assimilated their culture over generations. Their practicing Carib culture and exhibiting Carib cultural traits effectively set them apart from the African slaves on the French and English plantations on other parts of the islands. The Black Caribs sometimes held Africans as slaves, sometimes captured escaped African slaves to be sold to the plantation owners of the French islands or returned to their owners on St. Vincent for reward. They also harbored some and incorporated them into Carib society. The British viewed the Black Caribs as “African colonists” or Maroons and not as indigenous. The Black Caribs viewed themselves as indigenous to the island and part of the overall Carib nation. While there were sometimes conflicts between the Red and Black Caribs and they lived on opposite sides of St. Vincent, they also shared a common culture and language and would meet together in a common

island-wide national council in times of crisis to cooperate against common enemies. Moreau de Jonnes witnessed one of these councils on his first visit to St. Vincent at the beginning of the Second Carib War to warn them of a British plot to despoil their lands. This council included the important chiefs of both the Red and Black Carib groups.

European Encroachment

The French and British had been vying for control of the West Indian Sugar Islands from the early 17th century. The Caribs of St. Vincent had been able to trade one side off against the other, and use their rugged terrain and warlike reputation to keep both nations largely out of St. Vincent, a rich prize with soil ideal for sugar cane, until the late 18th century. In fact St. Vincent was the last of the Windward Islands to fall under colonial control. The French wanted to keep out the British, and the British wanted to keep out the French, while the Caribs, both Black and Yellow (Red), wanted both groups to leave them alone. The Caribs traded with and raided the Europeans, and allied themselves against one side or the other when it was convenient. Eventually they allowed a few French owners of small plantations to settle on the Leeward Side with their slaves, and were influenced by French culture and language. While there were some tensions, the less intrusive French presence meant for a more cooperative relationship between the French, headquartered in Martinique, and the Caribs, loosely ruled by their chiefs in island councils when the need to cooperate arose.

Some of the chiefs and notables among the Caribs learned French, sent their children to study with the French in Martinique, took to occasionally wearing European dress, and copied the European plantation system. It is said that the most famous leader of the Caribs, Chief Joseph Chatoyer, had his own sugar cane plantation and slaves at the main Carib town of Grand Sable, and was as comfortable having dinner and doing business with a European governor at

Government House as he was trekking through the jungle in a loincloth with his several wives in tow. There was a certain amount of cultural trade-off between the French and Caribs, leading to the exchange of traits between cultures. There are French words that have made their way into the modern Garifuna language, along with some from Spanish, and a few from African origins.

By 1756 war resumed between France and England in Europe, leaving the French a relatively free hand in St. Vincent. The French settlers had amicably acquired possession of much of the island, and lived peacefully with the remaining Caribs. Toward the end of the Seven Years War, General Monckton and Rear Admiral Rodney were sent in 1762 to St. Vincent and other islands, to capture them from the French and to hold them as bargaining chips in peace negotiations. The French were expelled from Canada, but regained some of the lost sugar islands, including Guadeloupe and Martinique. Some British politicians felt that Canada should have gone back to France, and the more valuable (at the time) sugar islands should have been retained by the British. The British did keep St. Vincent and Dominica, ending the effective neutrality of those islands in the Treaty of Paris of 1763. They also gained Grenada and Tobago, which effectively gave them control over the Grenadines, which had been under French sway previously.

At this point the English were determined to colonize the island of St. Vincent, and develop it for sugar cultivation. The lands already cultivated by the French and Caribs were to be acquired by purchase or otherwise. New lands, held by the Caribs exclusively, were to be acquired, and the Caribs and Blacks removed from the terrain so the lands could be cleared for the cultivation of sugar cane by enslaved African laborers. As it happened, the best sugar lands were those of the Black Caribs in the Northeastern Windward Side. The Black Caribs did not recognize the sovereignty of the British over their lands.

A period of British encroachment on Carib lands, accommodation to gain time by the Carib leaders, and then conflict took place over the next thirty-five years. During this time the French supported Carib resistance to British expansion by actively sending agent provocateurs and arms to the Caribs, and in time of conflict reinforcing Carib fighters with French soldiers from Martinique.

It is interesting to look at parallels between the French in Canada and the Caribbean. The French in Canada had generally good relations with the native populations, lived and traded amicably with them, and used them as allies in time of war against the British. The same can be said for the relations between the French and the Caribs on St. Vincent. The French had been living among them for a generation before the English gained control of the island. The French continued to support the Caribs as allies after the British occupied the island and, as in Canada, a large portion of the European population remained French after the British occupation, while the Caribs were much more familiar with the French language than with English. It seems the colonial policies of the British and French in North America and the Caribbean were similar. After initial conflict, the French sought friendly relations with the native populations, living among them and trading with them, while the British preferred removal of the natives and confiscation of their lands, to be replaced by plantations run by the British with the labor of captive Africans.

After the British occupation of the island in 1762 and their sovereignty confirmed in the Treaty of Paris in 1763 they set about promoting the island as ideal for development as a sugar production center. The fertility of the islands that had been under sugar cane cultivation for the previous hundred and twenty years was diminishing, and the relatively unexploited and fertile volcanic soil of St. Vincent was a resource that the British sought to exploit. The problem was

the best lands were under the control of the Black Caribs, who continued to have the support of the dispossessed French. The island was now constitutionally, in the minds of the British at least, a colony of Great Britain. The problem of Carib occupation of potential sugar lands had to be addressed.

Sir William Young the elder circulated a pamphlet advocating investment in the new sugar lands opening up on St. Vincent. He was appointed to head a commission to arrange the orderly sale and distribution of the new lands, and their settlement. This commission studied the problem of acquiring the Carib lands and removing the Caribs so the lands could be distributed to sugar planters. In the British view, uncultivated land was a waste of resources. The Carib pattern of subsistence was based on small garden plots scattered throughout the jungle. The jungle was vital as a resource for protein and the wild foods that were collected by the Caribs. It was also their source of security in time of war. They were also dependent on the clear streams that gushed from the forested mountains. Destruction and clearing of these lands for sugar would eliminate their means of subsistence, their security, and their traditional way of life.

This was not clearly understood by the British who sought to purchase the land owned by the Caribs, but not farmed. The British endeavored to move the Caribs to small plots or offer them substitute lands, perhaps including those located on Bequia, that were less suitable for sugar production. This would, of course, make the Caribs destitute and destroy their culture. The British planned to offer the incentive of British citizenship if members of the Caribs cooperated. The plan to remove the Caribs to Bequia was dropped in 1766, when it was discovered that the island lacked the streams considered essential for life by the Caribs (Adams 30).

In 1768 new instructions were issued for the acquisition of Carib lands, purchase of their cleared land, and their resettlement on lands "sufficient for their support, and . . . adapted to their manner of living" (Adams 36). The Caribs were to be given five years to resettle and build a new dwelling. Prices for cleared land were set, and the Caribs were to receive property rights with certificates for the new lands awarded. All this seemed reasonable from the British point of view, as they sought to make St. Vincent profitable as a sugar-producing island. The fact remains that the Caribs were given no input into this process and were in effect being evicted from lands they had controlled for generations. Provisions were also made for separate arrangements for "the remains of the native, or Red Charaibs, desire for their security to be separated and settled apart from the free Negroes" (from the Commissioners Instructions in Adams 36-37).

The instructions were printed in both English and French, as many Caribs spoke French. Abbe Valadares was appointed as a liaison between the British land commission and the Caribs. He went to an important Carib settlement, Grand Sable, to explain the British plan to the leaders of the Caribs. A young Chief Joseph Chatoyer, who was the cacique of Grand Sable and who would later play an important role in Carib resistance, presided over the meeting with Valadares. The bottom line of the British proposal was the eventual forced removal of the Caribs after five years. Some of the chiefs went along with the plan, while others protested. A general sentiment was that they recognized no British king and would deal only with the French governor in Martinique. Abbe Valadares was advised to withdraw. The English had to go back to the drawing board in their plans for the orderly acquisition of Carib lands.

The English believed that the Caribs were divided on the question of removal. Chatoyer appeared to be the leader of those most amenable to the removal plan. In actuality the

appearance of division was an apparent delaying tactic. While the British regrouped, the Caribs began preparing for resistance. The commission was busy distributing land on other ceded islands so activities on St. Vincent were suspended until 1769 (Adams, Fraser, and Muilenberg).

The British marked out new roads they intended to build. The Caribs realized that any road into their territory could be used for military purposes against them. The roads were allowed to proceed only as far as the Colonaire River, the boundary established in the land agreement between the Red and Black Caribs in previous generations. The British road builders were stopped at the Yambou River by the Caribs, and called on military assistance before continuing any more road construction (Adams 31).

When the project was restarted in 1769 military personnel accompanied the road surveyors, and a barracks was built for them. Captain Wilkie and forty soldiers took up their position in May of 1769. The Caribs stormed the barracks and removed the roof. The captain halted further operations, and awaited instructions from the Governor. The Caribs were not happy with the outcome, and surrounded the soldiers with a force of three hundred, cutting them off. A force of local military and militia came to rescue Captain Wilkie. The Caribs released the surrounded forty soldiers when the Carib chiefs were promised that the commissioners would be advised not to interfere in their country or build any more roads. This was a false promise, and was only made to rescue the soldiers. The British sought help from England (Muilenburg, Adams).

The Black Caribs were also preparing, procuring arms and ammunition from the French. The English patrolled the channel between St. Lucia and St. Vincent and intercepted four large canoes loaded with kegs of gunpowder, and twenty men each. The canoes rushed the patrol cutter and shots were exchanged. The dugouts were disabled with cannon fire, but the eighty

Caribs swam, cutlasses in their teeth, toward the cutter. The captain withdrew leaving the Caribs to their fate (Muilenburg 4).

A land sale scandal occurred in the interim, and the British government had to rescind all such land sales, including those made by some Caribs (Adams 33). As a consequence, Chief Chatoyer and forty of his leading people met with the commissioners in 1771. The matter of the sovereignty of the British crown was raised and the Caribs declared that they recognized neither French nor British sovereignty and were independent of both. They also had the promise of the French to support them in protecting their territory from British encroachment (Adams 33).

The establishment of new, successful sugar plantations on lands previously awarded to General Monckton for his success in the occupation of St. Vincent in 1762 brought a rush of new planters to the island seeking lands. The Caribs were determined to sell no more land within their boundaries to the planters. The British decided to carve new roads into Carib territory by force of arms. They obtained the required forces in 1772, and sought assurances that the French in Martinique would not intervene on the Caribs' behalf. The French governor responded that while he could not commit the French to war against the British by openly supporting the Caribs, he also could not prevent private citizens from selling them arms (Adams 35).

It all came to a head in September 1772 when, with the British troops assembled, the British offered the Caribs one more chance at reconciliation, which was refused. The First Carib War was then fought at great cost to both sides for five months. The Caribs were effective guerrilla fighters, and knew the territory well. The strategy of British Major General Dalrymple was to establish military posts in Carib lands so as to isolate the Caribs and control their movements. Despite resistance, the Caribs could not overcome the superior military supply and weaponry of the British, and were forced to surrender in January of 1773. They had faced 2,273

British soldiers, among whom 150 were killed or wounded and 110 died from disease. There was criticism in Britain of the campaign, and orders were issued to offer an honorable peace to the Caribs (Adams 36).

The Black Caribs surrender to the British at the end of the First Carib War; painting by Brunias.

A treaty of "firm and lasting peace and friendship" (from the treaty text in Adams 37) was signed by Darlrymple and twenty-five chiefs, including Chatoyer, who was to play an important role in the Second Carib War. The treaty ended hostilities, forced the Caribs to recognize British sovereignty, avoided dealing with the French, allowed forts and roads in Carib territory, and ceded the coastlands to the Crown. The treaty only delayed future confrontations.

The defeat of the Caribs was a major setback in their attempt to maintain their sovereignty and their lands. They lost a large portion of their territory, and were forced to accede to British sovereignty, but they did not give up the desire to expel the British from the island. The French shared this continuing animosity toward the British interests, though their goal was also to take over the sugar lands claimed by the Caribs. Both the Caribs and the French knew that their mutual cooperation would be necessary to achieve these goals, despite their different and

conflicting objectives. War between France and Britain began again in Europe in 1778 and included French support for the American Revolution. This offered both the French and the Caribs an opportunity to regain ground lost to the British in St. Vincent. The Caribs invited French agents to the island as spies, including Percin de la Rocque, who was arrested and jailed by the British, but escaped (Adams 45).

The state of the British military on St. Vincent was quite weak at this point with some troops being sent to the war in Europe. Lieutenant Colonel Etherington of The Royal Americans took charge of the defense of the island, but spent most of his time on his estate, acquired under questionable circumstances, supposedly with the help of Chatoyer. In June of 1779 the French invaded the island. La Roque and about 600 men took the Windward Coast with the help of the Caribs. Another 450 men landed without opposition near Kingstown in ships mistaken for British merchant vessels. Etherington convinced Governor Morris not to the resist the French, and the island was surrendered without much fighting. The British soldiers were taken to Antigua and exchanged for French soldiers (Adams 45).

The British made one feeble attempt under General Vaughan and Lord Rodney to recapture St. Vincent and were turned back by the combined forces of the French and Caribs in 1780. The French appointed Lieutenant Governors to rule St. Vincent from Martinique, including la Roque. The French remained in control for four years until the terms of the Treaty of Versailles of 1783 returned St. Vincent to the British on January 1st, 1784. During the French occupation relations with the Caribs were often tense, as they sought to destroy the British sugar plantations protected by the French.

The British now felt relatively secure in their control of the island, but new challenges still lay ahead. The Caribs were still in possession of some of the best sugar lands, especially around

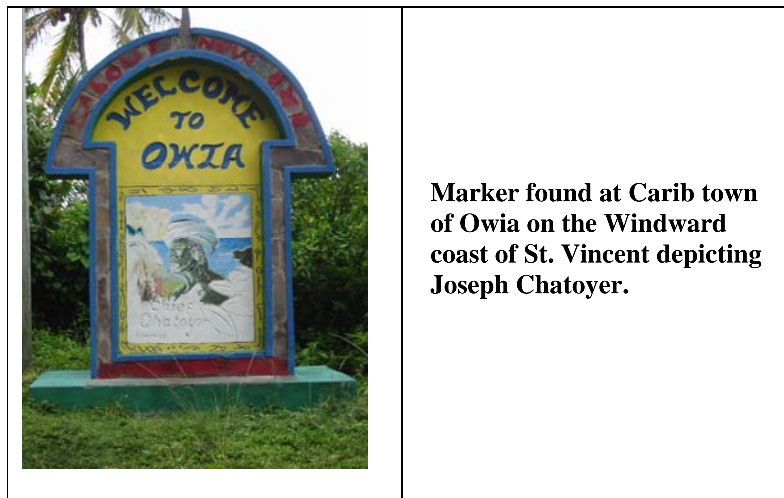
one of their main villages, Grand Sable, which was Chatoyer's hometown. The French Revolution of 1789 presented another threat to the security and advancement of the British designs in St. Vincent. New ideas out of revolutionary France spread to the Caribbean. One result was the slave uprising in Haiti, leading to its eventual independence. A slave revolt also occurred on Guadeloupe. The French began to stir up sentiment for revolution among the French, Mulattos, and Caribs on those islands recently occupied by the British. The French Jacobin governor of Guadeloupe, Victor Hugues, played a role in advocating revolution on St. Vincent, and promised the support of the French Republic if the Caribs and French settlers took action against their British oppressors. The ideas of the equality were taken to heart by many of the French leaders of the revolution at the time. Cynics saw this as simply a way to exploit tensions to help in defeating the British by creating a diversion in the Eastern Caribbean. The French forces in the Caribbean were known as Brigands by the British and consisted largely of freed slaves and French privateers, who were as much motivated by desire for pillage and profits, as by the ideals of the French Revolution. Part of this wider conflict involved the taking of American ships trading with the British by French privateers.

Hugues' plans were for a coordinated rebellion on Grenada and St. Vincent, but had to be changed. The military state of the British on St. Vincent was very weak at this point, and it was an ideal time for the Caribs and their French allies to strike. Word spread from Grenada of the planned attack and Governor Seton requested a meeting with the two top chiefs of the Caribs, Chatoyer and Duvalle. The response was that it was too late to negotiate.

The Second Carib War began on March 8th, 1795 with the burning of the La Croix estate. The militia was called up under the command of Governor Seton's son to respond, and captured 18 Caribs. Duvalle, known as Chatoyer's brother, pushed his forces down the Windward Side of

the island, burning estates as he advanced. Chatoyer, on the other hand, killed colonists and their workers as he advanced down the Leeward Side, but spared the property, anticipating future use for it. Duvalle advanced on the post at Dorsetshire Hill, capturing it and hoisting the flag of the French Republic. Chatoyer held the rank of a French general and his French and Carib forces joined him on Dorsetshire Hill for the final assault on Kingstown. He had captured three young Englishmen and brought them with him, and is alleged to have personally hacked them to pieces to show his hatred for the British ("Caribs" 6).

In the capital at Kingstown, Governor Seton was making ready for the defense of the town and the government. Two war ships had arrived in the harbor with reinforcements of British soldiers, and a force of soldiers, sailors, merchant mariners, slaves, and island militia in four columns advanced up the hill under cover of darkness for a surprise attack under on March 14th, 1795 (Adams 56). The Carib and French forces were caught by surprise and driven from the hill, saving the capital.



Marker found at Carib town of Owia on the Windward coast of St. Vincent depicting Joseph Chatoyer.

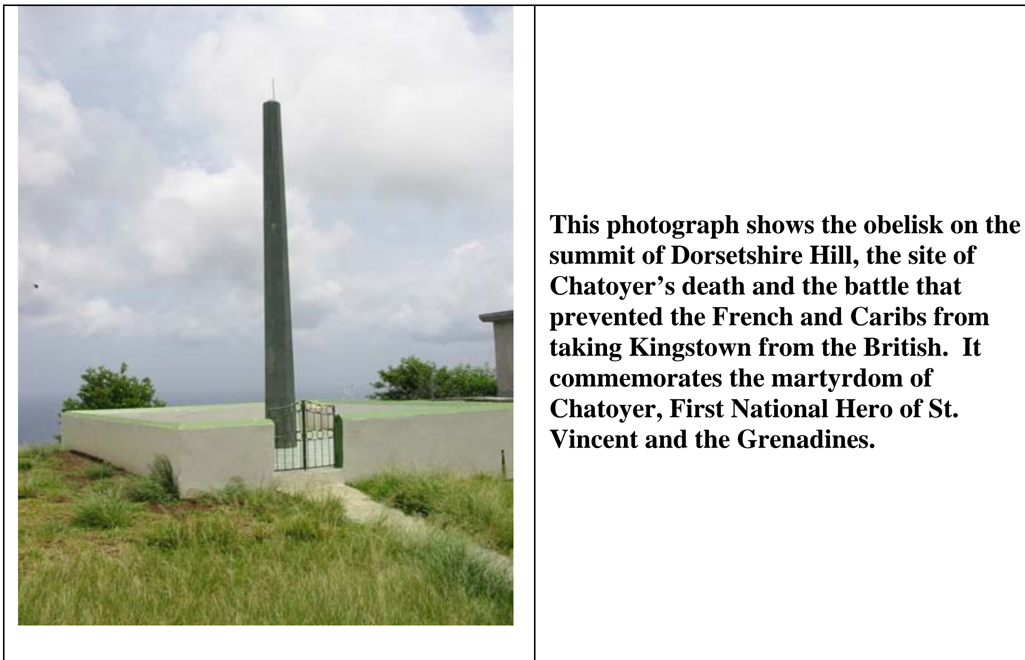
There are several versions of how the Paramount Chief, Chatoyer, was killed. The most dramatic involves a duel between Chatoyer, by then in his fifties, and Major Alexander Leith, forty-six years of age. The duel is supposed to have ended with Chatoyer's death by Leith's

hand. Leith later died at the end of the war. Other stories have Chatoyer being killed in ambush, or bayoneted, by five militiamen, as he moved to attack Leith. His body was not displayed by the victors in the battle, and its burial place has never been found, so the real story behind his death will remain a mystery. The government of St. Vincent in 2002 honored Chatoyer as the first national hero for his leadership and resistance to British tyranny. Each March 14th, the day of his death, is now remembered as a Vincentian national holiday. An obelisk has recently been erected in his honor on Dorsetshire Hill. Major Leigh's death and his killing of Chatoyer was remembered by the colonists with a plaque in St. George's Cathedral in Kingstown, now hidden under a rug by modern Vincentians.

In this painting, Prescott depicts the legendary fight between Major Leith and Chief Chatoyer on Dorsetshire Hill, March 14, 1795, that resulted in the death of Chatoyer. It is unlikely that Chatoyer was killed in a one-on-one duel that dark night. The British forces retook the post on the top of Dorsetshire Hill, preventing the capital below from being taken by the French and Caribs.

This defeat and the death of Chatoyer did not end the war. The fighting continued on for more than a year. The fighting was a seesaw affair, with victories and losses on both sides. The French had recaptured St. Lucia and could easily supply the Caribs and French forces on St. Vincent from there. The British continued to reinforce St. Vincent with more soldiers. When they retook St. Lucia, and destroyed many of the Carib piraguas on St. Vincent it was harder for

the Caribs to get re-supplied by their French allies. The Caribs nearly took Kingstown again, but failed.



This photograph shows the obelisk on the summit of Dorsetshire Hill, the site of Chatoyer's death and the battle that prevented the French and Caribs from taking Kingstown from the British. It commemorates the martyrdom of Chatoyer, First National Hero of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In June of 1796 a British force of nearly 4,000 advanced on the Caribs in six sections supported by cannon. British forces included slave rangers led by Leith and German mercenaries. The Caribs were routed and submitted under a flag of truce. Some resisted further, but by the end of October 1796 over 5,000 had been captured or surrendered to the British. Among the last to surrender were Duvalle and Chatoyer's son ("Caribs" 9).

Exile

At the war's end the Caribs were starving and destitute. They were to become exiles from their own country. Similar to the removal of other Native American peoples in North America, such as the Indians of the South East and the Trail of Tears, the Caribs were rounded up and expelled to lands unwanted by the British. The Black Carib Trail of Tears was a watery one, as they were loaded on ships and exiled to Roatan Island, thousands of miles from their homeland on St. Vincent.

At the conclusion of the war most of the Caribs were held on the small Balliceaux Island, where more than half died of disease. The approximately 2,000 remaining Caribs were exiled to Roatan Island, off the coast of Honduras in 1797. Their descendants are now known as the Garifuna, and number in the tens of thousands. There are 200,000 in Honduras alone (Conley 1). Others live all along the Central American Caribbean Coast and in the United States. They still view St. Vincent as the motherland. Some have recently been visiting the island in an attempt to reconnect with their roots, and in so doing reintroduce a lost culture to the people of St. Vincent.

Not all the Black Caribs died or were exiled in 1797. A small number moved to the most remote and rugged part of the island and their descents still live there today. Greiggs was their most important settlement. Today they have largely forgotten their Carib culture and language, and have assimilated into the mostly African Vincentian society. There were only a few hundred

The relatively barren island of Balliceaux held the Black Carib prisoners for nearly eight months, where many died. Battowia Island seen in the background is even more barren and likely was also used to hold Carib prisoners.

Red Caribs remaining in St. Vincent during the Second Carib War. Those that did not participate in the war were settled at Sandy Bay on the Northeast Coast, where their descendants still live today, mixed in with the largely African descendant population. There is little visible trace of the once proud Carib nation, Black or Red, on St. Vincent today.

On March 11, 1797, 722 men, 806 women, and 720 children were embarked on ten ships, escorted by the *H.M.S. Experiment,* leaving from Bequia Island in the Grenadines, and bound for Roatan Island off the coast of Spanish Honduras (Adams 58). These forlorn passengers were the remnants of the approximately 5,000 Black Caribs that were rounded up and imprisoned on tiny Balliceaux Island in the Grenadines after their defeat in the Second Carib War on St. Vincent in 1796. These captives spent nearly nine months on Balliceaux, where most died. The remaining 2,000 odd survivors were being transported to Roatan as exiles. This action ended resistance to total British sovereignty over St. Vincent and the rich undeveloped sugar lands, once controlled by the Black Caribs. The way was open for the British to establish an extension of the Sugar Kingdom on the former Carib lands of St. Vincent. The expulsion of the Caribs also meant that the French no longer had allies on the island with which to plot their recapture of it. From 1797 on, the French were unable to make any serious challenge to British sovereignty over St. Vincent and the Grenadine Islands.

What happened to the once feared Black Caribs who had been able to resist European conquest for so long? After being rounded up and held on Balliceaux, the British exile fleet took the remaining 2,248 captives to Roatan. The voyage took 31 days, including a ten day stay on Jamaica for repairs and provisioning. The British defeated the Spanish garrison on Roatan to open the way for the exiles on April 12th. On the way the Spanish captured one of the British ships with 289 exiles on board, and took the ship to the Spanish port of Trujillo on the mainland

of Honduras. The British sent three ships to bombard the town, and the ship was released with is prisoners back to the British. On the way to Roatan it hit a reef entering the harbor, and sank. What happened to the 289 Black Caribs aboard has not been recorded. The group that was eventually left off on Roatan to perish or survive was numbered at 2,026 (Adams 58). The Spanish later removed most of the survivors to Trujillo where they became farmers, and did fairly well. Some were used as woodcutters by the Spanish in Belize. Some were drafted into Spanish military service, fighting on the losing side in the wars of independence. This compelled some to move again, into another exile in Belize, a time now celebrated by their descendants as Settlement Day. Today these people are known as the Garifuna, and they make up an important part of the population of the Caribbean coasts of Honduras, Guatemala, and Belize. There are also thousands now living in the United States. To these descendants of escaped African slaves and Carib Indians, St. Vincent is "Yurumein," or Homeland, and it holds a very special place in the hearts of the Garifuna people.

Back on St. Vincent some of the Black Caribs were able to flee into the mountains, and avoid capture by British soldiers. They settled on the edge of La Soufriere volcano, and have suffered from its eruptions over the years. A Black Carib woman named Fanny Greigg came out of hiding to recover a captured child from the British. They were impressed with her bravery, and allowed her to mark out a boundary for a reservation where the tiny remnant of the population could live in freedom. Their descendants still live in the town of Grieggs, marked out by this Carib woman ("Symbols of Independence").

What of the original inhabitants, the Yellow or Red Caribs? There were only a few hundred left during the last Carib War. Many of them did not participate in the conflict, and were not exiled. These few were resettled in the old Black Carib territory at Sandy Bay on St.

Vincent, and have today largely disappeared as a recognizably separate group. Much was made by the British of the domination of the Yellow Caribs by the Black Caribs, and their apparent take over of Yellow Carib lands. This was done partly to justify the British taking the Black Carib lands. There is some contradiction between sources on the relative numbers of Yellow Caribs and Black Caribs during the last Carib War. The British writers Young and Anderson, who were justifying the British expulsion of the Caribs, claim that only a few Yellow Caribs remained. French historian Alexander Moreau, who was an eighteen year old French agent working with the Caribs during the war, claims that the Yellow Caribs were still in the majority, and that both groups cooperated with a kind of national council, where all indigenous leaders were present. Moreau witnessed the aftermath of a British massacre of the Carib village where he had once lived, with the homes burned and the inhabitants hacked to pieces, including the 18-year-old Carib girl Eliama, with whom he had fallen in love, and her father the chief (Adams 61). It is likely that the political and national differences between the French and British have distorted the historic accounts of the times for their own purposes. It may well be that the line between Black Carib and Yellow Carib was not as clear in the minds of the Caribs as it might have been in the minds of their British conquerors.

Of the French who had settled the islands before the British, and remained during the last Carib War, some were killed along with many of their 3,000 enslaved African laborers, during the war, others fled the islands, or were bought out after the war, and some remained to live under British rule. Those, like young Moreau de Jonnes, who were captured by the British in the war, were expelled to the French islands.

With the removal of the Caribs from the best sugar lands on the Windward Side of St. Vincent the British could now develop and exploit these lands. The Carib threat was gone and

defenses against the French were strengthened, such as Ft. Charlotte, on a ridge 600 feet overlooking Kingston harbor that was completed in 1806, and Fort Duvernette, next to Young Island, completed in 1800 to defend Calliaqua Bay. Roads and tunnels were built into the sugar lands, and the lands were distributed to prospective sugar barons.

Garifuna Diaspora

The Black Caribs on Roatan, now known as the Garifuna, at the end of the 18th century were now a people without a country. The British had left off over two thousand exiles on Roatan, with food, supplies, utensils, seeds for planting, and fishing gear. The Garifuna were having a difficult time getting started on the island and asked the Spanish in Honduras to transport them to the mainland. On May 17th, 1797 the Spanish brought the Garifuna to Trujillo on the northern coast of Honduras, where they thrived as farmers, and helped the struggling Spanish, unfamiliar with the tropical agriculture of the Caribbean. According to legend, the Garifuna (for "Cassava Eaters") on the exile ships hid cassava inside their clothing. It was kept alive by their sweat on the crowded ships. They were able to plant it on Roatan, and continue to use it as a basic stable.

Some of the Caribs living with the Spanish were conscripted into the military and served with distinction. The commander of the fort defending access to Lake Isabel in Guatemala at San Felipe was a Garifuna. Garifuna spread along the Caribbean coast of Central America from Nicaragua to Belize, fishing and farming. The first Garifuna to arrive in Belize came as woodcutters, working for the Spanish in 1802 near Stann Creek and Punta Gorda.

During the Central American wars for independence from Spain the Garifuna found themselves again on the losing side. When Honduras became independent, sentiment against Spain and those who fought for Spain were strong. Many Garifuna who had supported Spain

during the independence movement fled to Belize, which was under to control of the British. They joined those who had already settled there earlier. This mass migration from the Spanish territories to Belize is remembered annually in the Garifuna towns of Belize as Garifuna Settlement Day, a major holiday. It is celebrated each year on November 19th, even by Garifuna Belizeans living in the United States. The Guatemalan government officially recognized the importance of the Garifuan community with a visit of their president to the Garifuna town of Livingston on Guatemala's Caribbean coast on Settlement Day in 1996.

During the early 1900's the banana industry came to northern Central America. There were banana plantations, processing plants, and ports all up and down the coast from Belize City to Trujillo in Honduras. Many Garifuna settled in towns near the banana companies to work on the plantations or at the ports and processing plants. In the 1940's this industry was hit hard by a disease that attacked banana plants, and many of the companies were forced to shut down, throwing people out of work. Many Garifuna turned to the seafaring business and immigrated to North America and other parts of Central America.

During World War II Garifuna served in the merchant marines of Britain and the United States. Some then settled in the large U.S. port cities of Los Angeles, New York, and New Orleans. Large numbers of Garifuna have migrated to the United States in recent years and can be found all over the country. The United States is now the country with the second largest population of Garifuna after Honduras.

The Garifuna Today

Today the Garifuna live scattered in small coastal communities from Belize to Nicaragua. Many suffer from poverty, malnutrition, poor housing, and lack of education. The majority are not literate or only semi-literate in the national language of their host country. Most speak

Spanish, and many of the younger Garifuna are losing their native language altogether. English is also spoken by many Garifuna.

There are 43 towns and villages that are home to the Garifuna along the Caribbean coast. Generally they stay out of the mainstream politics of their host countries. They are often discriminated for their cultural and language differences from the mainstream of Central American societies. There are Garifuna who have made distinct contributions to their communities and nations, as educators, doctors, and community leaders. Many of the younger people are migrating to the cities for education and economic opportunities, where some are losing their unique cultural identity.

Those that migrate abroad to North America or elsewhere often go to school, work, raise families, and then return to their home village or town on the Caribbean coast to retire. This will probably be less likely with the younger generation being raised abroad, away from the memories of life in the Caribbean. Some will not learn the traditions of language of their ancestors and will assimilate into the mainstream of their adopted homes. This is a major concern of Garifuna leaders, who have established international organizations to preserve the unique Garifuna identity, language, and culture, despite the lack of a Garifuna homeland. There are even calls by some for reparations from Britain, modeled after those given to indigenous peoples in North America that would lead to the development of education, health, housing, and economy of the Garifuna living in northern Central America.

Note

1. The author, James Sweeney, Ph.D., completed graduate studies at California State University, including his thesis entitled *History as National Myth: The War of the Brigands or the Second Carib War*, from which this paper is derived. He teaches with Central Texas College-Asia and will also be teaching with the University of Maryland University College-Europe.

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