Carib Ethnic Soldiering in Venezuela, the Guianas, and the Antilles, 1492-1820

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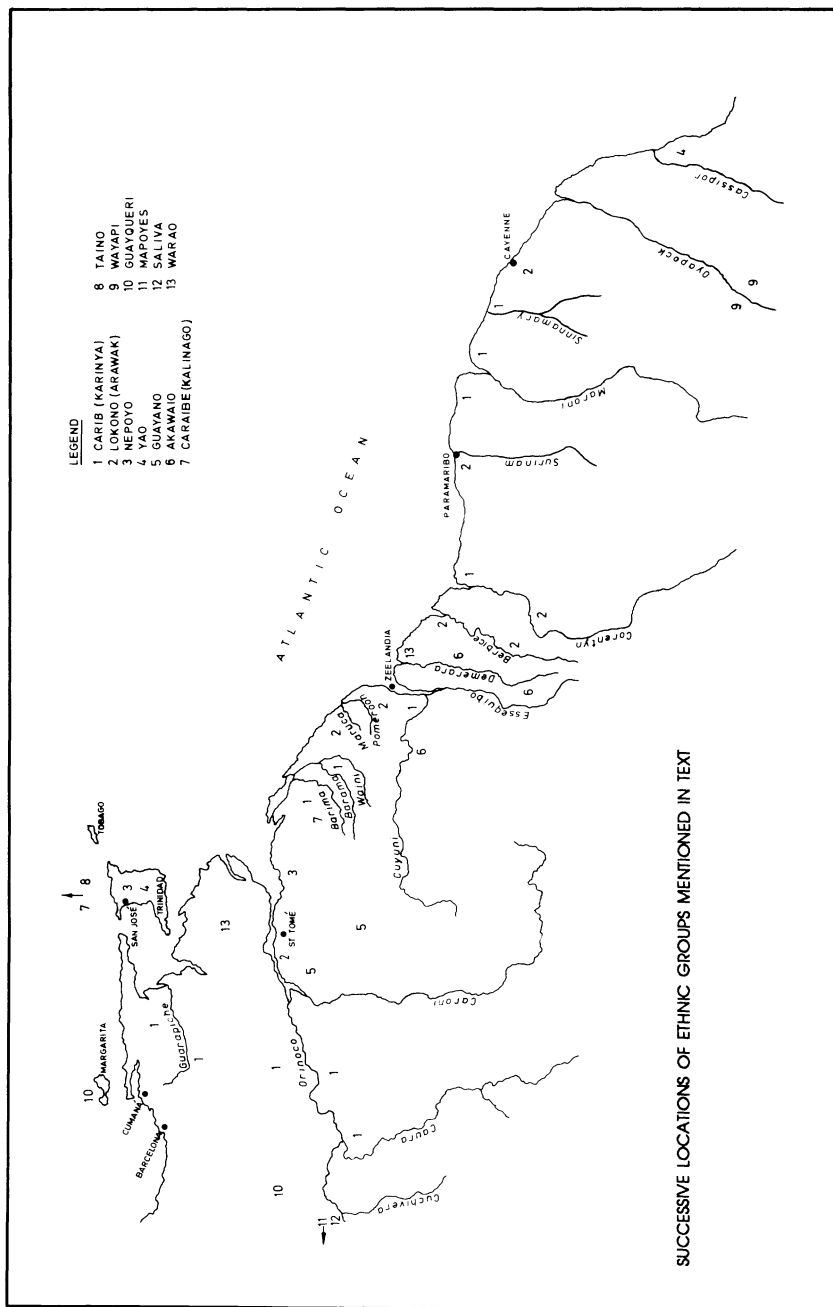# Carib Ethnic Soldiering in Venezuela, the Guianas, and the Antilles, 1492–1820

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Abstract. The phenomena of "ethnic soldiering" and "tribalization" have been noted worldwide in relation to the impact of European colonialism on native peoples, but they have not been explicitly linked. The case of the Carib (*Karinya*) and Caraibe (*Kalinago*) is examined here with emphasis on the role of military cooperation with the Europeans in the formulation of Amerindian ethnicity. Various current theories of ethnicity are also discussed in the light of this material.

In many areas of the world, including America, the initial establishment and long-term survival of European colonial enclaves often depended on the military assistance of the native population against native groups themselves, rebellious slaves, or other colonial rivals. This phenomenon has been termed "ethnic soldiering."[1] Ethnic soldiers may be enticed into the service of the colonial state by a variety of means, both coercive and seductive; consequently, the range of colonial control varies also, from alliances with autonomous polities, to contracts with local leaders, to the formal incorporation of a "martial tribe," as with the Gurkha in the British Army. In the Americas such military assistance also came from the black population of freed slaves, special "slave" regiments sometimes being formed (Buckley 1979; Campbell 1988; de Groot 1990).

For the Amerindian population in the Guayana-Caribbean region, the extent of such assistance initially was limited to an on-off, contractual basis between a local Amerindian leader and a local European one. In time, however, the sociopolitical consequences for the Amerindians of these repeated "temporary" military alliances, also entailed in both a developing trade in European manufactures and a chronic European need for military advantage in the context of fierce rivalries between the vari-

LEGEND

1 CARIB (KARINYA)
2 LOKONO (ARAWAK)
3 NEPOYO
4 YAO
5 GUAYANO
6 AKAWAIO
7 CARAIBE (KALINAGO)
8 TAINO
9 WAYAPI
10 GUAYQUERI
11 MAPOYES
12 SALIVA
13 WARAO

ATLANTIC OCEAN

SUCCESSIVE LOCATIONS OF ETHNIC GROUPS MENTIONED IN TEXT

ous colonial enclaves, were to create ethnic groupings that responded more precisely to these novel conditions. Preeminent among these groupings were the Carib, the stereotypical (Drummond 1977) ethnic soldiers or martial tribe. As the governor of Essequibo wrote in the eighteenth century, "The nation of Caribs, my Lords, are regarded as the nobility amongst the Indians, as allies in war or as friends they are outstanding and so also are fearsome enemies, more assured and unyielding than one might think" (PRO, CO 116/46, 21 February 1769).

This article will examine the development and dynamics of ethnic soldiering among the Native American people of northeastern South America, with a view to showing that it was the central political means by which the Europeans, in the absence of any decisive strategic advantages over the Amerindians at the military level, fractured and broke up an autonomous, regional Carib ethnicity that had emerged largely in response to the initial Spanish colonization of this region. Therefore, in the Carib case at least, the distinction between Carib ethnic soldiering before and after the loss of their ethnic autonomy, caused by the political and economic relationships that they established with the Europeans, is an important one to make. It represents the transition from ethnic soldiering as a collective activity, consequent on their pursuance of an anti-Spanish military and political alliance based on trade with the European rivals of Spain, to ethnic soldiering as a matter of purely local or individual significance in the context of established colonial relationships.

Nor should it be forgotten that if the Europeans sought Amerindian military assistance, the reverse was also true, and that, from the Amerindian point of view, ethnic loyalties among the Europeans might vary as inexplicably and as capriciously as those of the Amerindian polity, which the early colonists struggled to dominate.

Therefore, more generally, the colonial experience in this region would seem to pose a number of interesting questions for the study of ethnicity worldwide. In particular, so-called primordialist accounts, deriving from the Durkheimian notion of *Gemeinschaft* (see Vail 1989) or the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977; Bentley 1987), have a prima facie difficulty in accounting for the apparent political irrelevance of the European/Amerindian ethnic boundary; for instances of intraethnic, not just interethnic, conflict; and for the innovation and rapidity with which new ethnic groupings were created through the phenomenon of ethnic soldiering (see also Shennan 1989: 16). Similarly, Barth's (1969) classic formulation of ethnic dynamics, while broadly accepted here, places insufficient weight on the generally prescriptive role of colonial state-systems, as well as on the role of trade and warfare, in the historical process of refor-

mulating such ethnic boundaries, processes also very evident in African ethnohistory (Atkinson 1989; Vincent 1982: 88, 144–48, 156). Related criticisms might be leveled at Smith's (1986) more recent analysis of Old World *ethnies,* which, due to this partial perspective, tends to theoretically overemphasize the durability, or "inertia," of ethnic formations and so fails to account for the rapidity of change in their boundaries and content. Similarly, Gellner's (1983) Eurocentric definition of ethnicity as a phenomenon of industrialization has already been criticized by Vail (1989: 4) from the African perspective.

In this context, the South American case, which has many analogies elsewhere on the American continent (e.g., Bourque 1989; Forbes 1988: 50; Hill 1989; Jackson 1983; Osborn 1989), is of special theoretical importance, since it provides a situation within which to study the human agency and creativity that is inherent in ethnicity but that archaeologists (Ucko 1989: xviii), sociologists (Smith 1986: 17), and some ethnologists (Tonkin et al. 1989) continue to find opaque. As Ucko (1989: xviii) writes of the conference that was the basis of the Tonkin volume, "What remains completely obscure, however, is the detailed nature of the relationship between what did in fact happen in the past to the particular group concerned and the later details of claimed ethnic separateness and distinctiveness."

This article will therefore attempt to illustrate and analyze these processes, with particular reference to warfare, as they unfolded among those native peoples of Guayana and the Caribbean that we have come to know today as the Carib (see also Gonzalez 1988). It will be argued that, consonant with the views of Fried (1975, 1983), Helms (1976), and Wolf (1982), the main effect of the warfare which became endemic to this region during the colonial period was to "tribalize" the coastal peoples. Clearly, warfare, and particularly ethnic soldiering, was not the only process at work here (see also Atkinson 1989: 24; Vincent 1982: 17), for it was the trade in European manufactures that was the economic base of political cooperation with the indigenous population; but, as mentioned above, the relation of war to ethnicity is of special theoretical importance. As Smith (1986: 38ff.) notes, war crystallizes oppositions and solidarities, and persistent war can lead to the construction of "adversarial identities." Just such a situation can be observed in the notorious "ethnic vendetta" that the Europeans created between the Arawak and Carib (Whitehead 1988; Sued-Badillo 1978) but that has persistently been misinterpreted as relating to pre-Columbian conflicts (Rouse 1985, 1986: 106–56; Sauer 1966: 31). It will be argued here that it is not ethnicity that determines

war but conflict which creates ethnicity, and that *colonial* conflict creates "tribes" (see also Whitehead forthcoming).

Establishment of the Colonies and Emergence of the Caribs, 1492–1700

It is only in the context of European colonial establishment that the emergence of a distinct Carib ethnicity can be understood (Whitehead 1988: 3–5). This is not to suggest, as Atkinson (1989: 20) also notes in relation to African ethnohistoriography, that we should overemphasize the disjuncture between the colonial and precolonial periods—although this disjuncture is certainly more evident in the American case, given the relative isolation of Europe and America prior to the fifteenth century—but it does require us to recognize that ethnic definitions are a product of interaction with external forces and not just a passive inheritance from the past. Accordingly, the effect of successive European occupations on the pattern of ethnic definitions is the focus of this section.

The Spanish Occupation of Guayana[2]

During the first hundred years of the European presence in the New World, the Spanish made little or no progress in the conquest of the Orinoco, the Guayana coast, or the Lesser Antilles. This was only partly due to resistance from the Amerindians, for the Spanish Crown, which was fully occupied with the control and exploitation of more immediately profitable regions, such as Mexico and Peru, made only a token commitment to these areas.

Nonetheless, the Spanish were able to disrupt and destroy the extant polities in this area, to which the Carib, insofar as they can be discerned in the historical sources at this time, were still of marginal political significance (Whitehead 1989). Particularly notable in this regard were the occupation of Trinidad by Antonio de Sedeño in the 1530s and the foundation of Santo Tomé, at the mouth of the Orinoco, in 1595–96, by Antonio de Berrio (Ojer 1966; Whitehead 1988). Until this time, the sporadic and undisciplined efforts of aspiring conquistadors had achieved little beyond the intractable enmity of the majority of the indigenous population, with the notable exception of the Guayqueri of Margarita[3] and the Arawak (*Lokono*) of Trinidad, Orinoco, and the Guayana coast.

Thus, generally underpinning the Spanish settlements on the South American mainland, or *Tierra Firme,* were a series of local alliances or nonaggression pacts with various Amerindian leaders who had survived

the initial occupation and were antagonistic towards the emergence of
"caribes" as independent native traders to the Spanish *vecinos*. The alli-
ances formed with Carapana, ruler of Emeria (a Nepoyo province in the
Orinoco mouth), and with the *aruacas* (Lokono), who were widely dis-
persed from the Orinoco to the Corentyn, are especially noteworthy. In-
consistent though both the Europeans and Amerindians were in observing
such accords, a coincidence of interests in the case of the Spanish and
Lokono on the Orinoco, based on the trade of tobacco, foodstuffs,[4] and
both black and "red" (Amerindian) slaves, gave this particular relation-
ship exceptional stability (see Ojer 1966).

    In contrast, and partly in response to the resulting influence of the
Orinoco and coastal Lokono, opposition to the Spanish presence was
widespread within the Amerindian polity by the beginning of the seven-
teenth century. Leadership of this opposition still remained in the hands
of the ancient ethnic groupings of Trinidad and the Orinoco mouth—
the Warao (see Heinen 1988; Wilbert 1972), Nepoyo, Yao, and Guayano
(see Taylor 1977)—but their failure to offer consistently united opposition
to the Spanish meant that they were defeated piecemeal (Ralegh 1848:
35–41; Keymis 1596: 10–25). Refugees from the Spanish occupation fled
east, along the Guayana coast, founding new settlements as far south as
the Cassipour River in Brazil, though not without opposition from the
indigenous Carib:

> The *Charibes* are the ancient inhabitants, and the other Nations are
> such as have been chased away from Trinidado, and the borders of
> Orenoque. And forasmuch as they have united themselves in those
> parts, the *Charibes* have held them in continual warres, but the *Yaios*
> and the other Nations their Allyes, are growne so strong, that they
> have constrained the *Charibes* of the Sea cost [coast] to contract a
> peace with them, yet beare no hearty love the one Nation to the
> other: But with the *Charibes* inhabiting the in-land . . . they have as
> yet no peace at all. (Harcourt 1613: 20)

    Into these stormy waters sailed the English, Dutch, and French, offer-
ing the Amerindians a counterweight to Spanish influence, which the
Carib sometimes utilized. In 1615 it was reported to the Spanish king
that the coast was constantly being visited by "great numbers of Flemish
and English ships who, with the aid of the *Caribes,* with whom they have
made an alliance, are making several settlements . . . between the *Maranon*
[Amazon] and Orinoco" (BL, AM 36320, 29 July 1615). Furthermore, in
1638 it was reported to the governor of Caracas that "the Hollanders . . .
with many gifts and articles of barter and clothing to the Indians have the

whole region on their side, being united in particular to the *Caribes,* of whom there are a great number" (BL, AM 36324, 4 May 1638).

In such contexts the Carib warrior first appears in the capacity of an ethnic soldier, that is, in support of European interests, though only on a temporary and limited basis. Nonetheless, as will become evident below, a mixture of incentives emerged over time as a result of continued engagement with the Europeans. Initially, the Europeans themselves were drawn into extant native conflicts, but as the Europeans in turn utilized the divisions revealed to them through their participation in these struggles, so in time Amerindian conflicts themselves became more a product of this interaction with the Europeans. In this sense the manner of European settlement directly stimulated Carib militarism (Whitehead 1990), because in the absence of Spanish opposition to Dutch settlement on the Wild Coast, trade with the Amerindians might have proceeded more peacefully.

Moreover, that the Arawak *caciques* were alert to the regional political consequences of Dutch/Carib amity is shown by the fact that they made a formal approach to the Corporation of Trinidad, via the lieutenant of Santo Tomé, asking for military assistance against the Dutch and Carib, who were "taking many of them prisoner and carrying off their wives" (BL, AM 36320, 7 October 1614). As Don Juan Tostado, lieutenant-general of Trinidad, noted in his report to the Spanish Crown on the subsequent attack on the Dutch and Carib trading post on the Corentyn, "If they [the Dutch] had settled there [on the river Corentyn] regularly, as they had resolved to do, it would have been extremely prejudicial to the indigenous, friendly *Aruacas* to have had the *Flamencos* and *Caribes* so nearby" (AGI, SD 179, 9 December 1614). So, too, the Spanish had earlier helped the Arawak drive the Yao from the Moruca in the 1590s, following English attempts to construct an anti-Spanish alliance with the aid of the leaders of this group and the Guayano (Keymis 1596: 4; Harcourt 1613: 20, quoted above). These, then, were the contexts along the Guayana coast in which new or enhanced ethnic divisions, as between Carib and Arawak, typically emerged.

In the Orinoco area, Carib independence was not yet seriously threatened by the Spanish, who themselves pursued a lively contraband trade with the Essequibo Dutch. Indeed, the acquiescence of the Carib in this trade was itself paramount, since the lines of communication to the Orinoco from Essequibo, by both sea and inland routes, traversed regions of habitual Carib settlement, particularly those of the Barima and Cuyuni rivers. Accordingly, until the advent of extensive missionary work along the Orinoco, by the Jesuits, Capuchins, and Franciscans in the 1720s, and

despite the maintenance of legal provisions allowing the enslavement of "caribe" groups, in actual practice the isolated Spanish colonists of Santo Tomé had to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Orinoco Carib that even resulted in requests for Carib military cooperation.

For example, following the rebuilding of Santo Tomé in 1638 after two attacks by the Dutch and Carib from Essequibo, the Spanish governor, Diego Lopez de Escobar, attempted to cultivate his own Carib alliance by proposing and carrying out joint slaving raids with the Caura River Carib (AGI, SD 86, 7 August 1639).[5] In a similar vein, and again contrary to an overly simplistic view of Carib-Spanish relationships as necessarily involving permanent conflict, the governor of Cumaná, Fernandez de Angulo, found that alliance with groups of Carib from the Orinoco llanos was possibly desirable even when war had been first contemplated. He informed Madrid that

> upon entering the interior region [Orinoco llanos] with many troops . . . for the purpose of pacifying it and punishing the disorders and grave crimes which had occurred at the time of my predecessors, I held a junta in one of the Missions on the wisdom of commencing war against the Caribs but this was postponed . . . *and instead the whole body of their nation* [the Carib] *assisted me in attacking the other nations;* when the war was ended I left the whole country quiet and generally disposed to receive the Word of the Gospel. (AGI, SD 179, 2 May 1686; my emphasis)

It was not until the 1720s that the Spanish actually attempted further military action against the Carib.

Thus, by the mid-seventeenth century, local conditions overrode wider ethnic loyalties. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Carib cooperation with the Spanish, since it was the Spanish who had done much to create the basis for a strong, nearly pan-Carib political identity, ipso facto hostile to the Spanish occupation (Delgado 1970; Whitehead 1984: 70–74).

Carib and Dutch Military Alliances

It will be appreciated, then, that the Europeans were very much a catalyst for the outbreak of hostilities within the Amerindian polity itself, not just through the commercial competition for European trade goods but also through the local alliances between European and Amerindian that such trading promoted. Thus, because the grant of a relative monopoly on the redistribution of European goods was a very powerful political tool in the hands of indigenous leaders, the Europeans were keen to extract

political and military cooperation in return (see Whitehead 1988: 160–63 for quantitative analysis). To a degree, therefore, "trade" alliances with the Europeans were not distinguishable from "military" ones, the distribution of European goods being precisely the means by which a militarily cooperative leadership could be crystallized from the wide range of indigenous leaders seeking to exchange native products (dyes, woods, gums, gold, foodstuffs, tobacco, spices, slaves) for European ones (cloth, metal tools, firearms, alcohol, glass beads). As we shall see, in such a context ethnic loyalties, for Amerindian and European alike, were increasingly negotiable once a stable trade partnership had been established and military cooperation initiated.

For example, despite the initial alliance between the Dutch and Carib all along the Guayana coast, only in Essequibo did it endure. In Surinam, Berbice, and Pomeroon (Edmundson 1901: 642), the Dutch and English finally made agreements with the Arawak, to the economic and military detriment of the local Carib.[6] This contrasted with the situation in the Essequibo enclave. Here, trade with the Amerindians, until the 1740s, was far more important to the profitability of the colony than sugar planting. As a result, the Dutch authorities did everything in their power to defuse local conflicts among the Amerindians when these interfered with the company's trade, as in 1673, when it was reported by the commander in Essequibo that "peace has been made between the Barima Caribs and the Arawaks and they now have traffic with each other" (AR, WICi 32, 20 July 1673).

Yet although the Dutch acted as arbitrators in Amerindian conflicts, they did not have the ability actually to enforce the peace agreements that they promoted. Thus their attempts to intervene in Carib and Akawaio conflicts in the hope of ensuring the continuity of the trade in *annatto* (oriane dye) were consistently unsuccessful (Whitehead 1988: 150–70). The economic interest of the Dutch in the stability of the Amerindian polity was later to be expressed in a formal political institution, found throughout the Dutch Guianas, whereby the colonial authorities underwrote the status quo within the Amerindian polity, if it was favorable to Dutch interests, by "confirming" the authority of local Amerindian leaders with the grant of *chagualas,*[7] ceremonial staves, and special items of clothing.

Although there were some striking instances of the utility of this practice in the eighteenth century (see below), even where initial influence over the Amerindian polity was achieved by force of arms, the taking of Amerindian wives often seems to have been the prelude to the establishment of formal undertakings to the indigenous population concerning their free-

dom from enslavement and limits on the spread of European settlement. By such means it was intended that their more general cooperation, especially in the supply of foodstuffs, would be achieved. This was particularly necessary in the Essequibo colony, where Dutch West India Company (DWIC) traders came to rely on their affinal kinship ties with the Carib in order to maintain their trading connections (PRO, CO 116/18, 8 May 1687). By accepting Amerindian women in a domestic capacity, the company's traders were held to be *poitos* (sons-in-law), a kinship category also employed by the Carib to describe their Amerindian trade clients (Rivière 1977: 40; Whitehead 1988: 55). In certain cases, particularly in the French territories and Surinam, where private traders dominated the Amerindian trade, the term *banare* (friend/trade partner) was more commonly used, perhaps reflecting a more egalitarian relationship than that between the big Carib traders and the company's employees in Essequibo.

Indeed, such relationships were formed even at the highest level of the Dutch administration. For example, settlement of Essequibo was sustained only by the marriage alliance of the Dutch commander, Amos van Groenewegen, with a local Carib family. Scott writes that he would "have lost his fort and colony and for this cause only was forced to marry a woman of the Carib nation to balance the power of the Arawaks, and afterwards was at the charge of great presents to make up the business between the Dutch and the Arawak nation" (BL, S 3662, f. 62b ff.). In Surinam, although the Dutch first sought to control the Amerindian polity by military means, eventually they too sealed treaties of peace by taking Amerindian women as concubines, notably in the case of Governor Sommelsdyk, and as wives (Heshuysen 1925: 347–48). However, a different fate lay in store for the Carib of the Copename River, who were expelled from Surinam by Governor Sommelsdyk in 1684 (AR, WIC 1025, 18 August 1684). They sought alliance with the French of the Antilles and jointly raided Spanish establishments in Orinoco and Trinidad, although their attempts to persuade the Barima Carib to join them against the Essequibo Dutch were as fruitless as those of the neighboring Corentyn River Carib, who had tried to construct an anti-Dutch alliance among the Amerindians of the coastal region some five years earlier (AR, WIC 1025, 20 October 1679). In these cases it would seem that the wider ethnic solidarity and political attitudes, which had originally meant that the Dutch were welcomed as allies against the Spanish and Arawak, had come full circle, now that the Dutch had reached exclusive agreements with the Arawak caciques of Surinam. Even in Essequibo the stability of the Dutch-Carib trade was far more important to the DWIC and to the established Carib traders than the fate of these rebel Carib groups. Even

so, an illegal private trader from Surinam, Gabriel Bishop, was attacked in the Barima River by the Copename Carib despite the extensive trade and generally good political relations that the Dutch had with the Caribs permanently settled there. As the commander at Essequibo informed the directors of the DWIC, he was "with fifteen of his men, slain and the barque cut to pieces and sunk to the bottom, with threats to some other Indians friendly to us that they would come together with the French and destroy all the plantations outside the fort at Essequibo" (AR, WIC 1025, 18 August 1684).

Such differing origins in these European and Amerindian relationships in Essequibo and Surinam thus strongly influenced the subsequent history of these colonies, creating dissension among the rival Dutch colonies as much as it did among the Carib and profoundly affecting the pattern of ethnic soldiering in the eighteenth century.

Carib, Caraibe, and French Military Alliances

In the Lesser Antilles the Caraibe (*Kalinago*)[8] also initially met all attempts to settle their islands with suspicion and hostility, and the early English colonies of this region were frequently destroyed by them. Certainly their animosity was due in large part to their maltreatment by the first traders, as well as their early encounters with Spanish slavers. However, the Spanish and English policy[9] of using the Arawak (*Lokono/Taino*) as a bridgehead into the Amerindian polity was an important political factor in the Caraibe's continuing hostility toward these European nations.

Accordingly, just as the Carib used the Dutch to offset the Spanish/Arawak hegemony in the Orinoco region, so too the Caraibe found alliance with the French a useful counterweight to Spanish and English hostility. The French West India Company (FWIC) was not actually founded until 1625, but by 1605 the Caraibe of Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent were already led by *captaines* bearing French names and using the French language (Purchas 1906 [1625]: 16, 329). Even so, there was some fierce resistance to permanent French establishments on their islands in the 1640s and 1650s (Pelleprat 1965: 36–45).

Therefore, the terms of subsequent French treaties with the Caraibe (AN, C8a 2, 28 January 1678), especially with those of St. Vincent, Trinidad, and Tierra Firme (AN, C8a 2, 13 February 1678), were of great importance to events on the mainland, since the close relations between the Caraibe and Carib provided the French with a means of access into the vast Carib trade networks that extended into the interior of the continent.

In the Orinoco region, the favored routes of these French traders centered on the Guarapiche and Barima rivers, eventually leading to vari-

ous unsuccessful attempts to settle these regions. Here the traders were certainly able to find Carib support, especially as the Spanish themselves were encroaching into this area (AN, C8a 1, 20 November 1670), but they were not able permanently to override local trade partnerships among various Amerindian groups that the Dutch had already established in the regions of the Pomeroon, Essequibo, Cuyuni, and Berbice rivers. The French traders failed to do so despite penetrating into the interior by other routes: "The French in Barima even come as far as the upper Cuyuni to get them [hammocks] and have burnt the houses of the Pariacotts [Guayanos] there and driven them away, as they gather the copaiba from the trees. This is the reason that Daentje, the Negro, came back two weeks ago without bringing a single pound of copaiba" (AR, WIC 1025, 15 January 1685; see also 7 May 1686).

In the Cayenne colony, the Carib were initially hostile to the French presence, but by 1664 they had allowed permanent settlement (AN, C14 1, 18 May 1664), with their own communities being grouped on the Sinnamary and Kourou rivers. Here Jesuit evangelization, like missionary activity on the Orinoco, was to lead to a fundamental loss of Carib political and economic autonomy during the eighteenth century (see Hurault 1972). In contrast, the Maroni Carib maintained their physical and political distance from both Paramaribo and Cayenne, becoming involved in the hunting down of black slaves only as the preponderance of maroon communities in the interior began seriously to disrupt their commerce along the Maroni River into the interior of Surinam (AN, C14 34, ff. 25–58, 1767–68; 21, 29 January 1750).

Thus, in the second half of the seventeenth century, as the pattern of colonial settlement began to stabilize, an increasing number of local allegiances between Europeans and Amerindians proved stronger than an appeal to wider ethnic or political loyalties, the more so where these allegiances had been reinforced by such means as classificatory kinship or the taking of European names. However, even as the economic significance of the trade with the Amerindians declined in the eighteenth century, the plantation economy and the mission regime created new opportunities for Europeans to exploit Amerindians as slave hunters or as irregular militia in support of missionary evangelism.

Colonial Policing, Evangelism, and the Independence Wars: The Context for Ethnic Soldiering and Tribalization, 1700–1820

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, despite continuing attempts by the French to establish themselves at the Orinoco mouth, the basic

configuration of European colonial settlement had stabilized and was to persist until the end of the century. Accordingly, the autonomy of the Amerindians from these expanding colonial enclaves was steadily eroded, eventually sustained only by an ever deeper retreat into the interior. The events of the eighteenth century illustrate the increasing importance of the Carib to the Dutch and French authorities along the Guayana coast as hunters of escaping slaves, as a police force among the "wild Indians" of the interior, and as a conduit for intelligence as to Spanish and Portuguese activities in the Amazon and Orinoco river basins (see PRO, CO 116/30, 3 April 1744, 8 October 1749; 116/33, 6 November 1762, 9 March 1763; AN, C14 5, 24 July 1709; 21, 29 January 1750; 22, 24 September 1753).

In the Spanish territories, despite often tenacious resistance, the Capuchin and Franciscan missionaries had by 1771 completely pacified and resettled all the Carib communities of the Orinoco region. Their success was due partly to the use of levies from among the mission Amerindians against settlements of free Caribs; such levies later included Caribs themselves. It was also due to the fact that by the 1740s, DWIC trading with the Caribs outside the Essequibo colony was in a steep decline because of an increased economic focus on the planting of sugar in that colony.

Ethnic Soldiering for the Spanish

Under the regime of the missionaries in Orinoco, which was designed to break the Carib of their independence, and following the shattering effects of many epidemics among the newly "converted" populations, the old networks of leadership among the Carib were destroyed. In this context some of the Caribs of the Spanish missions had begun to act, by the middle of the eighteenth century, as an evangelical force among other Carib communities (see Caulin 1966: 254–83).

Such divisions among Carib communities faced with missionary advance in the mid-eighteenth century foreshadowed the later development of hostility between the "Spanish Carib" and the "Dutch Carib" (later to become "English Carib") along the disputed frontier between Venezuela and what was to become British Guiana (comprising the old Dutch enclaves of Pomeroon, Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice). By the end of the eighteenth century, these divisions within Carib society had become deep:

> The son of the chief Periper, a Carib by nation came to the post [Pomeroon] toward six in the evening, to ask for help in order to retake his father, whom the Caribs from Orinoco had captured, tying up all his family, he alone escaping. The Caribs . . . were from the mission of Tupuquen [where] . . . the friar is a Capuchin. The son of the chief Periper [also] told me that two Dutch Negroes commanded

the Caribs from the Orinoco. (AR, WIC 1947, Court of Policy Esse-
quibo, 22 September 1794)

These Spanish Caribs were largely the remnants of those Orinoco
communities evangelized during the eighteenth century. They were later
recruited into the patriot army of Bolivar, following the capture and exe-
cution of their missionaries in 1817. The latter, having been closely identi-
fied with the old colonial regime, had initially deployed their Carib militia
in support of the royalists.

Following the occupation of the missions, a special regiment of
Caribs, based on the communities on the llanos to the north of the Ori-
noco and dubbed "Sotillo's Bloodhounds" (Lance 1876: 154), was formed.
Something of the character of these Carib levies may be gleaned from
the comments of "an officer of the Colombian Navy" who commanded a
flecheria (an armed launch) for the patriots in the Orinoco region:

> They are selected for their bravery and ferocity and are characters of
> the most desperate description. . . . They are descendants of some
> of the unhappy Indians who were the aborigines of Venezuela . . .
> who are chiefly remarkable for their desperate courage and thirst for
> blood: which qualities rendered them a dreadful scourge to the Roy-
> alists, during the War-of-Extermination. (Anonymous 1828: 50–51)

However, other Caribs were taken in forced levies, sometimes from
as far away as the upper Barima River in British Guiana. These raids
were still a cause of bitterness between these Spanish and English Carib
communities at the end of the nineteenth century (see also Whitehead
1990).

Ethnic Soldiering for the Dutch and French

In 1778 the administrator of the DWIC plantations in Essequibo summa-
rized the functions of the Amerindian coastal "tribes" in a report on a
"merrymaking" held for the *Uylen* (Amerindian chiefs supported by the
whites) at Fort Zeelandia: "They were well pleased and thought of this
event as a renewal of friendship with the whites . . . and it would be useful
to repeat this event upon certain great occasions, whereby these people
would be more drawn to us, the conspiracies of the slaves would be con-
trolled, desertions would decrease and the colony be made redoubtable"
(AR, WIC 185, 16 March 1778).

Nonetheless, private traders, especially from Surinam, still operated
throughout this area and, parallel with the increase in European planta-
tions, supplied the increased demand for red slaves for use as domestic ser-
vants. That these Amerindian slaves enjoyed much better conditions than

their black counterparts is evident enough from contemporary testimony, as is the fact that the "sale" of one Amerindian by another frequently proved to be nothing more than a European fiction:

> For, as one can make no written contract with an Indian, it frequently happens that months or even years later the kinsmen of such a purchased slave come to demand him back, on the ground that he was carried off by violence or that he was betrayed and ought never to have been enslaved, in which case one is obliged to agree to such a request. (AR, WIC 2324, old series, 27 July 1790)

Given both an increase in European settlement and the extremely tenuous nature of the so-called slavery of the Amerindians, it is not surprising to find that the sale of Amerindians to this market saw a brief upsurge in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, voluminous missionary propaganda on this topic has tended to inflate the significance of this trade and to misrepresent the nature of Amerindian servitude for the Dutch, especially when set against the long history of Spanish and Portuguese enslavement of Amerindians in this region (Whitehead 1988: 183–88).

Thus, in contrast to the developments in the Spanish territories (see the preceding section), the Carib Uylen and captaines in the Dutch and French colonies, while often readily available as ethnic soldiers within the colonial command structure, essentially retained their political autonomy, being contracted for specific enterprises only. Nevertheless, alongside this development, a policy directly subsidizing favored Amerindian leaders (i.e., the Uylen) and permitting carefully controlled missionary activity was designed to maintain a political climate in which that autonomy was eroded and from which military cooperation and demands for ethnic soldiers might therefore regularly follow. However, even at the end of the eighteenth century, when Carib ethnic soldiering was most prevalent, the Carib's ambivalence in their allegiance to the Europeans was still evident, as is clear from a report made by the governor general of Essequibo and Demerara to the Council of the Colonies in 1794:

> At the post of Moruca [Pomeroon] there are in the government's service one postholder, two assistants, one sergeant and six privates and 14 Indians, who remain there to aid the postholder. These Indians are relieved every 4 months by others of the same nation; if it happens that the postholder needs more Indians, he sends word to the so-called captains of the Indians in the districts or villages. Communication between the postholder and the chiefs is carried on by the sending of a piece of string; at the one end he makes as many knots as men are required, and at the opposite end as many knots as weeks

they must stay. The payment that the Indians receive for the standard period of 4 months consists of goods for the Indian trade [*bocksne-gotie*] to an estimated value of f.7 for each man, the postholder must also supply them with the necessary food and drink. In case of alarm the postholder fires three warning shots, as a signal that the entire force, comprising several hundred men, must come to him. The post there has existed many years and through this precaution the flight of the negroes has been prevented. . . . no one will be able to turn the Indians to as good account as the postholder Bartholy, he being greatly beloved and never indulging in strong drink. (AR, WIC, 800 old series, 19 August 1794)

Thus it would appear that in practice the ability of the Europeans to use the Carib as ethnic soldiers depended ultimately on individual relationships established with the local chiefs. The ethnic soldiers were an informal force summoned in aid of the postholder for a specific purpose rather than maintained as a standing militia in support of the Dutch or French presence in general. Thus I would dissent from Menezes's (1977: 48) judgment that "they, therefore, formed a 'resistance movement' for the Dutch against the Spaniards to the west and the Negroes within the territory," although to encourage such a movement was undoubtedly the ambition of both the Dutch and the French authorities (AN, C14 36, f. 29; 18, f. 194).

This view is further confirmed by the evidence as to Amerindian cooperation with fleeing black slaves. The colonial authorities were as aware of the utility of fostering and exploiting ethnic conflict between the blacks and Amerindians as they were of its utility among the Amerindians. For example, the governor of Essequibo noted that Carib slave hunting caused "a great embitterment between the blacks and them, which, if well and reasonably stimulated cannot fail to be of much use and service in the future to the Colonies" (PRO, CO 116/34, 28 February 1764; see also Whitehead 1988: 164).

In the absence of such stimulation, the Carib were quite often prepared to leave maroon communities unmolested or even to facilitate the passage of runaways among the Dutch, Spanish, and French colonies (AN, C14 71, 29 April 1780; AR, WIC, 1947 old series, 22 September 1794, quoted above; see also note 10). Thus, in contrast to the relatively militarized Caribs in Venezuela, whose communities were first organized into militia in support of the process of missionary reduction and later conscripted during the War of Independence, the Caribs in the Dutch territories had, at most, a police function in relation to the slave population

of the plantations. Furthermore, only certain Carib leaders, the Uylen, participated in this role.

The importance of such cooperation is evident from the fact that the relatively small garrisons (AR, WIC 1039–1136; SvS 310–26; SvB 247–93) maintained in the colonies of the Guianas virtually necessitated the employment of Amerindians in order to offset the ever-present threat of slave rebellions, given the considerable preponderance of black slaves over European colonists. As a result, the authorities in Essequibo and Berbice, for example, were effusive in their praise of the Carib following the general uprising of Berbice slaves in 1763 (PRO, CO 116/36, 10 February 1769). In fact, the Dutch in Essequibo had reached agreements with the Carib to intercept slaves[10] fleeing to the Spanish territories by sea (PRO, CO 116/29, 1 April 1744) as well as by land (PRO, CO 116/20, 12 June 1706) well before the Berbice emergency.

However, it should be emphasized that even those Caribs who contracted to perform military service for the whites still maintained an attitude of independence:

> Since these are free-born people and not to be subordinated nor always won over by money or presents; it follows that one must act carefully in this matter [recruiting them to hunt down maroons]. They will only serve out of good will and inclination to their neighbors or out of a kind of primitive pride in considering themselves honored by being in a position to perform a service for the whites. For this reason it should not be looked upon as an act for which we pay them, but as a favor received from them, in return for which we make them a present as a memento and to encourage friendship for the future. (AR, WIC 2324, old series, 27 July 1790)

The Carib also played a more subtle role as a buffer against the encroachment of the Spanish and Portuguese from the interior. They did so by dominating the upland Amerindians through trade, warfare, or outright slaving. A similar strategy was used by the Spanish, who supported the Akawaio against the Carib in the Cuyuni region (AGI, C 258, 22 September 1758, letter of Fr. Garriaga), and by the Portuguese, who encouraged the Wayapi in their invasions of the Oyapock river basin (AN, C14 17, 14 May 1740; 21, 29 January 1750) in the hope of destabilizing the French and Dutch enclaves there by destroying or dispersing the Amerindian groups on which they were dependent. Likewise, the Dutch in Essequibo sought to extend their influence into the interior through Carib raiding parties. In 1778 the Court of Policy in Essequibo was informed by a Mr. van der Heyden as follows:

> Some of the [runaway] slaves had been stopped by, and were still staying with, a sort of bastard nation of the *Ackouwai* Indians called *Arenacottes* [Barinagotos]. . . . it would be best to have that nation suddenly surrounded, shut in, and attacked by the *Cariben,* in order to get those slaves again whether dead or alive. . . . [van der Heyden] knew no way for effecting this in a more considerate or gentle manner. (AR, WIC 530, 8 September 1778)

So, too, the Surinamese authorities encouraged the Carib of the Maroni, in conjunction with free blacks, to enslave the Emerillon (*Meriou*), who had been accommodating the settlement of maroon communities in the interior as well as welcoming the presence of French traders in their villages (AN, C14 34, 20 March 1767, 15 March 1767).

Outside Surinam, the more usual emphasis was on the maintenance of the goodwill of the local Amerindians. The authorities actively discouraged local slave taking, preferring instead to render the interior groups tractable, if possible, by opening trade with them. As the final decision of the Essequibo Court of Policy in the matter of the Arenacottes makes clear:

> Although the aforesaid Indian nation had, by sustaining the runaways, made itself guilty of bad faith and an act of dangerous consequence, but as was the desire of the Company and as the policy of the United Provinces requires that as natives they must be treated with consideration and tact; that therefore it shall be most strongly recommended to the [Carib] Indians who are employed for this expedition, to refrain as much as possible from killing them and to attempt to capture the slaves in the gentlest manner possible; moreover, to bring here a few prisoners from that nation of Indians, in order to account for their conduct and to attempt to make them better disposed to the authorities in the future. (AR, WIC 530, 8 September 1778)

Nevertheless, the illicit sale of firearms and the activities of the unlicensed slave traders, especially those from Surinam, often disrupted the possibilities for peaceful trade, not least because of the greater return that the exchange of red slaves offered to the Amerindians, who were thereby induced to abandon the more habitual items of trade with the Europeans, such as woods, dyes, and gums (PRO, CO 116/21, 19 April 1719).

However, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the Carib and other Amerindians were of declining significance to the changing colonial economies of the nineteenth century, and their political standing with the Euro-

peans suffered accordingly. When the British replaced the Dutch in British Guiana, Dutch customs and policy towards the Amerindians were largely continued, and plans were put forth to recruit a formally organized Amerindian militia. The Carib, however, due to the conquest of their Orinoco settlements and to population decline caused by the cumulative effects of European diseases, were no longer a militarily significant force. Hilhouse (1825: 29), who proposed the Amerindian militia for British Guiana, wrote: "About twenty years ago they could muster nearly a thousand fighting men, at this moment it would be difficult to collect fifty in the whole country below the falls. Those that remain have retired so far into the interior, that their services are entirely lost to us."

Since the system of slavery that initiated the use of such services was itself progressively dismantled throughout the region from 1834 onwards, it can be appreciated that, as Vincent Roth commented, "when their usefulness ceased, the interest of the State in them in actual practice ceased also" (quoted in Menezes 1977: 72).

Conclusions

The process of European alliance through which the Carib and their Caraibe allies had developed a dominant position within the Amerindian polity of this region thus led finally, against the background of demographic decline, to the stark outcome of total avoidance of or increasing integration with the colonial state. Under such pressures, Amerindian ethnic boundaries in general further loosened as remnant groups in the interior absorbed one another (Rivière 1969: 12–17). In such situations, ethnic identity is clearly revealed as a politically malleable construct and not as an unconscious or inevitable consequence of an individual's cultural and linguistic heritage, as "primordialist" views would claim.

Moreover, bearing this in mind, instances of intraethnic conflict become more intelligible. Given the widespread trading connections of the Carib, based on a frequently noted pattern of exogamy that sometimes involved Africans and Europeans as well as Amerindians, any appeal to "coethnicity" had become complicated by the increasing heterogeneity of Carib ethnicity itself. Coupled with an increasing divergence in the historical experience of Caribs in the Dutch and Spanish territories, ethnic identity now derived more from the residual congruence of cultural and linguistic forms and from the character of relationships with the Europeans than from the widely shared political perceptions and aggressive ethnic ascriptions that had once made the Carib the "arbiters of peace

and war, trampling down the other nations" (Governor of Cumaná to the Council of the Indies, AGI, SD 179, 2 May 1686).

Yet, as the evidence of the united opposition to the first Europeans shows, coethnicity was a form of political consciousness that was once widely practiced as part of Amerindian political life but became less prevalent as the Europeans and Africans penetrated the Amerindian polity through marriage, trade, and direct military conquest. By one or another of these means, the well-known strategy of divide and conquer was steadily deployed against the Amerindians. As Keymis (1596: 48) somewhat tartly observed, "And howsoever the Spaniards vaunt of their redoubted exploits in the Indies: yet do their own writings in effect testifie, that without the aid of the Indians divided amongst themselves, Mexico, Peru, and the rest, had never been Spanish."

Furthermore, there can be little doubt that, just as contact with the Amerindians provoked debate among the Europeans as to the nature of human origins, so too Amerindian thought was deeply affected by European actions. Indeed, it was the initial nature of contact with the Spaniards in this region that generated a Carib attitude of hostility to and independence from the Europeans.[11]

Nonetheless, the individualistic tendencies of Carib political leadership—for example, the need to build a strong following through the manipulation of kin ties, to perpetuate and consolidate that following through the giving of women, and to conduct successful trading and raiding expeditions—all cut across attempts to build pan-Carib or pan-Amerindian alliances in the face of European encroachment. Such individualism was further encouraged by the Europeans as they played off one Amerindian leader against the other. The politically desirable industrial products of Europe, such as steel tools, cloth, and occasionally firearms, were made directly available only to those Amerindian leaders who favored the Europeans, as a reward for their continuing political allegiance. In this sense, the European ability to re-form, or "tribalize," native leadership was based on the economics of this trade, and the increasing willingness of the Carib to act as ethnic soldiers may be seen as the political reflection of this process in the military sphere.

Consequently, although recognition of the strategic aims of the Europeans was not uncommon among Amerindian leaders (Keymis 1596: 20), response to European encroachments was largely sporadic and opportunistic. Nevertheless, the lack of highly centralized leadership was in itself one of the more important reasons why the Carib proved so difficult to dominate, as the Spanish themselves acknowledged.

Different Carib leaders' exploitation of the new political and eco-

nomic opportunities that Europeans offered thus led to the creation of new and divergent ethnic identities among distinct sections of the Carib population. It thereby undermined the wider cultural integrity and political homogeneity that had developed in the face of the violence that marked the initial Spanish occupation in this region, and from which events their ethnic identity as caribes first sprang. The maintenance of this wider cultural and political integrity, which might support such an identity, required the maximum participation of distant Carib groups. But since Carib ethnic identity, at its boundaries, always remained individually negotiable, such integrity would represent only the temporary political dominance of a particular section of that population which shared a potential Carib identity. The successful construction of a definition of ethnic integrity, or "Carib-ness," therefore only expressed the dominance of a particular political faction within Carib society.

Bentley (1987: 26, 41) suggests that dominance would require a greater level of political awareness on the part of this "ethnic elite," and that such a view of ethnicity entails that it is considered a "fiction" (cf. Brass 1974, cited ibid.) constructed by leaders and "sold" to their "impressionable" followers. But this analysis, while perhaps plausible in the more static contexts of the Old World, is manifestly erroneous in the light of the evidence presented here as to the differential participation in ethnic soldiering by different Carib groups and the different definitions of Caribness that went along with this variable participation. For example, we have already noted how different Carib groups adopted different political strategies in the face of European invasion and colonization, and such was the origin of the ethnic divisions between the Barima Carib and the Corentyn/Copename Carib in the seventeenth century or the Spanish Carib and the English Carib in the eighteenth century. I and others have observed that this issue is of continuing concern to the modern Carib, whose leaders seek exclusive definitions of Carib-ness despite substantial mixing with a wide variety of non-Carib groups, as well as the adoption of different European religious idioms (see also Derveld 1976; Drummond 1977; Gonzalez 1988; Gullick 1985; Kloos 1971). It would seem, therefore, that it is precisely this phenomenon of disintegration in the actual content of ethnicity, despite a continuing invocation of its form in the struggle for political power, that has led to the analytical opposition of "primordialist" and "instrumentalist" views, the former preoccupied with form, the latter with content.

Although Bentley (1987: 26) correctly recognizes that neither of these analytical positions addresses the question of "how people recognize the commonalities underlying claims to a common identity," this is less a

criticism of those views than an indication that this may be a misleading level of analysis[12] on which to understand the *social* phenomenon of ethnicity. It is precisely the competent presentation and elucidation of such "commonalities" by which leadership is exercised within ethnic groups, as recurrent ethnohistorical and ethnographic descriptions confirm (see Barth 1969; Chagnon 1968; Clastres 1977; Rivière 1984; Thomas 1982; Whitehead 1988).

Nevertheless, the failure of Carib leaders to enforce a widespread or enduring uniformity of cultural and ethnic identity (unlike, for example, the Inca or Aztec ruling classes) alerts us to the possibility that it was exactly this ever-present ability to negotiate ethnic boundaries that undermined their attempts. The Europeans' failure to perceive this facet of Amerindian political life kept them from ever quite mastering the Amerindian polity, though they were eventually able to destroy it.

Hence also, considerable confusion over the identities of the Arawak, the Carib, and their Island variations has arisen chiefly because linguistic identifications were, and still are, uncritically used as political ones; whereas it was quite possible for an aruaca by culture to become a caribe by political design or for economic advantage. As the king of Spain was told concerning the "inundations of Caribs from the Barima and the sea" against the Jesuit missions of the Orinoco in 1733, the Arawak as well as the neighboring Guayano, Guayqueri, Mapoye, and Saliva had become "for the most part *caribes,* some because they are the sons of *caribes,* others through inheritances, marriages and alliance . . . and are consequently traitors, as the Salinas [*sic*] and Guayqueries were during this year in plotting our assassination" (BL, AM 36333, 23 August 1734).

Accordingly, the manipulation of the Carib for use as ethnic soldiers may ultimately be understood as one means by which European political authority was extended directly into the Amerindian polity and the autonomous operation of the latter curtailed. When Storm van Gravesande, first governor of the Essequibo colony, was asked by the Carib for guns with which to defend their Orinoco settlements from the Spanish *entradas* for the capture of souls, his response thus was entirely appropriate:

> I asked the Carib *Uill* this morning whether the Caribs were no longer men and whether they had no hands with which to defend themselves, whereupon he replied: "Indeed, they have; but the Spaniards have guns and we only bows and arrows. Give us muskets, powder, and shot and we will show you what we are." Having no further supply of these than just sufficient for the garrison, I could not have done so, *even had I been inclined.* (PRO, CO 116/36, 12 May 1769; my emphasis)

Notes

1 This phenomenon was first explicitly brought to my attention by Nancie Gonzalez and Sylvia de Groot, who organized a symposium on this theme at the Forty-sixth International Congress of Americanists (see Lechner 1990: 47–48). I am deeply grateful to them and to the other participants at that symposium, Roger Buckley, Mavis Campbell, and Hans Vogel, for their comments on earlier drafts of this article, as well as for the valuable suggestions of Audrey Colson and the anonymous referees for this journal. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the H. F. Guggenheim Foundation.

2 The term *Guayana* is used here to designate the geographical area comprising the political units of Guyana, Surinam, Guyane, Estados Amazonas, Roraima, Amapa, and Territorios Federales Para in Brazil and Estado Bolivar and Territorio Federal Amazonas in Venezuela. For a discussion of the historical orthography of the term *Guayana* see Drummond 1977: 77; Whitehead 1988: 200.

3 The Guayqueri were later used as a militia by the governor of Cumaná against the English in Jamaica (BL, EG 2395, f. 698, 1673).

4 Indeed, so valuable were the aruacas to the Spanish in the supply of manioc and palm flour that Brinton (1871) suggests that the name itself was originally derived from the Arawak and Warao term for these products, *aru.*

5 Also underwriting this alliance was a tradition of cooperation between the Caura Carib and the colonists of Santo Tomé, which had its origin in their desire to use the Spanish presence to break the power of the Guayano of the Orinoco mouth (BL, AM 36315, f. 182b, 1 January 1593). For this reason also Ralegh (1848: 85) was warned off the Caura Carib by the Guayano chieftain Topiawari, who told him the tale of the dreaded *Ewaipanoma,* also described as the *men-with-heads-in-their-chests,* who inhabited that river—perhaps a somewhat poetic reference to a Carib custom, noted also by Keymis (1596: 14), of grossly distending the ear cartilage.

6 Berkel (1695: viii) recounts that the Berbice Arawak habitually raided the Corentyn Carib with the blessing of the authorities at Fort Nassau, while Warren (1667: 26) informs us that "they did once cut off some French in Surinam, and made several attempts upon the English at their first settling, which were always frustrated, and they soundly smarted for their folly: now the Colony is grown potent and they dare not but be humble."

7 Traditional, crescent-shaped chest plates which were symbols of authority among the Amerindians (Gilij 1965, 2: 172) and which also have their counterpart in European military dress, being worn as recently as World War II by the field police of the Waffen-SS. The French of the Cayenne colony, following the lead of their Louisiana colony, also adopted the practice of awarding favored leaders medals (AN, C14 27, 19 July 1764).

8 The term *Carib* is appropriately used to refer exclusively to the Karinya of mainland South America, since the so-called Island Carib are actually Arawakan speakers who call themselves *Kaliponam* and whose warriors also used the honorific title *Kalinago* to indicate a tradition of close military and political alliance with the Karinya. However, the historical sources are not always so precise in their designations. Furthermore, much subsequent confusion has been caused by the fact that the orthographically analogous terms *caniba* (probably meaning "from the mainland" in the Arawakan Taino language of

the Greater Antilles) and *caraybe* (meaning "brave" or "wise" in the Tupi lan-
guages of Brazil) also passed into common European usage. Accordingly, the
French practice of using the term *Caraibe* to refer to the Kalinago is followed
here, since the Caraibe are discussed in this article only insofar as their politi-
cal and cultural relatedness to the Carib was of importance in determining the
pattern of Carib alliances with the Europeans.

9 The "patroon" Lord Willoughby also relied on the Arawak's horticultural
expertise in his settlement of Barbados (Handler 1968).

10 However, that ethnic loyalties might be very complex in such a situation is
revealed by the fact that the desertion of white colonists, sometimes accompa-
nied by their black slaves, was not uncommon in either the French or the Dutch
colonies—in which case the Amerindians seem to have taken little interest
unless supported by regular troops. The commandant at Essequibo explained
the problem to the DWIC in the following terms: "When white people desert
or abscond with their slaves, it is quite natural that they should not readily
allow a body of Indians to seize them and bring them back but rather that they
should resist and defend themselves. In such cases the Indians . . . could not be
induced, without the aid of soldiers, and without their guidance and example,
to attack these white people under the leadership of the Postholder, who is
also a half-breed . . . because the Indians commonly have a dread of white
people in general and it would be difficult to get them to take the offensive"
(AR, WIC 185, 22 December 1777).

11 The Spanish were thereby trapped in a self-fulfilling prophecy in 1520 when
they attempted their notorious final adjudication as to the location of caribe
groups, since populations so identified could be taken as slaves (Whitehead
1988: 172–73). Despite the confusion that this has caused in the distinction
between the Carib and the Caraibe, it is clear (Las Casas 1962, 1: books 131–
32; Oviedo y Valdes 1959, 1: book 2) that the designation *caraybe* was, for
the Amerindians as well as the Spanish, a cultural and political category.

12 A psychodynamic model of ethnicity does not account for the facility and
rapidity of change in ethnic identity that can be observed from the historical
period dealt with in this article. It is critical to Bentley's (1987: 43) account
that the habitus, which he imports from Bourdieu (1977: 73–87) to explain
the "sense of compulsion" in ethnic symbolism, is impervious to conscious
manipulation and so, presumably, to purposeful historical change as well. This
being so, it is difficult to see *how* change in ethnic identity takes place at
all, especially in those situations, such as conversion by Christian mission-
aries, where quite fundamental redefinitions (presumably to the habitus) are
involved.

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